Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL   R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Cole

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Vital Signs: Measuring Progress Towards a Better Quality of Life in Every Neighborhood

FOR the purpose of endorsing the Vital Signs project, an initiative of the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance - Jacob France Institute of the University of Baltimore. The purpose of the Vital Signs Project is to use indicators to promote, support, and help people make data-driven decisions to improve the quality of life in Baltimore City neighborhoods. These indicators reflect the diverse conditions of neighborhoods and provide the basis for a system of tracking progress toward a shared vision and agreed-upon outcomes that will result in stronger neighborhoods, improved quality of life, and a thriving City. In 2012, the Alliance released Vital Signs 10, which marks a decade's worth of neighborhood indicators that can be used to both measure success and serve as an input into planning the City's future.

Recitals

For more than 10 years, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance-Jacob France Institute have been committed to enabling well-informed decision-making for neighborhood change, using accurate, reliable, and accessible data and information for improving the quality of life in Baltimore City neighborhoods. Along with an alliance of diverse organizations, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance-Jacob France Institute empowers our neighborhoods with information they need to create constructive change. The indicators are Baltimore's Vital Signs to determine progress toward the strength and health of our neighborhoods. The report uses statistics from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, CitiStat, the Baltimore City Public School System, the Baltimore Police Department, and the Department of Housing and Community Development, to create a baseline for charting what is happening in key areas:

- Housing and community development
- Children and Family health
- Crime and safety
- Workforce and economic development
- Sanitation
- Urban environment and transit
- Education and youth

·   Neighborhood action and sense of community.

  Vital Signs does not rank neighborhoods but is meant as a reality check that will give residents, community leaders, elected officials, and policy makers a common yardstick for measuring progress. The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance-Jacob France Institute presents the information online to be used by various stakeholders to work together to move these vital signs in the right direction so that eventually Baltimore City will achieve a clean bill of health.

  Since 2000, the City has seen improvement in many of the indicators tracked in Vital Signs, reflecting the community-based efforts made to achieve these results. For example, the City, in general, is safer, healthier, and more sustainable; the crime rate has declined by nearly 45%; the teen birth rate has declined by 32%; and the percentage of residents not using a car to travel to work has increased almost 11%. Neighborhoods like Midtown and Fells Point experienced the greatest improvements in crime rates; teen birth rates declined dramatically in Cherry Hill and Brooklyn/Curtis Bay; and, in Harbor East/Little Italy, two-thirds of workers now commute to work by alternative means of transportation. Use of the City's newly implemented 311 service-call system for access to City services rose over the decade; for example, Baltimore residents increased calls to report dirty streets and alleys at a rate of more than 69 per 1,000.

  The median household income in Baltimore City has increased by $8,268, the median value of homes sold has increased by $50,000, and the poverty rate for both individuals and for families with children has declined by nearly 2%. Highlandtown, Washington Village, Patterson Park, and Canton experienced large increases in median income; home sales prices increased most in Medfield/Hampden/Woodberry, South Baltimore, and Downtown; and poverty rates have declined the most in Greater Charles Village/Barclay and Midtown.

  Educational outcomes have improved with the percentage of chronically absent middle school students decreasing by over 13% (from 2005 to 2010) and the high school drop-out rate declining by slightly more than 6%. Chronic absenteeism among middle schoolers declined most in Southern Park Heights and Glen-Falstaff; the high school drop-out rate declined most in Poppleton/The Terraces/Hollins Market.

  However, these overall City improvements hide the fact that not all of the City's neighborhoods have benefitted equally. In the City's most distressed neighborhoods, the compounding effects of population loss, increases in vacancies and foreclosures, recent increases in crime rates, and increases in unemployment and poverty continue to affect the lives of thousands of residents. There are seventeen communities in Baltimore where at least three of every ten families with children live in poverty. In communities such as Upton/Druid Heights and Oldtown/Middle East, at least one in every two families with children lives in poverty. In some of the same neighborhoods, the crime rate is at least the same as the City average; in Oldtown/Middle East, the crime rate is currently more than 40% above the City average.

  Some of the indicators tracked by BNIA-JFI have not shown positive improvement for the City as a whole over the past decade. From 2000 to 2010, there has been an increase in the percentage of persons unemployed, an increase in the percentage of vacant and abandoned homes, and an increasing percentage of residents spending more than 30% of their household income on their housing expenses.

  Vital Signs is meant to serve as a resource that allows for the identification of the areas that need attention and interventions to improve the quality of life in every neighborhood.

  NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body endorses the Vital Signs Project, an initiative of the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance-Jacob France Institute. The

purpose of the Vital Signs Project is to measure whether Baltimore's neighborhoods are making progress toward specific goals using indicators - the Vital Signs - that reflect the diverse conditions of neighborhoods and provide the basis for a system of tracking progress toward a shared vision and agreed-upon outcomes that will result in the rejuvenation of our City.

   AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this Body endorses the common goal of a better quality of life in every Baltimore neighborhood.

   AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance-Jacob France Institute, the Baltimore City Police Commissioner, the Baltimore City Health Commissioner, the Director of Planning, the Commissioner of Housing and Community Development, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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