What Happened in Baltimore and What Can We Do?

A Neighborhoods' Perspective

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Enduring Effects
Although people and individuals help shape neighborhoods, their actions occur within the structural construct of history, planning and geography

Introduction

In late April 2015, the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody set in motion civil and racial unrest in Baltimore City at a level not seen since 1968. While the unrest is part of a national movement of post-Ferguson protests in the past year, the roots of the unrest in Baltimore can be clearly linked to a history of segregation and disinvestment that impacts certain neighborhoods such as Sandtown-Winchester where Freddie Gray lived. While geography need not be one's destiny, a growing body of research shows that neighborhood context significantly impacts the ability of residents to participate fully in social, economic, and political life[1]. The disparities that exist in the places we live are having a growing impact on the disparities in our life outcomes.

Why are Neighborhood Statistics Important?

Robert Sampson argues in his 2012 book, *Great American City*, that neighborhoods have extremely durable properties based on the social, cultural and physical realities that define places. Although people and individuals help shape neighborhoods, their actions occur within the structural construct of history, planning and geography. To better understand the context in which programs and actions take place, Sampson points to the need to track the "ecometrics" of neighborhoods to assess the milieu in which interventions and solutions are trying to take hold.

This is precisely the purpose of tracking key quality of life measures for neighborhoods that has been the mission of the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance—Jacob France Institute (BNIA-JFI) since 2000. Community based indicators are bits of information that generate a picture of a place and provide insight for all stakeholders, both inside and outside a neighborhood, about the overall direction of the community[2]. They can be thought of as analogous to a person's physiological "biometrics which do not define who a person is but instead indicates specific issues that can impede what someone can do, for example the impact of having high blood pressure or low metabolism.

In early April 2015, BNIA-JFI issued the 13th edition of *Vital Signs*[3], a compendium of data, maps and charts of over 100 indicators for all of Baltimore's neighborhoods. The indicators are calculated by integrating administrative data sets across several public agencies, and by design, there is a human story behind each data point. For example, from vital statistics, the data shows that a teenager had a baby in a neighborhood. From police

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[1] Ludwig, Jens, Greg J. Duncan, Lisa A. Gennetian, Lawrence F. Katz, Ronald C. Kessler, Jeffrey R. Kling, and Lisa Sanbonmatsu, 2012, Neighborhood Effects on the Long-Term Well-Being of Low-Income Adults, *Science* Volume 337(6101), 1505-1510; Ellen, Ingrid G., Margery A. Turner (1997), Does Neighborhood Matter? Assessing Recent Evidence, *Housing Policy Debate*, Volume 8(4), 833-866.

[2] Kingsley, G. Thomas, Claudia J. Coulton, and Kathryn L.S. Pettit. "Strengthening Communities with Neighborhood Data," Urban Institute (NNIP Coordinator) and Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development (Cleveland),

[3] *Vital Signs 13* www.bniajfi.org/vital_signs

records, we know that someone called 911 to report a crime. From housing permit data, we know that a homeowner is remodeling a kitchen and upgrading the plumbing. Our job at BNIA-JFI is to try to understand these data and synthesize the implications for communities.

The latest edition of *Vital Signs* continued to point to disparities across neighborhoods on educational, economic and social outcomes. Long standing spatial patterns show that for Baltimore's most distressed neighborhoods, there are many issues that may seem intractable but need to be addressed. For communities like Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, where Freddie Gray was fatefully detained by police, there is a confluence of compounding negative effects that result from low employment, high housing vacancy, and high incarceration. So how can community-based indicators help prioritize issues when so many multi-faceted problems seem overwhelming?

Using Baltimore's Community Based Indicators

The *Vital Signs* data is openly accessible in multiple formats on the BNIA-JFI website, and training supports are available to community-based organizations on how to use the information[4]. Almost immediately after the incidents of civil unrest that began in late April 2015, media outlets from the Washington Post to the Larry Wilmore show highlighted the devastating statistics for Freddie Gray's neighborhood[5]—such as 51.8% unemployed, 33% vacant and abandoned housing, and life expectancy of only 68.8 years[6]. Many Baltimoreans already know these statistics; we may live with the realities of these conditions or more likely drive pass them every day. So what does the neighborhood context *really* have to do with the civil unrest that occurred in Baltimore? This report aims to highlight key indicators that stand as major barriers <u>at the neighborhood level</u> to truly achieving a more just and equitable City. More importantly, community-based indicators can expose the magnitude of issues that neighborhoods face in order to help communities set clear and measureable goals towards removing barriers for a better quality of life.

Impact of Population Decline on Neighborhoods

Although *Vital Signs* contains more than 100 indicators, perhaps the ultimate indicator of neighborhood vitality is population change. Growth or even stability signals that a community provides locational advantages (i.e. quality housing, schools, jobs, urban amenities) that draw in new residents if a household moves away. Between 2000 and 2010, Baltimore City as a whole experienced net population loss of 30,000 people which continued a half-century trend; since 1950 the City has lost 330,000 residents. This loss has not been equally distributed in recent years, with some neighborhoods growing and others shrinking. Table 1 below shows the neighborhoods in Baltimore that lost and gained the most population between 2000 and 2010. Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park lost

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Setting Goals

Community-based indicators can expose the magnitude of the issues that neighborhoods face in order to help communities set clear, measureable goals towards removing barriers

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nearly 2,600 people (15%) over the last decade. If a neighborhood is losing thousands of people, this fundamental statistic is a clear statement about the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Table 1: Population Change between 2000 and 2010 for Losing-most and Gaining-most Community Statistical Areas (CSA)				
	Pop 2000	Pop 2010	Change	%
Baltimore City	**651,154**	**620,961**	**-30,193**	**-4.6**
Greenmount East	11,561	8,184	-3,377	-29.2
Allendale/Irvington/S. Hilton	19,129	16,217	-2,912	-15.2
Clifton-Berea	12,496	9,874	-2,622	-21.0
Greater Rosemont	21,877	19,259	-2,618	-12.0
Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park	17,495	14,896	-2,599	-14.9
Canton	7,010	8,100	1,090	15.5
Cross-Country/Cheswolde	11,796	13,034	1,238	10.5
Downtown/Seton Hill	4,767	6,446	1,679	35.2
Harbor East/Little Italy	3,523	5,407	1,884	53.5

Most people and the media attribute this loss to high crime rates or poor quality education. However, the *Vital Signs* data not only dispel that misconception, but actually point to the real, structural impediments impacting neighborhoods like Sandtown-Winchester. Focusing on quantitative measures of neighborhood trends can help foster collaborative solutions by residents, elected officials, government agencies and other multi-sector stakeholders to address these issues and improve the quality of life in every neighborhood.

Using Data

Vital Signs data actually point to the real, structural impediments impacting neighborhoods

Correlations

In their 2013 book *Big Data*, Viktor Mayer-Schonberger and Kenneth Cukier point to the power of showing data that is correlated to other information as a key means of exploring *what* is going on, if not precisely *how* or *why* a phenomenon occurs. *Vital Signs* data lends itself to this kind of exploratory analysis in order to remain data 'agnostic' as to which indicators help explain the variation in population change by neighborhood. Correlations range from 1 to zero to -1. Two indicators can either *positively* support each other (as one goes up so does the other), have *zero* relationship or *negatively* relate (as one goes up the other goes down).

Figure 1 shows at the neighborhood level, violent crime and 5th grade reading proficiency scores have no relationship to population change. This means that the movement into *or*
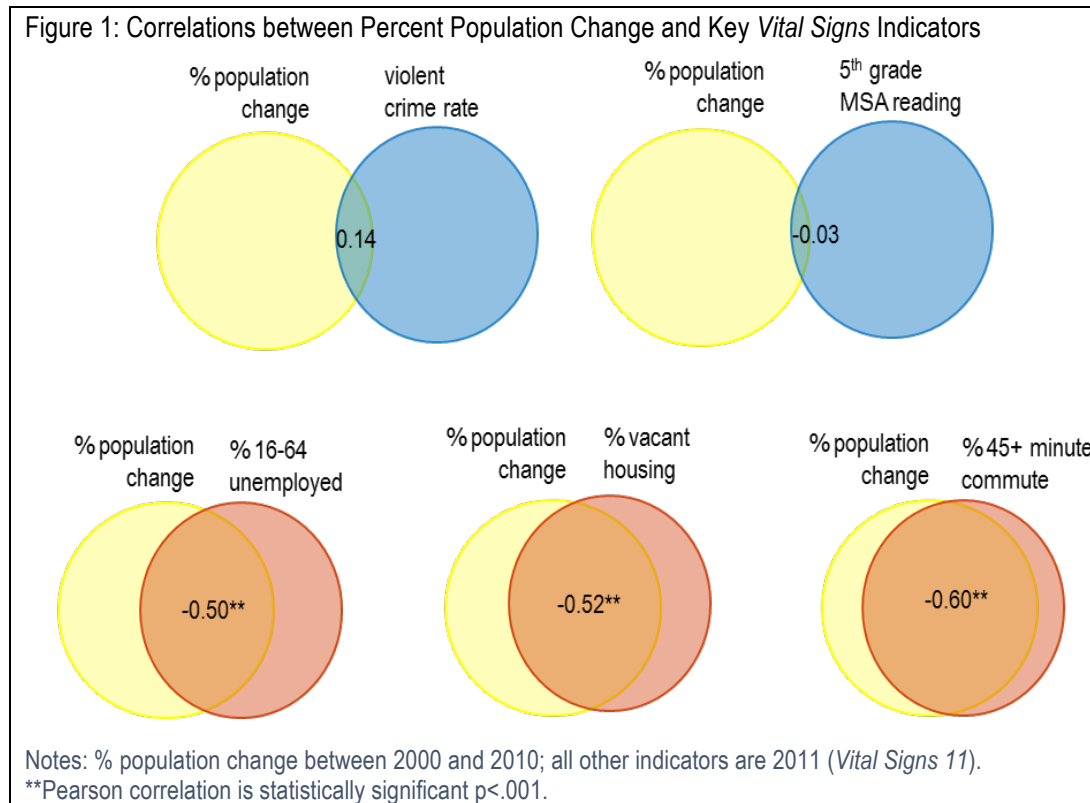
out of a neighborhood is not correlated to crime or educational outcomes. In contrast, the percent of 16-64 year olds unemployed and looking for work and the percent of vacant housing are both negatively related to population change. Perhaps most surprising is that the percent of commuters in a neighborhood traveling more than 45 minutes to get to work has the strongest, negative relationship with population change.

Figure 1: Correlations between Percent Population Change and Key *Vital Signs* Indicators

Notes: % population change between 2000 and 2010; all other indicators are 2011 (*Vital Signs 11*).
**Pearson correlation is statistically significant p<.001.

The point of this kind of analysis is to highlight the structural issues that affect *neighborhoods as places*. This report focuses on the most negatively-correlated indicators (vacant housing and long commute times) to give a 'voice' to local context in a way that can engage everyone to ensure better quality of life in every neighborhood.
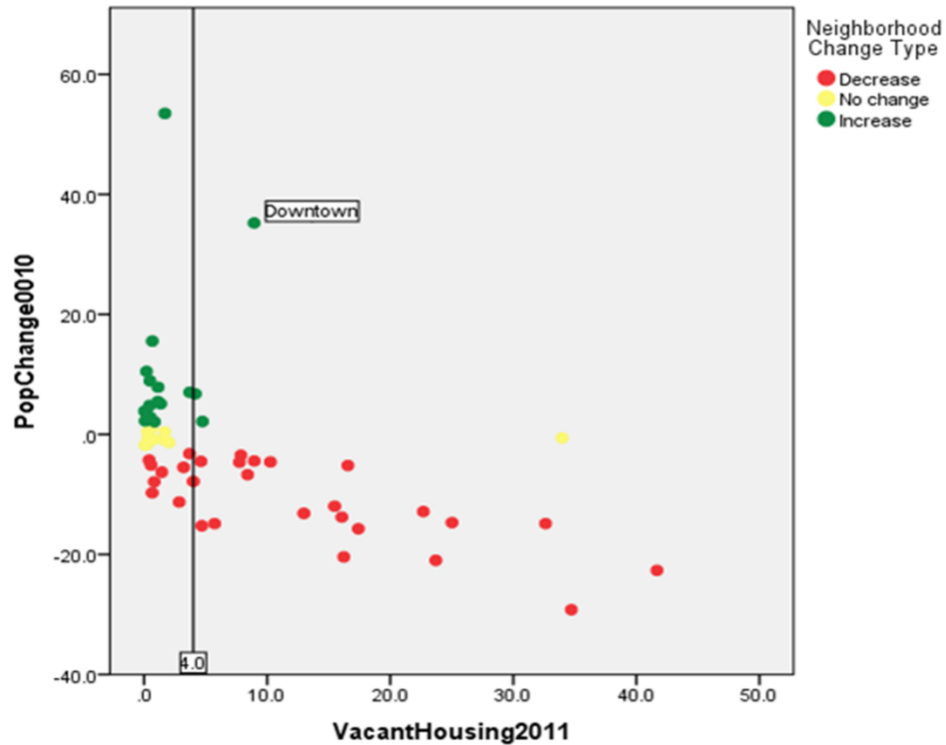
Justice: Vacant and Abandoned Housing

When thinking about issues of justice, vacant housing does not immediately rise to the top of most people's consideration. However, vacant houses are the physical vestiges of population decline as many property owners decided or were compelled by misfortune to abandon their properties. The ramifications of those decisions rest on the shoulders of the people who currently live among the vacancies, as they are reminded of and dealing with that loss every single day. For some neighborhoods, the problem has become overwhelming.

To unpack the relationship between vacant housing and population change, Figure 2 plots these two indicators together. The graphic shows all communities (except Downtown) that grew between 2000 and 2010 had vacancy rates at or below 4%. Not all communities with

vacancy rates below 4% grew, as can be seen by the red dots in the plot below the threshold.

Figure 2: Scatterplot of Percent Population Change vs. Percent Vacant Housing

This means that at the community-level, vacant and abandoned housing percentages below 4% can be considered a *necessary* but not *sufficient* condition for a neighborhood to be conducive for population growth. So how can neighborhoods use this information? Table 2 provides the number of properties that would need to be addressed to bring the neighborhood to 4% vacancy. For Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park more than 1,800 properties need to be either rehabilitated or demolished or greened in order to achieve a level of vacancy more favorable to population growth. Communities need to plan and focus together, with city agencies and outside resources on the best course of action in their neighborhood to create a vision for a less-than-4%-vacancy reality.

Table 2: Community Statistical Areas (CSA) with Highest Percent Vacant Housing in 2013	% Vacant Housing 2013	Number of Properties Needed to Bring CSA below 4% Vacancy
Oldtown/Middle East	34.7%	444
Sandtown Winchester/Harlem Park	34.3%	1,837
Upton/Druid Heights	33.7%	640

Of course, there is a spatial pattern to how vacancies increase by neighborhood. In 2013, nearly 8% of Baltimore City residential properties were vacant and abandoned. The data for this indicator comes from the Baltimore's Housing Department. The neighborhoods with the highest rate of vacant houses are geographically concentrated in East Baltimore (Greenmount East, Clifton-Berea, and Oldtown/Middle East) and West Baltimore (Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, Upton/Druid Heights).

Map 1 shows the pattern of vacancy that *Vital Signs* reports have been displaying for 13 years. Many would argue that this pattern has been evident in Baltimore for more than 70 years due to unfair housing practices such as redlining or blockblusting[7]. But if 2,600 people left Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park in the last decade, who still lives there now?
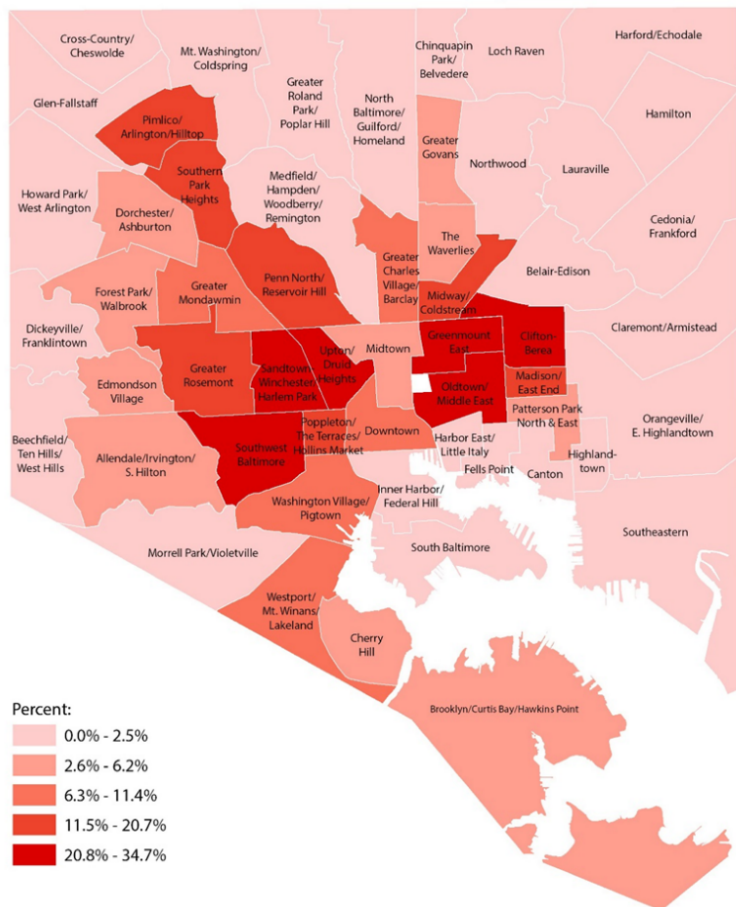
Looking at data mapped from the Maryland Department of Human Resources (Map 2), the neighborhoods with the highest percent of households on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are among the same that have high rates of vacant housing (Madison/East End (26.5%); Clifton Berea (24.1%); Poppleton/Hollins Market & Sandtown Winchester/ Harlem Park (23.8%)).

These same neighborhoods appear to be policed differently as well. In March 2015, the Justice Policy Institute released a report[8] showing that the community with the highest number of currently incarcerated persons was Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park. The report shows that taxpayers spent

Map 1: Percent of Residential Properties Vacant and Abandoned (2013)

Percent:
- 0.0% - 2.5%
- 2.6% - 6.2%
- 6.3% - 11.4%
- 11.5% - 20.7%
- 20.8% - 34.7%

lap created by BNIA-JFI, 2015

Source: Baltimore Housing

$16,946,000 in 2014 on incarcerated residents from Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park alone. The study also suggests that rather than incarceration, these funds could have provided one month of housing for 13,535 families.

Finally, data from the Governor's office of Crime Control and Prevention (Map 3) shows that these same neighborhoods have the highest rates of adults under community supervision (Madison/East End (14.5%); Greenmount East (11.1%); Southwest Baltimore & Clifton-Berea (10.9%); Sandtown-Winchester/ Harlem Park (10.4%)). A major effect of over-policing in certain neighborhoods is that persons with previous records have a much more difficult time finding employment after incarceration. Neighborhoods with high rates of unemployment then have less community wealth building opportunities and more residents who potentially need to rely on an informal economy.

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[7] Antero Pietila (2010) *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*
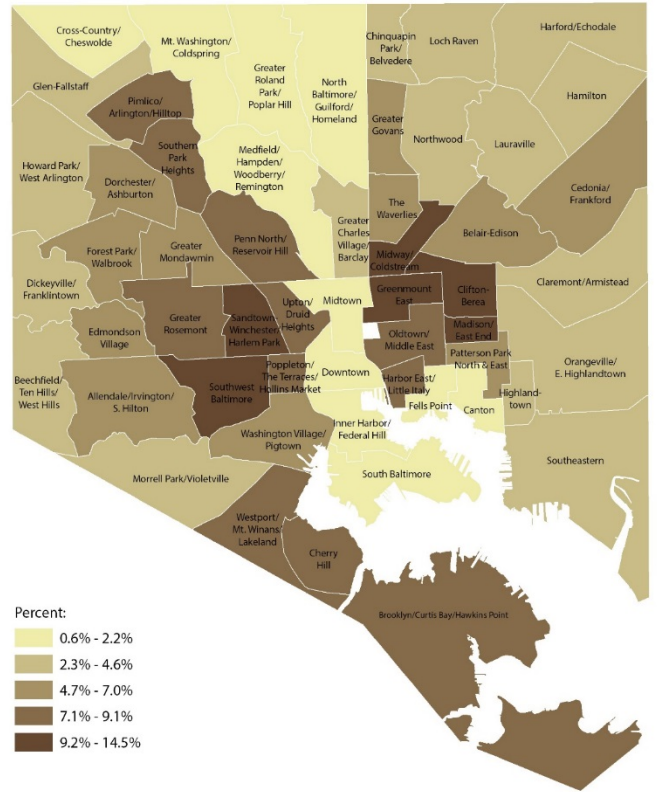[8] "The Right Investment? Corrections Spending in Baltimore City" by the Justice Policy Institute and Prison Policy Initiative (2015). http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/8764

Map 2: Percent of Families on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (2013)

Percent:
- 0.2% - 3.0%
- 3.1% - 7.5%
- 7.6% - 12.2%
- 12.3% - 18.5%
- 18.6% - 26.5%

Map created by BNIA-JFI, 2015

Source: Baltimore City Department of Human Resources
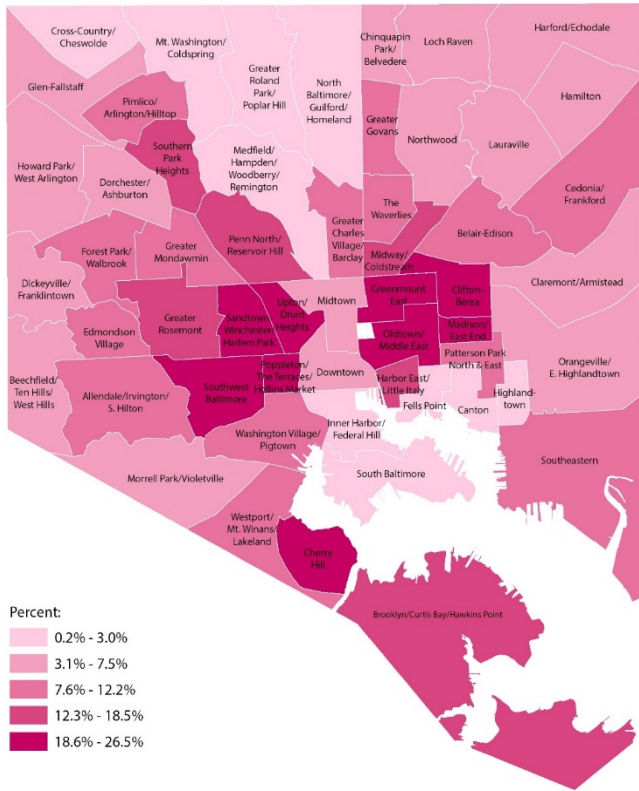
Map 3: Percent of Adult Population under Community Supervision (2013)

Percent:
- 0.6% - 2.2%
- 2.3% - 4.6%
- 4.7% - 7.0%
- 7.1% - 9.1%
- 9.2% - 14.5%

Map created by BNIA-JFI, 2015

Source: Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention

These maps show that the most vulnerable and/or disadvantaged populations are also living in neighborhoods with high rates of vacant housing, which can be thought of as an environmental injustice. Vacant housing and neighborhood disinvestment is having a similar effect on negative life outcomes as living near other environmental hazards, and we need policies and interventions in place to protect people in the same way. As other studies have shown, households are largely living in these neighborhoods because affordable housing is scare in other parts of the Baltimore region.

Vacant Housing and Regional Housing Markets

In November 2014, the Opportunity Collaborative released the Baltimore Regional Housing Plan[9] which estimated the unmet housing need for 70,000 households in the region especially for the lowest income residents. BNIA-JFI contributed to the housing plan by mapping housing submarkets using indicators for all communities in the Baltimore Region to cluster similar housing markets regardless of what county they might be in. Map 4 shows the 6 types of markets identified in the region.

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[9] "Strong Communities, Strong Region: The Baltimore Regional Housing Plan and Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA)" accessible online http://www.opportunitycollaborative.org/housing-plan/

Map 2: Housing Submarkets by Regional Planning District (2014)
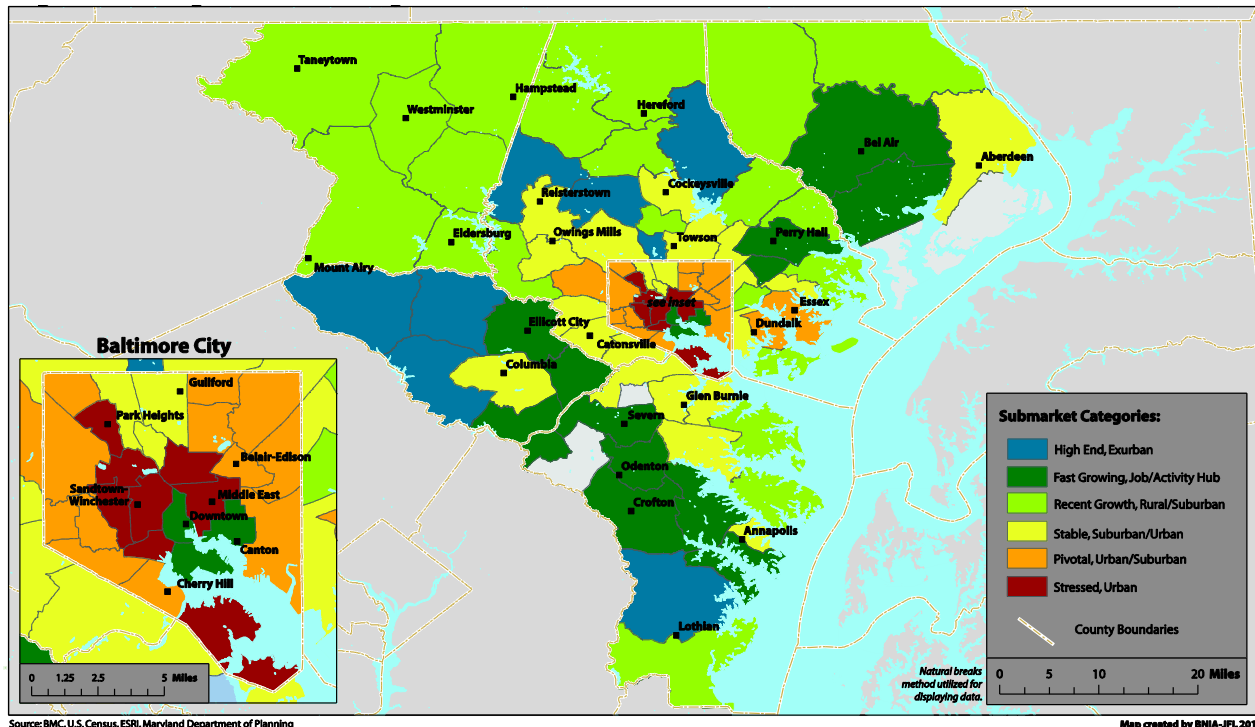
In the central urban core are *Stressed* areas, surrounding Downtown Baltimore, that have the distinguishing characteristic of housing vacancy rates (22.4% when no other submarket had more than 9% vacancy). The orange communities are called "Pivotal" which is characterized by stagnating population trends and low housing rehabilitation rates which means that these communities might fall into distress without active support. The yellow areas are the *Stable* submarket, which had moderate rates of growth, housing prices and rehabilitation rates and represent the region's most sustainable communities—there is housing diversity, income diversity and racial diversity. They are located right around the beltway and include places like Columbia.

The *Exurban* submarket in blue has the region's highest sales prices and lowest renter occupancy rates. The *Growing* areas in light green include rural parts of the region as well as suburban areas with high home ownership. The *Fast Growing* submarket consists of areas along the I-95 corridor from Aberdeen Proving Grounds to through Downtown Baltimore and on to the Baltimore-Washington International Airport/Fort Meade and is characterized by significant increases in the housing stock and very fast market movement (low days on market for houses on multiple listings service).

Using these cluster-based submarkets, their relationship with other economic and social indicators that impact housing decisions were analyzed such as the housing voucher usage and access to quality education. Figure 3 shows that the rate of housing voucher use is highest in the region's *Stressed* and *Pivotal* submarkets with a median rate of 40

Sustainable Communities

The most sustainable communities in the Baltimore region are characterized by housing diversity, income diversity and racial diversity

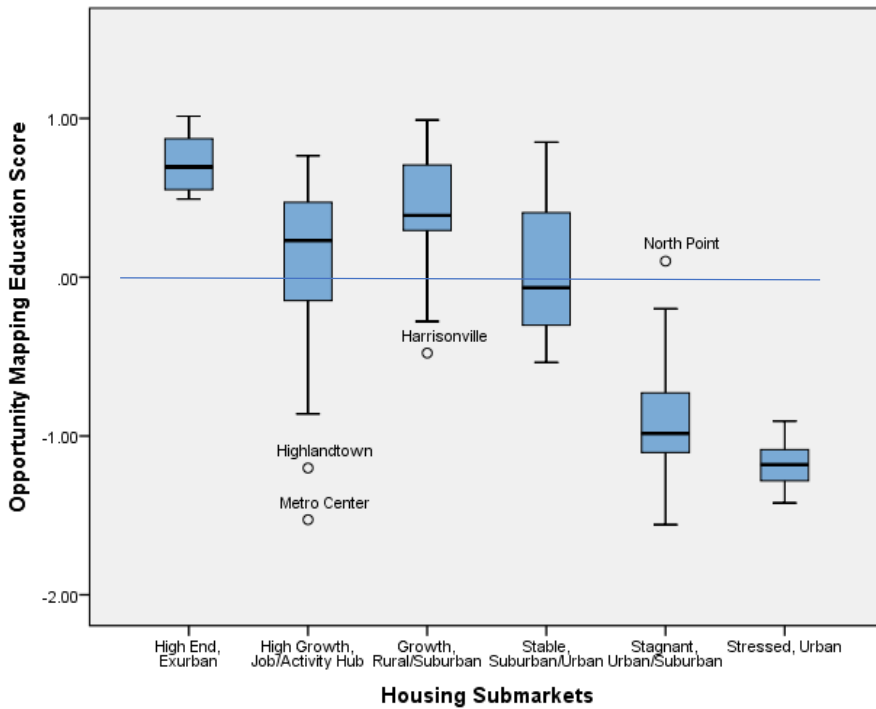Figure 3: Distribution of Housing Choice Voucher Rates by Submarket
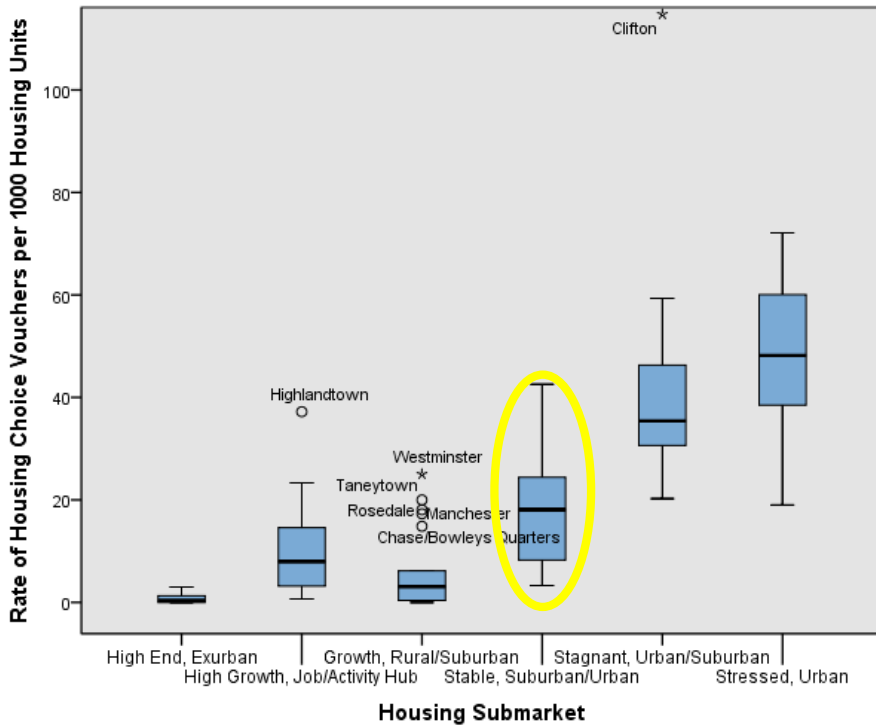
and 50 vouchers per 1,000 housing units respectively. As can also be seen, *Stable* submarkets do have moderate use of housing choice vouchers (a median of 20 vouchers per 1,000 housing units). If these are the kinds of sustainable communities we can hope all neighborhoods can aspire to, this finding represents another quantifiable goal that all neighborhoods can monitor and plan for.

Increasing housing diversity in both the most stressed communities and the strongest markets provides realistic choices for income and racial diversity everywhere. For any community in the Baltimore region, the Regional Housing Plan offers concrete strategies on how to increase housing diversity in all housing submarkets.

Figure 4: Distribution of Educational Opportunity Scores by Submarket

Ultimately, housing diversity matters because the strength of the housing market is correlated with educational outcomes. Figure 4 shows that educational opportunity scores are significantly below the regional average in the region's *Stressed* and *Pivotal* submarkets. The implication is that housing policy is at the root of educational outcomes. If we truly want to end the cycle of racial and poverty isolation, we must eliminate the disparity that exists between neighborhoods themselves by promoting housing diversity everywhere.

Equity: Accessibility to Work

All neighborhoods are impacted by regional dynamics as people and businesses can choose to locate anywhere in order to have access to regional amenities. For a neighborhood to "compete" for new residents and jobs in the regional context, it must have locational advantages that meet the needs of people living there. In our increasingly interconnected region, that advantage does not mean that every neighborhood has to have all amenities, but rather everyone living in any neighborhood should be able to *access* amenities that may be located anywhere in the region, like a job or shopping centers or transportation hubs. Accessibility for everyone in every neighborhood is the key to regional equity in the 21st century; policies and programs that consider both people and the places being impacted can help bridge the gap in access (See *Regional Equity* insert).

Map 3: Transportation Networks and Community Statistical Areas that Grew between 2000 and 2010
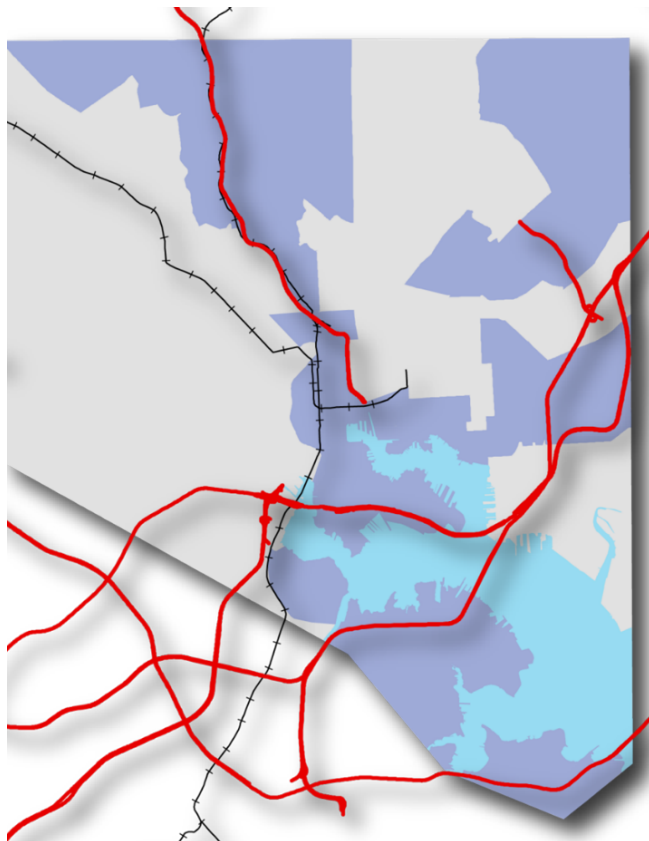
One of the key ways that people access different parts of the region is via the transportation and transit network. Being close to a highway has proven to be a locational advantage for many of Baltimore's neighborhoods. Map 5 shows community statistical areas that grew (in blue) between 2000 and 2010. The map overlays the interstate highways in red lines (I83, I95, I295, etc) and light rail lines in black. All of the neighborhoods in Baltimore that grew have quick access to a major highway. Right now, in Baltimore, without a robust transit system, the light rail lines are not an accessibility feature particularly for the neighborhoods on the western side of Baltimore; highways are the means by which people access all parts of the region.

Based on a series of reports on the city's Grow Baltimore initiative published by BNIA-JFI in May 2015, individuals from focus groups were asked why they chose the location in which they currently live. People who recently moved from the city to one of the surrounding counties cited easier *access to a thoroughfare* among the top considerations in the decision to move[10].

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[10] Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance—Jacob France Institute (2015) "Grow Baltimore: Who's Moving, Where and Why?" http://bniajfi.org/2015/05/22/grow-baltimore-whos-moving-where-and-why/

Regional Equity

"Achieving regional equity means considering both **people and place**. A competitive and inclusive region is one in which members of all racial, ethnic and income groups have opportunities to live and work in all parts of the region…and are included in mainstream regional life. It is also one in which all neighborhoods are supported to be vibrant places with choices for **affordable housing…decent transit that connects people** to jobs and healthy, sustainable environments"

~Conversation on Regional Equity, 2006, *Edging toward Equity: Creating Shared Opportunity in America's Regions.* Santa Cruz: University of California, Center for Justice, Tolerance and Community

These individual household preferences bear themselves out in the community based indicators of neighborhoods that grew between 2000 and 2010. These neighborhoods have an average of only 15.8% of households traveling more than 45 minutes to get to work, have significantly less signs of distress (average of only 1.8% housing vacancy in 2011) and have markedly more diverse housing and racial composition than the neighborhoods that did not grow[11].

As mentioned earlier, the most negatively correlated indicator with population change is the percentage of commuters in a neighborhood traveling more than 45 minutes to get to work. The CSAs with the highest percent of people traveling more than 45 minutes to work are Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park (34.1%), Greater Rosemont (33.6%), Greenmount East (31.2%), and Oldtown/Middle East (30.8%)[12]. Longer commutes can be a barrier to reliably getting to work on time[13] particular when relying on public transportation. These CSAs are also the same ones with the highest percent of residents who use public transportation to get to work: (Greenmount East (44.2%), Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park (42.9%), and Oldtown/Middle East (38.5%)[14]). The impact on urban neighborhoods of long commute times is two-fold. Chances are high for an employed resident to move closer to a job more than 45 minutes away, as the negative correlation to population growth implies; conversely, chances are high for a worker to not keep a job and become unemployed. Neither outcome contributes to the quality of life in the neighborhood itself.

Long Commutes

Chances are high for an employed resident to move closer to a job more than 45 minutes away; conversely, chances are high that a worker may not be able to keep a job and become unemployed. Neither outcome contributes to the quality of life in the neighborhood itself.

Conclusions

The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance-Jacob France Institute has been issuing the *Vital Signs* indicators every year for more than a decade; when the events of April 2015 unfolded, many people turned to the data to better understand the neighborhood context that spawned such civil unrest. BNIA-JFI has been researching many neighborhood issues in Baltimore, but it seemed particularly relevant and timely now to provide some focus on the barriers to population stability or growth, which is the ultimate indicator of neighborhood vitality. Using a data agnostic approach, the key indicators that emerged are rooted in issues of justice and equity, and by offering a clear set of data-driven objectives, community organizations, non-profits, elected officials and all stakeholders can work together to eliminate disparities in neighborhoods themselves. This report represents the synthesis of several years of work and points to 3 key goals that could serve as a common agenda to improve quality of life in every neighborhood.

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[11] See 2013 Federal Reserve presentation on Baltimore's neighborhoods
https://www.richmondfed.org/~/media/richmondfedorg/conferences_and_events/community_development/2013/pdf/iyer_presentation_6_18_13.pdf
[12] Percent of Employed Population with Travel Time to Work of 45 Minutes and Over
http://bniajfi.org/indicators/Sustainability/trav45/
[13] Central Maryland Transportation Alliance (2014) "The Last Mile Final Report"
http://www.cmtalliance.org/uploads/file/reports/The%20Last%20Mile%20Final%20Report.pdf
[14] Percent of Population that Uses Public Transportation to Get to Work
http://bniajfi.org/indicators/Sustainability/pubtran

1. **Increase housing diversity in every neighborhood**
   The most stable housing markets the Baltimore region are characterized by housing diversity and have moderate use of housing choice vouchers (a median of 20 vouchers per 1,000 housing units). Increasing housing diversity in the region's most stressed communities as well as the strongest markets will provide realistic housing options for a range of household incomes and racial backgrounds. Ultimately, housing diversity matters because the strength of the housing market is correlated with educational outcomes for children. If we truly want to end the cycle of racial and poverty isolation, we must eliminate the disparity that exists between neighborhoods themselves by promoting housing diversity everywhere. For any community in the Baltimore region, the Regional Housing Plan is example of an existing plan that offers concrete strategies on how to increase housing diversity in all housing submarkets.

2. **Reduce or maintain vacant and abandoned housing below 4% in every neighborhood**
   Vacant and abandoned buildings are an environmental injustice. They represent the physical vestiges of population decline and their negative consequences rest on the shoulders of the people who currently deal with that loss every single day. Based on the experience in Baltimore, nearly all communities that grew between 2000 and 2010 had vacancy rates at or below 4%. For communities with significantly higher vacancy rates, the magnitude of may seem overwhelming. Communities need to plan and focus together, with city agencies and outside resources, on the best course of action in their neighborhood to create a vision for a less-than-4%-vacancy reality.

3. **Reduce the percentage of households traveling more than 45 minutes to get to work**
   The impact on urban neighborhoods of long commute times is highly detrimental to population growth. Either a successfully employed resident is more likely to move out of the neighborhood to be closer to a job or a worker may not be able keep a job, remaining in the neighborhood unemployed. Neither outcome contributes to the quality of life in the neighborhood itself. Programs aimed at workforce development for residents in distressed neighborhoods must take commute time into consideration. Accessibility to work and other amenities for everyone in every neighborhood is the key to regional equity in the 21st century.

Consistent with BNIA-JFI's core mission, we will not only continue to annually monitor quality of life indicators for all of Baltimore's neighborhoods but more importantly work with communities to help them understand and advocate for the realization of these goals. Focusing on quantitative measures of neighborhood trends can help foster collaborative solutions by residents, elected officials, government agencies and other multi-sector stakeholders to address structural impediments to justice and equity in order to improve the quality of life in every neighborhood.

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