

**GEDCO (Govans Ecumenical
Development Corporation)
Agency History**



*“In partnership with faith communities, GEDCO provides affordable housing with supportive services and assists in meeting emergency needs of community residents.”
(Mission statement)*

“GEDCO is committed to a just society that respects the dignity and worth of all people, values diversity, upholds community, encourages each person's contributions, and fosters growth toward personal independence.” (Webpage)

GEDCO stands for “Govans Ecumenical Development Corporation.” It is a neighborhood-based charitable organization that is largely focused on housing and care for the elderly. Additionally, they also offer individual job assistance, operate two food pantries and provide long-term housing services specifically geared towards the homeless, low-income seniors and people with mental disabilities.

The organization was founded in 1977 in the Northeast Baltimore community. A Presbyterian minister who had recently moved into the Govans community met with several local ministers and priests in an informal collegial setting with the general intention of strengthening communication within the geographic neighborhood community. These meetings quickly solidified into the CGGC (Churches of the Greater Govans Community).

At first the group met monthly for general conversation. They planned periodic ecumenical services, including services for Thanksgiving, Good Friday and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It was natural to begin working on coordination of the emergency services each church gave out in response to the unending requests from the poorer members of the community. By 1978 they had also established a summer job bank for youth, a training program for church staff in responding to emergency aid from persons in need, and the coordination of summer camps for youth.

Deeper levels of community interaction by these church-based networks revealed particularly serious needs faced by some of the least independent members of the Govans community, particularly the housing needs of the elderly. Recognition of these problems led to the establishment of several housing-based community services. This is notable, as housing has remained at the center of GEDCO's mission, and is even reflected in the organization's mission statement.

The organization grew rapidly, but the demands of increased capacity placed a heavy burden on the ministers and priests who were responsible for its operation. Because the Baltimore City housing services were unable to effectively meet the needs of many of the most needy members of their community, the ministers pursued avenues where they knew their own targeted efforts would have the most effect. In 1983 they acquired a Civil War era Hotel and incorporated themselves as Govans Ecumenical Homes, Inc. The end result was a facility that could provide housing, care, and support for 33 senior citizen residents.

Faith groups would do well to look for those opportunities to restore their neighborhoods that only they can do. Our cities have entire blocks, and sometimes entire neighborhoods that cry out for redevelopment, and few for-profits will undertake this thankless task.

This project and several others conducted at this time were done with support coming from multiple sectors including the Baltimore mayor's office, local developers and businesses, a local hospital, the Maryland State Department of Aging, multiple public grants, and most centrally, donors and volunteers from the affiliated neighborhood churches to which the clergy belonged.

This successful project, known as Epiphany house, was repeated in a modified form as Ascension Homes, which serves housing and care needs for the mentally ill. This was, in part, reaction to the practice of deinstitutionalization. The establishment of a neighborhood care facility for the mentally ill required a very intensive degree of interaction with the Govans community to ensure their consent, but also to encourage their participation. The criteria for selecting mentally ill residents for Ascension Homes were drawn up through extensive conversation with the community.

Jack Sharp attributes the success of these ambitious projects to four key elements:

- The support of the pastors -- who must be willing to help develop congregational and community support.
- The support of the leadership of the church.
- Professional support from persons either within or without the congregation -- in our case we employed a professional developer. There is an incredible amount of administrative work in planning, construction, and operation.
- The support and/or cooperation of the community (city) health professionals. In this case the ministers had to learn who the "providers" were, and locate the one who would work with them.

In 1986, after several successful years of operations, Govans Ecumenical Homes developed three homes for individuals with serious mental illness and expanded their attention to the broader issue of local homelessness. This expansion of services led to a need for increased organizational capacity; and the scale of their budget became such that they were able to consolidate their operational structure, incorporate in a more professional form as GEDCO and hire an executive director, all of which was made possible by a major grant from the Goldseker Foundation.

Concerns over community housing were expanded to address the needs of aging local neighborhood residents who were unable to afford quality eldercare but did not qualify for state support. This led GEDCO to an even more ambitious project than any of those previously attempted. Their objective was to establish housing for between 200 and 300 residents and in 1995 they set their sights on the city-owned grounds where Baltimore's Memorial Stadium had previously stood.

In order to ensure the success of the endeavor they partnered with the YMCA. The partnership with the YMCA was also intended to facilitate interaction between the elderly community from the GEDCO properties, and the surrounding neighborhood.

Acquisition of the Stadium grounds was difficult; a second development company was also attempting to acquire the property. The competing developer was a large, successful development company that had the support of the mayor, and was a strictly commercial

endeavor with much larger budget. This drove GEDCO to aggressively recruit new member organizations, moving well beyond the faith-based nature of their original founding churches. These new additions included several private schools and small businesses from the surrounding area, and came with increased public visibility on the part of GEDCO's founding clergyman.

Ultimately they were successful and once the Stadium Place housing facility was operational, it was independently incorporated as a 501(c)3. Despite being separately incorporated, multiple overlaps between the board of directors at Stadium Place and the board of directors at GEDCO has insured that both operations remain congruent in their objectives.

The guiding principles of Stadium Place are to:

- Provide housing with services;
- Linked to surrounding communities;
- Maintain Intergenerational ties; and
- Build a diverse community.

Part of their path to achieving these was their participation in the Green House concept, a national endeavor that includes smaller housing units with groups of elderly needing skilled care. It also links the skilled-care facilities with retirement housing and retail designed for elderly shoppers. Additionally, they began plans for commercial condominiums that would extend the services of Stadium Place to other aging members of the Govans community.

Following the success of the Stadium place projects, GEDCO found itself with an extremely developed operational network and organizational capacity. Acutely aware of their tremendous potential, the GEDCO board commissioned an extensive organizational self-study in order to develop a coherent five-year plan that would be in keeping with their organizational goals.

In 2008, GEDCO's five-year strategic plan was unveiled. The plan was based on hundreds of interviews with volunteers, employees and member organizations of GEDCO, as well as extensive financial self-evaluation, and many, many conversations within the organizational leadership. The five-year plan required a clear understanding of who GEDCO's target community was. Their conclusion was that the GEDCO community was threefold:

- The people living in and immediately around the Govans neighborhood of Baltimore.
- The residents of the various GEDCO and Stadium place housing units.
- The individuals belonging to the churches schools and businesses who are members of GEDCO.

With this in mind, GEDCO drew up four areas upon which to focus their attention:

- Expanding affordable housing opportunities.
- Alleviating effects of poverty.
- Supporting seniors in their communities.
- Strengthening organizational capacity.

In late 2008, as the housing crisis in the United States began to spread and intensify, GEDCO began to see the effects of the suffering economy on its neighborhood. The weakening housing market led them to shelve their Stadium Place condominium project indefinitely, and it motivated them to expand their service capacity in other areas like their heating oil fund and food donations for those in need.

Currently they are also developing new practices intended to maintain closer contact with their various member organizations by appointing GEDCO representatives who are tasked with maintaining contact with six member organizations each. At the same time, they are also developing an ambitious database network of cooperative service exchange within the GEDCO community in a system called "neighbor helping neighbor". This project is intended to make cooperative interaction between GEDCO residents convenient and useful.

GEDCO now has 47 institutional "Member Organizations" including churches, community groups, schools, neighborhood associations, and service organizations throughout North Baltimore.

Timeline

- 1977 Formation of Churches of the Greater Govans Community (CGGC).
- 1978 Established summer job bank for youth and Emergency Aid Training Program for church staff.

- 1982 Focus on housing and support services for seniors-in-need begins.
- 1983 Incorporated as Govans Ecumenical Homes, Inc. and began work on Epiphany house.
- 1985 Doors opened at Epiphany House.
- 1987 Began work on Ascension Homes using funding from a HUD loan.
- 1991 GEDCO was incorporated in a more professional form in order to qualify for a major grant from the Goldseker foundation, replacing its previous manifestation. Opened three Ascension Homes housing and care facilities serving the mentally infirm with the assistance of Baltimore Mental Health Systems, Inc. Julia Pierson brought on as first Executive Director, developing of the CARES program (Civil and Religious Emergency Services).
- 1994 Harford House, a 26-unit SRO rental residence for homeless men was opened on North Avenue.
- 1996 Gallagher Mansion, 40 units of subsidized supportive housing for seniors, opened in a renovated county home just off of York Road. Began work on Micah House.
- 1997 Underwent extensive self-evaluation resulting in a new mission statement, values statement, fundraising strategy; and refocused future goals.
- 1998 Micah House, a 33-unit SRO rental residence was opened for homeless men and women opened on York Road. The York Road Partnership, a network of neighborhood associations, was created.
- 1999 Began work on Stadium place.
- 2001 Organized communitywide interfaith service in the aftermath of September 11.
- 2004 Mitch Posner appointed as new Executive Director.
- 2004 –2008 GEDCO opens four Stadium Place high-rise apartment buildings housing more than 350 low and moderate-income adults, aged 62 and older.
- 2007 Stadium Place incorporates separately, but considerable overlap between Boards of Directors remains.
- 2008 GEDCO's five-year plan is presented.

Financial

GEDCO Funding Sources

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Individual gifts thru the VOICE, annual appeal and campaigns, but not from Special Events. | | | | | |
| TOTAL | \$110,008 | \$116,582 | \$154,128 | \$297,000 | \$142,500 |
| MAJOR GIFTS | | 64.7% | 47.7% | 25.3% | 38.6% |
| TGP | 50.5% | | 21.4% | 55.6% | 21.1% |
| NET | 49.5% | 43.3% | 30.9% | 19.1% | 40.3% |
| Grants with strict parameters for use or for new activities outside of budget | | | | | |
| CARES | 14.4% | 11.9% | 28.2% | 12% | 39% |
| Stadium Place | 37.4% | 83.6% | 41.1% | 12% | 20.8% |
| TGP | | 2.1% | 26.4% | 67.1% | 26% |
| OTHER | 48.2% | 2.4% | 4.3% | 8.9% | 14.2% |
| | \$236,195 | \$483,541 | \$688,111 | \$417,500 | \$192,500 |
| United Way Gifts | | | | | |
| | \$6,863 | \$6,644 | \$6,737 | \$7,000 | \$6,000 |
| Generally unrestricted or minor restricted gifts from corporations and foundations | | | | | |
| 2004 | \$50,218 | PHI, IBM and Penza | | | |
| 2005 | \$121,618 | Audit entry net present value of PHI, other smaller grants 20K BOA, Minor donations from small businesses | | | |
| 2006 | \$34,549 | | | | |
| 2007 | \$35,000 | 20K BOA, 10K Meyerhoff, 5K TBD | | | |
| 2008 | \$30,000 | 20K BOA, 10K Meyerhoff or TBD | | | |
| Member donations | | | | | |
| | \$56,454 | \$51,733 | \$66,820 | \$78,000 | \$55,000 |
| Donations from non-member organizations who are not regular supporters of GEDCO. | | | | | |
| | \$64,758 | \$10,731 | \$6,884 | \$15,500 | \$5,000 |
| Special Events | | | | | |
| This estimate includes 1 spring event (\$20K) and 1 fall event (Gala \$110K) | | | | | |
| 2006 included some 2005 late revenues. | | | | | |
| GROSS | \$55,925 | \$84,964 | \$132,398 | \$125,000 | \$130,000 |



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