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How To Fix Baltimore City, Maryland

A Detailed Analysis of the Education, Transportation, Housing, Homelessness,
Lifestyle, Business Diversion, Crime Rate and Security Systems

Introduction

Will Baltimore live up to its title of being known as the “Charm City” or will it continue its descending spiral? Baltimore, among the most populous cities in the United States, is made up of four well-known areas: Downtown Baltimore, Inner Harbor, Mount Vernon, and Lexington Market. The city is known for being a bayside city that has convenient access to Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Virginia, Harrisburg, and Annapolis. Furthermore, the city has state-of-the-art biotechnology parks, the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University, as well as numerous other businesses, industrial parks, and is home to twelve colleges and universities.¹ As exemplified, Baltimore is the birthplace of ambition for many American entrepreneurs that built the city from the ground up, however, there are currently several factors that are leading to the destruction of the inner foundation of the city. Structural deficiencies include education, lifestyle, housing, transportation, and business diversion, which are the catalysts of crime rates and the number of people experiencing homelessness. In this paper, we will work towards preserving the culture of the city for all who call it home, while making efforts to combat the ongoing challenges of Baltimore City.

¹ Brief Economic Facts, n.d.

Education

Education is the cornerstone and foundation of every thriving community. Those that make educated decisions in their social, professional, and financial lives tend to also be the most successful. With a four-year graduation rate of just 69.2% in 2021, education continues to be a chronic shortcoming of the youth in Baltimore.² Without a high school diploma or adequate education level, generations of youth are left jobless and skillless, ultimately to a future of unproductivity. According to the Pioneer Institute, “two-thirds of those without a high school diploma have an annual income of less than \$25,000”.³ Principally, not receiving a high school diploma almost immediately places one in poverty. It is evident the central issue is attendance. In 2017, 37% of students missed at least 10% of school last year.⁴ It is extremely challenging for teenagers to learn and succeed academically without being consistently present in the classroom. Indirectly, it provides them with structure and discipline that is beneficial to their lives. Additionally, the lack of financial literacy is a detrimental factor in Baltimore’s education system. The city of Baltimore has constantly lacked financial stability, which can lead to limited employment and earnings opportunities. It is reasonable to infer the quality of education received within a Baltimore City school is sub-par, which is its own problem independent from the graduation rate. The average median earnings for Baltimore’s graduating class of 2009 was only \$15,000 which is 335% lower than the national average for 2009.⁵ While this was indeed over 10 years ago, it is reasonable to assume that without major changes to the education system, this number has not dramatically changed. Without kids understanding the financial implications of

² “Data: Information...”, n.d.

³ Taylor -, K., & Taylor, K., 2019

⁴ Bowie & Richmond, 2018

⁵ “Baltimore’s unemployment problem...”, 2022

not only not receiving a diploma, but not saving or investing any money, they are left with dreadful financial habits that can negatively affect them throughout their entire adult life.

The beginning step in solving Baltimore's education issue is attendance. It is more challenging for kids to learn if they are not physically in school. Incentivizing attendance could help make a massive change. Union City School System provides, "cash prizes, movie tickets, class parties and special luncheons are included among the list of incentives students can receive through daily attendance".⁶ While it is likely the parent or guardian of the child is at fault for sub-par attendance, enforcing and incentivizing it is bound to improve it. Second, financial literacy and life skill courses must be mandatory for high schoolers. An important aspect of rebuilding a city is having competent business owners who make sound financial decisions that impact the greater economy, i.e borrowing and repaying from local banks, investing into local business, and operating a business that employs and/or insures their workers. A generation of well educated students can positively change the course of Baltimore City. They will be able to own and operate successful businesses, decrease the rate of crime, and further educate the upcoming generations of community members. In order to properly prepare Baltimore's youth for the future, it is important to note that there must be a reallocation of equal funding to school districts through donors and nonprofit organizations so that each student gets an opportunity to obtain a well-rounded education.

Transportation

Ineffective transportation impacts children's ability to go to school, citizen's access to health and job centers, and can disconnect the neighborhoods of a city. Unfortunately for the

⁶ Heller, 2019

once booming city of Baltimore, their transportation system has fallen into disrepair with reports of extreme amounts of congestion coming in and out of the city, making public transportation unreliable for many citizens.. Transportation, both public and private, plays a large part in a city's ability to operate efficiently. A study by Johns Hopkins University's Public Health and Engineering Departments proposed the idea that "communities planned around people having cars rather than people walking systemically benefit more affluent people, which in turn perpetuates racial, socio-economic, and health disparities". Lower income families who rely on these buses may not reach their destination in the city for over an hour due to Baltimore public buses being consistently late. Traffic is also notoriously unfavorable on Baltimore highways, and it is not just impacting the ability of low-income individuals to go places, but it is also affecting their health. These lower income neighborhoods tend to be closer to highways because they are often the "first to be uprooted and bulldozed for highways".⁷ This directly affects the amount of air pollution in these neighborhoods, which can lead to health problems like lung cancer and asthma. Through targeted solutions to problems in Baltimore's transportation system, it creates a city that can be easily accessed allowing for a new population of people to visit.

Baltimore has already been taking steps to improve their transportation in the city. With a plan to allocate \$4.5 million of the \$25 million budget on timing optimization progress for traffic lights between 2019-2024, Baltimore hopes to have traffic lights that are more conducive to the flow of vehicles through the city. This will cut down on congestion of Baltimore highways and fossil fuels emitted by cars stuck in traffic. This is just a small part of what needs to be a larger investment into Baltimore's transportation system. Time and effort need to be put into building up the bus system for commuters in all parts of Baltimore. In order to cut down on travel times

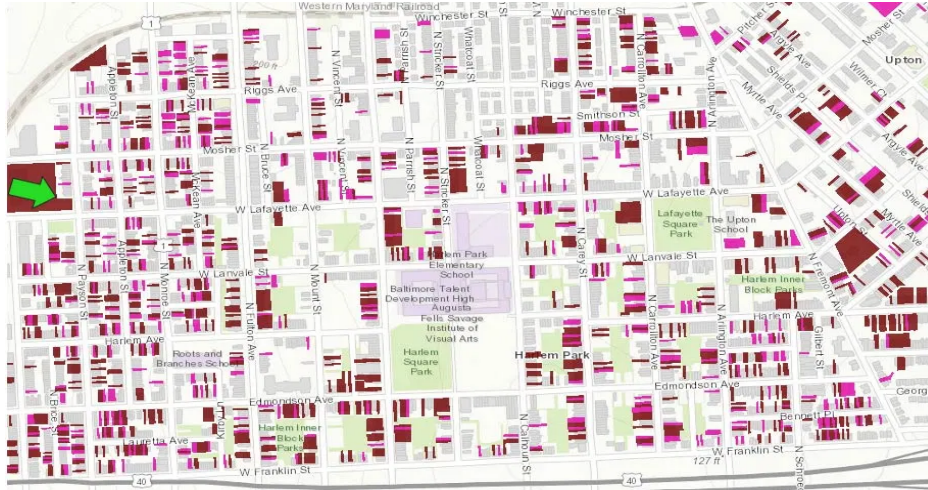
⁷Latshaw, et al., 2021

and reduce the amount of stress for bus drivers, it is necessary to find the most effective routes that have traffic light optimization. Additionally, it is important to get public transit to areas with the highest demand. Specifically, areas of people with lower income that do not have the option of using a car to travel to work and out to get necessities. Furthermore, creating effective and timely transportation systems will encourage more people to use public transportation. While creating an efficient transportation system, it will help mitigate the carbon footprint of Baltimore and create a more sustainable city. “Public buses produce approximately 33% less pounds of carbon dioxide per passenger mile and the Light rail can see as much as a 76% reduction in carbon dioxide per passenger mile”.⁸ Cutting down carbon emissions will improve the respiratory health of the people living in Baltimore. The ultimate goal should be reliable transportation for the entire city of Baltimore, reduced traffic in the city and reduced air pollution.

Housing

While the deterioration of vacated properties throughout Baltimore do not cause crime and poverty, they do impact the quality of life of the urban neighborhoods and can exacerbate those specific issues in the city. Currently, over 15,000 homes are vacant in Baltimore. The chart below shows, in pink and brown, the Open Vacant Notice Buildings in West Baltimore as of July, 2020.

⁸ Latshaw, et al. 2021



Open Vacant Notice Buildings in West Baltimore as of July, 2020.

With housing prices as cheap as \$1.00, there have been questions circulating as to why investors do not purchase these blocks with the intent to renovate. The three main reasons they remain vacant are due to the accruing leans on the property, the After Repair Value (ARV), and the quality of the tenant. The phrase “the quality of the tenant,” refers to one's ability and timeliness to pay rent, care for the property and hold a landlord-tenant relationship. First, the leans on the properties are more than they are worth even after renovating because people fail to pay water bills, gas, electric, mortgages, etc. Therefore, the investors who purchase the vacated properties are obligated to pay off the house. Second, the ARV is worth much less than the amount you actually spend on it. Landlords are encouraged to hold back from spending a great deal on renovating the house and keep property values low. Landlords on these blocks dictate the market value and leave little room for prosperity and mutual benefit. Therefore, there is a constant cycle of the quality of tenants and will drive investors away from buying property in

these more vacated neighborhoods.⁹ Vacant properties in Baltimore become deposits for trash and refuge for drug dealers and require serious renovation. Some lots may benefit more from demolishing the vacant house. However, due to the sparse tenants throughout the city, you may run into the problem of someone living next door. Baltimore would have to invest a great deal to rid the city of the vacancy problem.¹⁰ It is significant to understand that there still remains opportunity for Baltimore to protect those who live there and at the same time advancing it into an elite city. These acknowledgments will enable those to realize that Baltimore's housing challenges affect all people of socioeconomic status, especially for those experiencing homelessness.

Baltimore City must incentivize the new generations to move into the city while simultaneously keeping the current community and helping them improve their quality of life. The goal is to preserve the heritage of Baltimore while adding various improvements to encourage a movement of people into the city. A result of the efforts to mitigate the transportation system problems within Baltimore include the ability for a new generation of homeowners to visit the city and plant their roots. In 2021, Mayor Brandon M. Scott in partnership with the City Council discussed his plans to reauthorize three tax credits set to expire: the CHAP Tax Credit, the Newly Constructed Dwelling Tax Credit, and the High Performance Market Rate Tax Credit. The reauthorization bills associated with the credits were approved and have concluded a drive for future growth towards the city of Baltimore. The CHAP tax credit begins by incentivizing homeowners and small businesses to make substantive rehabilitation of buildings, such as row homes and commercial properties in historic

⁹ "Why don't Investors buy Vacant Blocks in Baltimore City?", 2019

¹⁰ Scott, 2020

neighborhoods. The new dwelling tax credit led to the construction of new row homes and the substantial rehabilitation of vacant homes. The high performance market rate tax credit also allowed for the construction of new apartment buildings and the conversion of vacant commercial properties to apartment buildings. Councilman Eric T. Costello points out that “the reauthorization of these credits is critically important to growing” Baltimore City by “creating new jobs, and ensuring opportunity across all neighborhoods.” With those changes, Scott also established a Tax Credit Review Committee that will evaluate the city's existing tax credits and ensure the incentive program will sustainably and equitably grow the tax base. Offering credits have resulted in growing Baltimore and have been the drivers of economic development in the community.¹¹ It is important to renew these incentives to encourage more people to plant their roots in Baltimore.

While there are long-term plans to incentivize new generations to move into the urban Baltimore neighborhoods through a tax-credit program in partnership with the City Council, there are several short-term solutions to consider. By understanding explanations other metropolitan areas have offered in efforts to diminish vacancies and rehabilitate neighborhoods, many solutions can be implemented to help improve the quality of life and help solve other systemic issues such as homelessness and crime. As mentioned earlier, due to the mass amount of vacancies in Baltimore, landlords are encouraged to not spend a great deal on renovations because of the quality of the tenant. However, in some cities such as Richmond, California, outside of San Francisco, the mayor is putting in place a program that will pay landlords to allow for those experiencing homelessness to live in vacant housing. Unlike Baltimore landlords, Richmond proprietors are encouraged to waive usual credit, employment, and background

¹¹ “Mayor, in partnership...”, 2021

checks.¹² By making it a high priority to alleviate the housing crisis Baltimore City endures, it will become a cause and effect relationship by boosting business endeavors as the quality of life among residents advances.

Homelessness

Parents of Baltimore often wonder about the future of their children because many do not have an education that allows them to become employed in a job with financial stability. In 2019, Baltimore City was ranked 24th out of 48 metropolitan cities with the most homelessness.¹³ While it is difficult to pin-point the specific number of people experiencing homelessness in Baltimore due to a lack of data on the subject, city officials reported that of the 6,360 people who are unhoused in Maryland, Baltimore City accounts for approximately a third of that number. Additionally, about half of all Baltimore residents live below the 200% federal poverty line.¹⁴ Many factors play a role in supporting the increasing homelessness issue and how people end up in a destitute situation. The trickle-down effect of unreliable transportation causing tardiness and eventually lay-offs in the workplace, crime motives, poor education systems, lifestyle choices, as well as physical and mental health all impact the escalation of homelessness in Baltimore City. Baltimore is currently involved in a 10-Year Plan to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness that will come to a close in 2023. By looking at the progress Baltimore has already made to tackle the issue, we can see what policies and opportunities to keep, add, or take away to use funding from the state to its optimal level.

¹² “Bay area landlords...”, 2022

¹³ Steele, 2021

¹⁴ “Homelessness in Baltimore”, n.d.

When it comes to the widespread poverty and homelessness Baltimore City faces, it is important to stray away from generic solutions that are heard in every major city such as for people “to just get a job” or “stop being lazy”, and focus on high-level solutions to improve the city. By formulating stigmas surrounding homelessness in America and stereotyping those who face the struggles that come with it, it will make others less inclined to help solve the issue and avoid any interaction with them. An issue with many rehousing programs is the timeliness of the placement. For example, the Rapid Re-Housing innovation in social policy can take six-months to be placed in a private apartment.¹⁵ While efficient organizations such as the Smalltimore Homes initiative takes about 12 hours to build a home from start to finish.¹⁶ It is important to note that while there might not be an immediate fix for the homelessness issue in Baltimore City, progress and creative solutions are crucial to present to city officials for the future benefit of the community.

Baltimore’s 10-Year Plan to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness takes action to diminish homelessness by implementing a seven-step strategy: Reconfigure the Crisis Response System, Targeted Prevention Assistance, Rapid Re-Housing, Accessing Mainstream and Community Resources, Permanent Supportive Housing, Improved Data and Outcome Measures, and Resource Allocation¹⁷. It is difficult to decipher whether Baltimore's homelessness prevention and reduction strategy is operating as expected because between 2013-2022, the population significantly decreased within the city by more than 45,606 thousand residents and homelessness rose.¹⁸ At first glance, we can see that the strategy is not working adequately and needs revisions. Smalltimore, an organization whose mission is to provide a micro-shelter for those living below

¹⁵ Hayden, 2019

¹⁶ “Smalltimore Homes hopes to...”, 2019

¹⁷ “Preventing and Ending Homelessness”, n.d.

¹⁸ “Baltimore, Maryland Population History”, 2022

the poverty line, specifically those experiencing homelessness, is an organization that is worth looking into and potentially backing. While this might not be a solution for all homelessness in Baltimore, it is a first step and can help more people have a safe place to live and store their belongings. Additionally, these small homes clean up the streets and make Baltimore a more sustainable city. It is important to back organizations such as Smalltimore and encourage businesses to invest into the city, to prevent the replacement of current residents and pushing them out to the suburbs. However, the housing vacancy issue in Baltimore and the reason why investors are not taking advantage of the large plots in various neighborhoods that could potentially be revamped and utilized for business endeavors.

Business Diversion

Imagine the economic impact of keeping larger companies that can create cities around them in Baltimore. Companies are relocating their operations to other locations due to the current conditions of Baltimore City. Depending on the size of a company, businesses are choosing to leave the city and move to suburban areas because the city lifestyle is not as productive. Companies such as Apple, Facebook, and Microsoft are located in areas where they are able to create cities of their own without having the challenges such as transportation, crime rates, or the general infrastructure that are currently associated with cities, such as Baltimore.

One of the primary reasons that businesses leave Baltimore is for the protection of their business and their employees. The crime rates, the rise of real estate, and the overpopulation of poverty have driven businesses such as Barnes & Noble, Dick's Resort, the Holiday Inn Hotel, and most recently T. Rowe Price out of business and out of Baltimore. A local business owner, named Tony Assadi, has recognized the businesses departure and cited "this city was established

to be the ‘Charm City’, there is no charm in this city”.¹⁹ The lack of safety in Baltimore is the driving force behind many companies leaving the city. Modern work conditions post pandemic have allowed working conditions to be remote, which allows many employees to work from anywhere. This has given companies opportunities to move to suburban areas for easier access and more unique locations. With suburban areas as their space of work and increased safety, it seems to be a no-brainer, which is not found in Baltimore.

The overpopulation of Baltimore and increased real estate prices has made it difficult for employees to be living in the same city of work. The growing number of people moving into Baltimore has caused the prices of real estate to increase and limit spacing for housing. Not many employees are willing to live within Baltimore and work in the city because living expenses to be in a safe neighborhood are very high, so they look for other places to work with better environments.²⁰ Therefore, most companies are adjusting to the wants of their employees in today’s employee-driven job market, so they are relocating to attract employees with a safe location, easier drives, and cheaper neighborhoods.

The overall impact and issue for businesses not staying in Baltimore is the safety issue they are faced with involving their population culture, resulting in a lack of attraction to the city. Baltimore has the stigma of being an unsafe neighborhood to the average citizen, life-risking trips through the city, and only a few safe places within the city that only a local would be aware of having the reputation of being known as the “murder capital of the world” creates a struggle

¹⁹ Lampariello, 2020

²⁰“Advantages and...”, 2014

for business with minimal attraction to potential investors and future longevity of a business growing successfully in the city.

There are many models of success, such as the Navy Yard area in Washington D.C. and Amazon Inc. in Seattle, WA, that businesses and Baltimore City can follow. These two areas have had a large impact within their own cities because they pushed the importance of business investments in the city and the surrounding area. The companies' presence has increased the number of jobs within the area and the overall income per capita of the city as well as limited the crime rate. If Baltimore can study the practices done by these cities, they can create a more effective solution to companies investing and a World-Class environment for the Charm City.

Navy Yard did not push a specific company or business, rather they pushed for improvement of the area. Navy Yard, historically, was a place during World War II where soldiers created ship parts such as boilers, torpedoes and gun missiles. The federal and district government saw the potential within this area and invested "over \$1.2 billion, which in turn catalyzed private-sector investment of over \$3.5 billion."²¹ The criminal activity in the area declined between 2000-2014 with a change of 59 crimes per 1000 people to a criminal rate of six crimes per 1000 people in only 14 years.²² The investment of neighborhood condos, increased security, and the addition of Nationals Park created an environment which created a thriving sense of fun, success, and future potential for businesses moving into the city.

Amazon's success has been consistently increasing as they have expanded their economic footprint to Seattle, Washington. Their investment within the city created 18,000 jobs with the potential of 22,000 more jobs over the next five years, totaling 410,000 employees in Seattle.

²¹ Hoffer, 2014

²² "Our Changing..." , n.d.

Since they opened their offices in 2007, the income has grown 41% and they are the largest property taxpayer in Seattle. This expansion of Amazon within the Seattle area has allowed the city to thrive and create a safe environment because of the rise of new employees to the area. The relocation of the old residents of Seattle has changed the dynamic of the city to a thriving successful city. In Seattle, Amazon's impact led to large apartment complexes being built with the results of building homes for 7,600 new apartments and generating \$722 million more in buying power downtown.²³ This change and filtration of new people has made Seattle a rising world class environment in the eyes of future city goers.

The overall situation in Baltimore is the lack of security and the lack of investment from the district governments in the city. Recognizing their issues they face and seeing how other cities overcame their issues, is a first step Baltimore can take in order to increase business attraction to the city. Businesses see more than just the economics of the city, they see the surrounding factors such as neighborhood life, criminal activity, and social-economic status of the residents. It is similar to investments within the stock market, a smart investor looks at world factors that could affect the economics rather than just the stock performance itself. If Baltimore City would like more business and government investments within their city, they need to change their city dynamic as Seattle, WA and Navy Yard in Washington D.C. has done.

Lifestyle

While housing and transportation are important for the future of Baltimore's economy and overall efficiency it can be concluded that the greatest wealth is an individual's health.

²³ Olya, 2021

Living with habits that help to improve health is considered a Healthy Lifestyle. It can be determined that the most prominent causes of deaths in Baltimore City are heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lower respiratory diseases, unintentional injuries, drug and/or alcohol induced causes of death such as overdose or alcoholic liver disease, with homicide coming in first. Between neighborhoods, life expectancy differs by up to 20 years.²⁴ It is apparent that many individuals who live in Baltimore do not foster a community surrounded by health. This creates an environment where people do not feel like health is their top priority. This affects the actions of all residents and tourists who visit Baltimore because they are less likely to go to a place that fosters a poor environment. This is more than double the number of people who died from homicide. This hardship for Baltimore creates an unhealthy lifestyle and there are many possible solutions that must be made in order to transform a city into one of prosperity.

Baltimore City must re-engage all generations of individuals by allowing people to feel safe when exploring the big city. In order to make people feel secure, Baltimore must spend time constructing recreation centers for residents. In the 1980s, Baltimore City operated more than 100 recreation centers. Today, only 44 remain, most of which are 50-60 years old and have spent the past few decades closed on weekends. The physical deterioration of Baltimore's recreation centers has been the most glaring example of the city's misplaced budget priorities. Over the past thirty years, park and recreational funding has remained unvarying while the police department's budget has tripled. Recently, corrective steps are being made. For example, the first new recreation center in more than a decade was built in 2014. West Baltimore's Crispus Attucks and Harlem Park recreation centers both recently reopened. Last September, city recreation centers also opened on Saturdays for the first time since the 1970s. Other new efforts include the planned

²⁴ "State of Health...", 2017

Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center. This will include a turf field for football, lacrosse, and soccer, and an outdoor pool. A 50,000-square-foot Cahill Fitness and Wellness Center, which will be built into the 1,000-acre Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park area, is also in progress. Reginald Moore, executive director of Recreation and Parks, now wants to create a state-of-the-art regional facility that will not just pull kids from the city, but host elite basketball, cheerleading, robotics, and gaming competitions. “The goal,” Moore says, “is that Baltimore kids won’t have to travel to participate in AAU basketball, cheerleading, and gaming tournaments”. Baltimore should build recreation centers that give opportunity to all socioeconomic classes.²⁵ These classes could range from mental and physical health to lifestyle including: cooking, planning for the future, and educational sessions. Baltimore needs to foster an inclusive environment and make various alterations to fix the stigma surrounding the mental and physical well-being of people who live in Baltimore. Giving more opportunities to the entirety of Baltimore will have a direct impact on its population by giving an outlet for the youth and have a direct influence on the crime rate.

Crime

The biggest challenge that Baltimore City is currently facing is its crime rate and security. The rate of crime in Baltimore is 202% above the nation’s average which is taking into account the number of residents and total crimes per resident. Annually, Baltimore experiences 9,532 violent crimes and 18,370 property crimes, for a total of 27,902 crimes per year. This means that per 1,000 residents, approximately 47.64 crimes occur. When compared to Maryland as a whole, the chances of falling victim to a violent crime in Baltimore is over four times more likely.²⁶ As

²⁵“Baltimore Sun Staff: For...”, 2022

²⁶ 16.27 per 1,000 residents v. 3.92 per 1,000 residents

for property crime, the chances of falling victim in Baltimore are almost two times more likely than falling victim in Maryland as a whole.^{27 28} According to FBI statistics, the worst neighborhoods- considering safety and income- in Baltimore are Cherry Hill, West Baltimore, Greenmount East, Fairfield Area, and Pulaski.²⁹ A common theme in these neighborhoods are their high unemployment rates, low median income, and low median home value which all directly correlate to the crime rate and security of Baltimore.

In 1999, Baltimore's Health Commissioner announced that the biggest problem the city had was drug addiction.³⁰ Over the years, researchers have found a direct correlation between drug use and crime, whether it be drug-related or violent crimes committed. In Baltimore, there is a never ending opioid problem. Although Baltimore experts can cite a decrease in drug related deaths and violent crimes over the past 20 years, claiming that the city is trying to lessen the drug problem, they are unintentionally the lead supplier of opioids of Baltimore. In 2017, 692 of the 761 drug and alcohol related deaths were linked to opioids. Currently, the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) has a three-point system in place to combat drug addiction: saving lives with naloxone, increasing access to on-demand evidence based treatment, and fighting stigma with education.³¹ Out of the three, there is only one that is a preventative measure.

Homicide is the leading cause of "unexpected" death in Baltimore. As of June 26, 152 homicides were documented in the city, up 14% from last year. A majority of those deaths are a result of gun violence. Non-fatal shootings have jumped significantly this year, with about 344 shootings having occurred as of June 26. This is a 25% increase compared to last year.

Throughout the country, the amount of interpersonal and violent crimes have grown

²⁷ 31.36 per 1,000 residents v. 15.78 per 1,000 residents

²⁸ "Baltimore, MD Crime...", n.d.

²⁹ "The 10 Worst...", 2022

³⁰ "Drug Addiction: Baltimore's...", n.d.

³¹ "Substance Use Disorder", n.d.

exponentially. Baltimore was one of the many communities that were hit the hardest as a result of the aggression.³² The shootings and tragic deaths not only emphasize that the city has a “culture of violence,” as stated by Michael Harrison, Baltimore City Police Commissioner, but that guns are readily available.³³

There are many solutions in progress to decrease the rate of crime that occurs annually in Baltimore. One effective plan the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) implemented to deter crime was by setting up patrol stations in the neighborhoods facing the highest crime levels. BPD’s district patrol plan and district action team (DAT) created a diagram with the labeled activity zones. Each specific deployment zone will cover no more than four square blocks to ensure that each patrol officer will be able to efficiently do their job. Although these zones only make up about 5% of the city’s geography, they account for nearly 33% of the city’s violent crimes in the past few years. Creating a more narrow and structured patrol by the DATs will enable the BPD to become more targeted in their efforts to diminish crime in Baltimore.

Aside from the patrol stations, the BPD has been in the process of updating their technology by creating new systems to keep track of criminal and gang activity. Through their operations dashboard, BPD officers will be able to access specific data that tells them where and when specific offenses have occurred. This data will be sent out and received in real time, “allowing the BPD the opportunity to become more responsive and grasp a comprehensive understanding” of which locations are hotspots in each district as well as what types of crimes are most popular in each district. These systems will provide feedback to the BPD in regards to which actions they are taking are seemingly the least and most proactive. The two overall goals

³² Ogasa, 2022

³³ “Deadly Violence...”, 2022

are to reduce victimization and the fear of victimization from crimes. Commanders in each district will be responsible for determining the underlying issues that cause crime through the utilization of research, data analysis, and community partnerships.³⁴

Property crimes and security issues are underlying issues that impact Baltimore. This includes theft, burglary, trespassing, breaking and entering, vandalism, and shoplifting. Baltimore is stricken with poverty, which pushes many people to squat in properties that are not being lived in. This has caused many legal issues within the city and puts many homeowners at risk for property damage.

A school security assessment was conducted in 2019. Through this assessment, it was found that 165 schools within Baltimore had “significant security and safety issues.” This, of course, is very alarming because it means that children are susceptible to violent crimes that occur in the city surrounding them. During emergency lockdowns, many of the interior doors are unable to be locked by teachers and staff because they are completely outdated. Additionally, many security cameras in the buildings give faulty footage and leave many “dead spots” allowing for crimes to occur in certain areas of the schools.

After a staff member was shot in Frederick Douglass High School, the city school board started to have a conversation regarding whether or not it was necessary to arm the schools’ resource officers within Baltimore. Although the shooting allowed for new upgrades within the buildings, such as improved metal detectors and repaired broken locks, many teachers across the city were upset that it had to get to this point in order to have proper safety measures implemented.³⁵

³⁴ Harrison, 2019

³⁵ Malafronte, 2019

In a more recent prevention plan, Mayor Brandon Scott first defines the five most important social determinants of health such as economic stability, education, health and health care, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context. Mayor Scott believes that, in order to combat the everlasting crisis of violence in Baltimore, we must focus on the environmental and social factors that affect the wellbeing of the citizens rather than relying solely on the police.

Through this program, which is meant to be put into effect through June 30th, 2026, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement will treat violence as a public health epidemic. With that being said, the strategies following this approach will be trauma-informed, reduce harm, and heal individuals and communities. As of last fall, Mayor Scott has accelerated the CVPP through a \$50 million ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) investment. Between the years 2022 and 2025, it is expected that Baltimore will invest \$10,025,000 from ARPA to issue a minimum of 30 contracts with partner organizations.³⁶ "The Community Violence Intervention Ecosystem plan both increases support for victims while offering pathways to homegrown economic opportunity that gives people hope for their futures".³⁷ As noted, crime is an on-going problem because it undermines the majority's interest's. To combat this challenge, implementations must be enacted in order to create an atmosphere where individuals can focus their attention on the positive attributes of Baltimore.

Conclusion

Baltimore is a city with enormous potential. It has favorable geography, located at the center of the mid-Atlantic - one of the richest regions in the United States and home to over 50

³⁶ "Mayor Scott Announces...", 2022

³⁷ "Woman, 63, ...", 2022

million. Baltimore lies between the nation's capital and some of the largest cities in the country, such as Philadelphia and New York, and has convenient access to the ocean and international trade through its own major port. The city is also home to or adjacent distinguished universities such as Johns Hopkins or the University of Maryland.³⁸ Despite these advantages, Baltimore's potential is bottlenecked by deficient public transportation, rising housing costs, dilapidated and neglected neighborhoods, fleeing businesses, a poor education system, and the generally unhealthy lifestyle of residents in its more impoverished areas. All of these issues have contributed to the city's current crime and homelessness epidemic, two tragedies that it has increasingly become associated with and inseparable from.

Baltimore must address the fundamental issues that have brought about these two epidemics. First, the repair and maintenance of existing transportation systems and new investment in public transportation, such as bus lines or rail systems, would lessen the environmental impact of the current car-centric system on marginal communities and alleviate the already crippling traffic. Second, restoring neglected neighborhoods with renovations and tax incentives to attract new residents would increase supply in the housing market and lower rent prices. Third, Baltimore needs to retain the businesses that are already there, like Seattle with Amazon, and attract new ones through public investment, like the Navy Yard in DC. Last, the education system of Baltimore needs foundational reform to provide its students equal opportunity and the ability to make a positive impact in their community. Implementing these solutions to the fundamental issues the city currently faces would naturally alleviate the crime and homelessness epidemics over time. Provided with more opportunities and better access to them, Baltimoreans would not have to turn to crime and would be able to avoid homelessness.

³⁸ Brief Economic Facts, n.d.

With these bottlenecks removed, the city would be safer and more attractive to businesses, potential residents, and tourists. Baltimore would inevitably become the world class city it has the potential to be.

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