

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1276 (Delegate Wolek, *et al.*)
Economic Matters

West North Avenue Development Authority - Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Program - Establishment (WNADA Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Act)

This bill establishes the Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Program in the West North Avenue Development Authority (WNADA). The purpose of the program is to foster social connections to support neighborhood development within the West North Avenue Corridor by providing technical support to specified entities and awarding grants, as specified. The bill requires WNADA to award grants to implement the program, though WNADA may set aside existing funds totaling no more than \$500,000 for such grants. **The bill terminates September 30, 2029, concurrent with the termination date of Chapters 215 and 216 of 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: WNADA expenditures in total are likely not affected but may be redirected from other priorities as it must award grants under the program, as discussed below. Revenues are not directly affected.

Local Effect: Baltimore City operations and finances are not affected.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: While WNADA must award grants under the bill, it may only do so for (1) social gatherings, including block parties, cultural festivals, parades, speaker series, and service or recreational events; (2) outreach initiatives, including neighborhood newsletters,

community bulletins, or digital content, to raise awareness of social events and connect residents with available resources and services; (3) stipends to compensate volunteers for the time used to organize projects, refreshments at program designated events, rental and event spaces, and materials for program events; (4) operating support for participating organizations; (5) social connection projects to create and maintain green spaces or other community gathering spaces; (6) resources for training and hiring community organizers; and (7) resources for grant application efforts.

Participating organizations must collaborate with residents of the West North Avenue Corridor in the planning and implementation of events and projects to ensure that activities reflect neighborhood priorities and, to the extent practicable, that events and activities are led by residents.

By July 1, 2029, WNADA must compile evaluations and outcomes of programs to develop a template for neighborhood building and provide scaling recommendations to similar organizations in the State and across the United States. By December 1, 2027, and annually thereafter (in 2028 only, under current termination provisions), WNADA must report to the Governor and the General Assembly on its comprehensive grant-awarding activities.

Current Law: Chapters 80 and 81 of 2021 established WNADA for the purpose of developing a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy for the benefit of a specified “target area” and “buffer zone” in Baltimore City, generally defined as West North Avenue and the surrounding area in Baltimore City. The Acts establish provisions governing the membership, procedures, and duties of WNADA. Under Chapter 136 of 2023, the authority is generally exempt from State procurement law, although WNADA is still subject to written policy and procedure requirements for exempt units and the State’s Minority Business Enterprise program. By December 15, 2023, WNADA was required to report its [comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy](#), including any procurement activities undertaken by the authority, to the Governor and specified committees of the General Assembly.

Chapters 215 and 216 altered the composition, powers, and duties of WNADA. Among other things, the Acts created a special fund to carry out the purposes of WNADA, exempted WNADA from specified provisions of State law, and generally modified the statutory authority of WNADA to more closely align with that of a State economic development authority. The Acts also extended the authorization for WNADA until September 30, 2029, authorized the Governor to include an appropriation to WNADA, and required WNADA to be self-sustaining beginning in fiscal 2028.

State Fiscal Effect: WNADA must award grants under the program, but the amount for them is capped at \$500,000. This analysis assumes that grants can be awarded in fiscal 2027 within the appropriation for WNADA; the fiscal 2027 budget as introduced

includes \$19.8 million for WNADA. However, as the authority must be self-sustaining in its final two years (given the current termination date), the requirement may necessitate funding needed for other purposes being used for program grants instead. The Department of Legislative Services advises that the bill does not specify if WNADA is limited to issuing \$500,000 *in total* for grants under the program or may issue up to \$500,000 for grants each fiscal year. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that WNADA awards grants each year but the total amount awarded across all three years is within the \$500,000 limit. WNADA advises that it can administer the program and complete other requirements under the bill (develop a template and report annually) with existing staff.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 816 (Senator Hayes) - Finance.

Information Source(s): West North Avenue Development Authority; Department of Commerce; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 2, 2026
jg/ljm

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