



The Right Investment 2.0

How Maryland Can Create Safe and
Healthy Communities

Section I:

Introduction

In 1970, Baltimore City (Baltimore) reached a new peak in population with over 900,000 residents. Since then, the number of people living in Baltimore has dropped precipitously, falling 35 percent to a new record low of 585,000 residents in the 2020 Census.¹ Baltimore is the only city with at least 400,000 residents on the east coast with a declining population.² While many U.S. cities have experienced a revitalization in the last two decades, Baltimore’s population has dropped 10 percent since the 2010 census. Current estimates report that the population has declined by 15,000 residents since 2020.³ Within the city, only 16 neighborhoods out of 55 experienced an increase in population between 2010 and 2022.

Within these changes the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA), a research organization associated with the University of Baltimore, found a clear pattern of neighborhoods diverging, creating “two Baltimores” where some communities are getting resources and others are not.⁴ However, there remains a historical context to the divided city. Baltimore’s history included the white population’s flight from urban communities in the latter half of the 20th century. This movement shifted state-level investments to the suburbs, providing less investment in the city and less interest from visitors. The result is represented in socioeconomic and public health indicators reviewed throughout this research that have seemed to worsen over the years. While other area cities, such as Washington D.C., have regained population – and investments – in recent years, Baltimore has remained stagnant. And the neighborhoods that experienced no growth also experienced no benefit.

The Justice Impact

Baltimore has an outsized footprint in Maryland’s criminal legal system. In 2020, Baltimore accounted for 32 percent of Maryland’s prison population, despite comprising less than 10 percent of the state population. Of the 630,384 statewide criminal trials tracked in Open Justice Baltimore’s database, 439,285 criminal trials (70 percent) were out of the Baltimore Circuit Court system.

The Right Investment 2.0 examines how concentrated criminal legal involvement in specific neighborhoods, coupled with a lack of investment in housing, education, economic development, and public health, can devastate communities and lock them into a downward spiral of disadvantage that can seem insurmountable.

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To examine the justice system's impact, the Justice Policy Institute and the Prison Policy Initiative analyzed 2020 census data to determine the last known address of each individual currently in prison. This is possible because, when Maryland abolished prison gerrymandering in 2010, the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services was required to collect each individual's last known legal address rather than counting them as a resident of the prison facility.

This information provides a unique opportunity to analyze neighborhoods by incarceration rate. Moreover, BNIA provides a detailed look at each of the city's 55 communities. BNIA provides yearly reports on 21 vital signs to assess a neighborhood's wellness. Combining the geocoded data from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services with the rich data source on each of the neighborhoods, we are able to discern the disparate ways in which a lack of investment and criminal legal involvement have multi-generation impact plaguing Baltimore.

Section II:

Communities of Disproportionate Impact

The impact of the American criminal legal system is not experienced equally across this country's states and localities. It tends to be highly concentrated in the same communities that have been historically disadvantaged across a host of social indicators: poverty, crumbling infrastructure, lack of access to healthy food and medical care, poor education, and inadequate economic opportunities. These are the very same neighborhoods with disproportionately high rates of arrest and incarceration. This alarming correlation results in stark differences in lifetime outcomes among neighborhoods that are often less than a mile away from one another.

To understand how these dynamics play out in Baltimore, we examine patterns in policing strategies, sentencing policies, and inequitable investment in communities.

Policing Strategies

Baltimore's policing practices were launched into the national headlines after the tragic death of Freddie Gray in 2015. In a 164-page report, the U.S. Department of Justice analyzed the strategies of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD). It concluded that BPD's "relationship with certain communities is broken" and "the Department has engaged in years of racially discriminatory policing, which has targeted Black residents."⁵ These illegal practices included unconstitutional stops, which overwhelmingly impacted Black community members. In each of Baltimore's nine police districts, pedestrian stops of Black residents were starkly disproportionate to their

representation in the general population. For example, in Southeast Baltimore, with a Black population of just over 20 percent, 65 percent of stops between 2010 and 2015 were of Black residents. That disparate trend remains consistent across the board. Arrest data between 2009 and 2023 shows that the Southeast Police District made 23,500 arrests. Of those arrests, 14,166 (60 percent) were of Black people.⁶

The arrest data below clearly illustrates how and where BPD chooses to deploy its resources and focus its attention. Perhaps no example highlights the racially disparate arrest patterns better than Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park. This neighborhood, where Freddie Gray lived, is 92 percent Black and accounted for 7 percent of all arrests in Baltimore, despite comprising only 1.8 percent of the city's population.

Sentencing Patterns

Policing strategies that targeted communities of color were coupled with increasingly punitive sentencing policies that emphasized a “tough-on-crime” mentality and more frequent use of incarceration to remove individuals from the community. In Maryland, for example, the average prison sentence increased 22 percent between 2000 and 2012.⁷ According to the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy, that trend has continued, with assault and robbery increasing 12.5 percent and 8.5 percent, respectively, since 2016.⁸ Despite recent reforms such as the Justice Reinvestment Act and the Juvenile Restoration Act, 66 percent of those in Maryland's prison system still serve at least 10 years. Unsurprisingly, these long prison terms disproportionately impact people of color. Of the individuals from Baltimore serving a life sentence, 94 percent were Black.⁹

It is important to note that this increased use of long sentences in prison has had a dubious effect on public safety. Research shows that incarceration has a minimal deterrent effect and does little to make neighborhoods safer. The United States has the highest incarceration rates in the world, yet it also suffers from some of the highest rates of serious crime and violence. The “tough on crime” strategy has not delivered the intended results. In fact, some research has concluded that high incarceration rates actually *increase* crime by destabilizing communities, due to the steady flow of people in and out of prison and high rates of people on probation and parole. Policymakers are not making wise decisions about how best to improve public safety, and a significant reason for this is the deliberate choice to invest money in reactive strategies, such as arrest and incarceration, versus proactive approaches that target the root causes of crime.

Investments

Aggressive policing, harsher sentencing, and mass incarceration exacerbate deeply entrenched disparities among Baltimore neighborhoods. Choices about where to invest public resources have contributed to the deep segregation along the lines of wealth, race, and other life outcomes. Baltimore’s overall poverty rate of 23 percent towers over the statewide average of 9 percent. In some Baltimore communities the poverty rate is over 35 percent. This wealth gap is often a result of neglect from city officials. According to research by the Urban Institute, majority white neighborhoods receive four times the investment of neighborhoods with a Black population of more than 85 percent. These investments include small business lending; neighborhoods with a higher concentration of Black residents received an average small business loan of \$2,336, compared to \$11,442 for neighborhoods with a higher concentration of white residents. Home construction and affordability are also uniquely impacted by investments. Baltimore, named one of the nation’s most gentrified cities, is no exception to these patterns.¹⁰

Without sustained and consistent investments, many neighborhoods are left behind.¹¹ Local policing strategies, sentencing practices, and investment allocations all negatively impact communities of color in Baltimore and ultimately drive the alarming racial disparities in mass incarceration. Racial disparities remain the shameful cornerstone of the criminal legal system, and Maryland leads the nation in racial disparity in incarceration. As of 2022, 71 percent of the prison population was Black, despite accounting for 31 percent of the state population. No other state in the country has such a stark disparity.

Below represents select data points on the five highest-impacted and five least-impacted communities. To explore the full interactive data maps, please visit [The Right Investment 2.0](#) or scan the following QR Code.



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Community	General Population	Incarcerated Population	Incarceration Rate per 100,000
Greater Roland Park/Poplar Hill	7,284	1	13.7
Mount Washington/Coldspring	5,796	6	103.5
South Baltimore	8,216	8	97.4
Canton	8,249	10	121.2
Cross-Country/Cheswolde	13,224	11	83.2
Belair-Edison	15,327	241	1,572.4
Cedonia/Frankford	22,702	247	1,088
Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park	10,808	277	2,562.9
Southwest Baltimore	13,489	300	2,224
Greater Rosemont	15,424	325	2,107.1

Section III:

Community Indicators

In 1959, 22 percent of the U.S. population and 55 percent of the Black population lived in poverty. Due to social safety net improvements, the poverty rate was cut in half by 1973. However, we still have 46 million people living in poverty today, which is 15 million more than in 2000.¹² Widening inequality has emerged as a critical policy and political issue over the last decade. Many Americans are falling behind, while an increasingly smaller proportion of the population controls an ever-growing fraction of this country's wealth. Factors such as a shrinking manufacturing base, shortcomings in educational opportunities, an increasing reliance on low-paying service sector employment, and unequal access to broadband and transportation exacerbate these inequalities.¹³ Many of these challenges have been well documented as causes of the growing number of working poor and others facing material disadvantages. However, the impact of mass incarceration has received less attention.

People who have been incarcerated experience lifelong negative economic consequences.¹⁴ Individuals who have been in prison earn less over their lifetime, experience reduced upward economic mobility, and pass these same obstacles along to their children. Children of incarcerated parents also earn less over their lifetime and have more difficulty improving their financial standing. The Brookings Institution also found that concentrated poverty is difficult to reverse over several generations.¹⁵

The Justice Policy Institute (JPI) uses key metrics of community well-being collected by the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA) and overlays them with incarceration data. The analysis examines 10 neighborhoods, the five most impacted by incarceration and the five with the lowest incarceration rates.

For a few of the indicators, we provide a deeper dive into the impact of these policy failures on the impacted neighborhoods. The data clearly show the strong correlation between mass incarceration and other adverse socioeconomic outcomes.

Unemployment

BNIA collects data on the *percentage of the population 16–64 years old, unemployed and looking for work*, by neighborhood. This calculates the residents not currently in the labor force but seeking work that pays a formal income. This is most akin to the traditional definition of unemployed. To expand the analysis, JPI collected data on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' definition of a healthy economy, where unemployment should be between 3 and 5 percent. Of

the 55 Baltimore City neighborhoods, 28 have higher unemployment rates than the *healthy zone*, including the five neighborhoods most impacted by incarceration. Despite making up about half the city population, these 28 communities account for 71 percent of the Baltimore population in prison.

	Number of Communities	Number of Incarcerated Residents
<i>Within Healthy Zone</i>	27	1,721
<i>Outside the Healthy Zone</i>	28	4,303

Stable employment impacts both community and individual prosperity. A low unemployment rate indicates a prosperous community with more money circulating through the economy, and is a bedrock for building strong and safe communities. Conversely, neighborhoods with high unemployment rates are plagued with other correlated problems. Research has found that these communities often suffer from “inadequate and low-quality housing, underfunded schools, few recreational activities, restricted access to services and public transportation, and limited opportunities for employment.”¹⁶ On an individual level, according to the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, unemployment is associated with depression, anxiety, poor self-esteem, and increased mortality rates. Unemployed residents can have a complicated relationship with their community, including feeling alienated and disaffected, which can impact safety. These ripple effects between employment and neighborhood health can lead to higher rates of violence, increased police presence, and a higher chance of criminal legal system involvement.¹⁷

Household Income / Poverty Levels

The U.S. economy has rebounded strongly since the Great Recession of 2008. This includes a strong job market, with 110 straight months of growth and record-low unemployment.¹⁸ However, while unemployment rates remained low, average household income has not returned to its pre-recession level, which has fostered a deeper disparity between lower- and higher-income households.¹⁹ In 2020, the global economy was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, furthering economic hardships for many families and impacting household income. Even with the strong job market in recent years, the positive impact has not been felt equally. Some of this is due to the outsized number of low-wage service-sector jobs that improve employment but hurt household earnings.

The three Baltimore neighborhoods with the highest number of people in the prison system – Greater Rosemont, Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, and Southwest Baltimore – have 40,000 residents and cover less than two miles of land. Within this densely populated portion of the city comes highly concentrated poverty. According to the latest census, half of the residents make less than \$25,000 a year and live below the federal poverty line.²⁰ Greater Rosemont reports the highest median household income, \$37,490, and Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park reports the lowest, \$26,690.

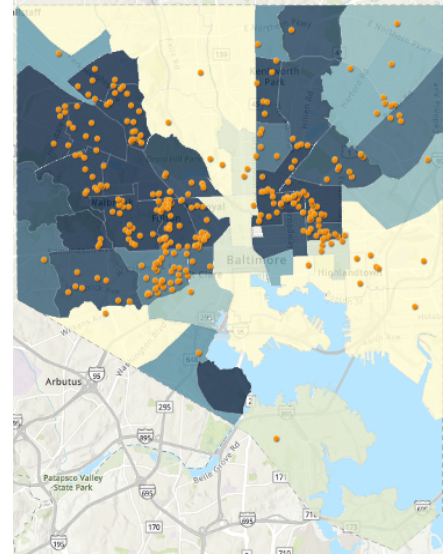
Communities with lower household incomes experience challenges with meeting their financial needs and have issues supporting their health. According to research by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, neighborhoods with significant unmet social needs experience worse physical and mental health outcomes.²¹ This results in decreased economic stability, poorer health outcomes, and increased barriers to quality education. Baltimore is an example of how these social factors interact to create alarming consequences. It impacts educational attainment, health and wellness outcomes, and, clearly, the justice system.

Elevated Lead Blood Levels - <100Mg/dL >200Mg/dL

Exposure to lead impacts brain development and increases the likelihood of future learning and behavior problems. This has significant implications for performance in a work or school environment.²² The National Institutes of Health also connects lead exposure to mental health issues, including attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, and depression.²³ While exposure can be consequential to anyone, the Centers for Disease Control finds that the impact is most harmful to children under six due to their developmental stage.²⁴

BNIA has tracked lead exposure levels in Baltimore since 2010 and found that six communities reported elevated lead levels in the blood of youth up to 6 years old. While not as widespread as some of the other indicators, the short- and long-term consequences of this public health crisis – even with low levels of exposure – are detrimental. And those six communities reporting elevated levels account for 21 percent of the prison population, including Southwest Baltimore and Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, two communities among the top five most impacted. Many speculate that lead exposure is linked with an increased likelihood of engaging in crime, primarily due to the cognitive problems caused by exposure. While research has not identified a causal relationship, there remains a strong correlation, and the evidence continues to grow linking lead exposure and crime.²⁵

So, unsurprisingly, research in the American Journal of Public Health identifies a link between poverty and lead exposure. Children with primary caregivers who received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families benefits and lived in neighborhoods with high poverty had higher lead exposure than children in less poor households and communities.²⁶ The neighborhoods where lead violations have been detected are disproportionately low-income Black communities, as evidenced in the image.



Educational Attainment (GED)

Education is a vital determinant of a community’s economic and social stability. Education has a variety of benefits related to health, civic, and social engagement. Perhaps most importantly, it provides the foundation for access to well-paying employment. Educated communities benefit from lower unemployment rates, higher average income, lower public assistance costs, reduced crime, improved public health, higher tax revenues, and greater civic and social engagement.²⁷ Graduation from high school is a requirement for many well-paying jobs. It represents a benchmark for transitioning into adulthood, serving as a signal to employers that individuals are prepared for the workforce. In January 2022, high school dropouts over age 25 had an unemployment rate of 6.3 percent, while college graduates had a rate of 2.3 percent.²⁸ Access to stable, quality employment allows for stable, safe communities. Individuals with higher incomes benefit from a better quality of life and access to private insurance, and they provide higher tax contributions that can improve community public services. Communities with higher education and income levels also benefit from lower public assistance spending, as higher incomes reduce individuals’ eligibility and need for income support.

Higher educational attainment also impacts community public health, with research showing high school graduates have better lifelong health and lower mortality rates.²⁹ This can be attributed to having access to better healthcare, insurance through employment, and better decision-making skills regarding personal health.

Communities with access to quality education and high educational attainment have better access to opportunities, higher employment, better overall health, and less impact on the justice system.

As of 2021, 9 percent of the national population aged 25 or older had not completed a high school degree or GED equivalency.³⁰ In Baltimore neighborhoods that contributed the least to the prison populations, the percentage of adults without a high school degree or GED equivalency ranged between 1.2 and 7 percent. In comparison, in neighborhoods that contribute the most to Maryland’s prison populations, those rates ranged from 14 to 30 percent. The Maryland Department of Education released research in February 2023 indicating that Baltimore students had the lowest math scores across the state, with 93 percent lacking math aptitude of their grade level. In 23 schools, *zero* students were proficient in math. As you can see below, those schools are located in neighborhoods contributing a high percentage to the prison system.

<u>School Name</u> <u>(Elementary Schools)</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Incarcerated Population</u>
Stuart Hill Academic Academy	Southwest Baltimore	300
Johnston Square	Greenmount East	156
Belmont	Greater Rosemont	325
Collington Square	Clifton-Berea	159
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor	Upton/Druid Heights	175
Park Heights Academy	Southern Park Heights	189
Dorothy I. Height	Penn North/Reservoir Hill	140
Baltimore International Academy West	Edmonson Village	118
Abbottston	The Waverlies	96
Dallas F. Nicholas SR.	Greater Charles Village/Barclay	81

<u>School Name</u> <u>(High School)</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Incarcerated Population</u>
Augusta Fells Savage	Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park	277
Vivien T. Thomas	Southwest Baltimore	300
Renaissance Academy	Upton/Druid Heights	175
Joseph C. Briscoe	Upton/Druid Heights	175
New Era Academy	Cherry Hill	132
Excel Academy	Poppleton/The Terraces/Hollins Market	78
Reach! Partnership	Belair-Edison	241

Coppin Academy	Greater Mondawmin	132
Forest Park	Dorchester/Ashburton	119
City Neighbors High	Hamilton	88
Achievement Academy	Harford/Echodale	105
Baltimore School for the Arts	Midtown	45
Independence School Local 1	Hampden/Remington	40

These scores are indicative of the resource deficit Baltimore neighborhoods experience. Since education is the foundation for a community’s economic vitality, public safety, well-being, and prosperity, ensuring students stay in school and receive a high-quality education is critical. Further investing in education will positively impact health outcomes, poverty, and involvement in the legal system.

Vacant / Abandoned Properties

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University found that between 7 and 8 percent of Baltimore’s housing inventory is vacant or abandoned annually. ReBuild Metro, a Baltimore-based housing non-profit, estimates that three properties become vacant daily, and the 2020 census estimates there were 40,000 vacant units in the city.³¹

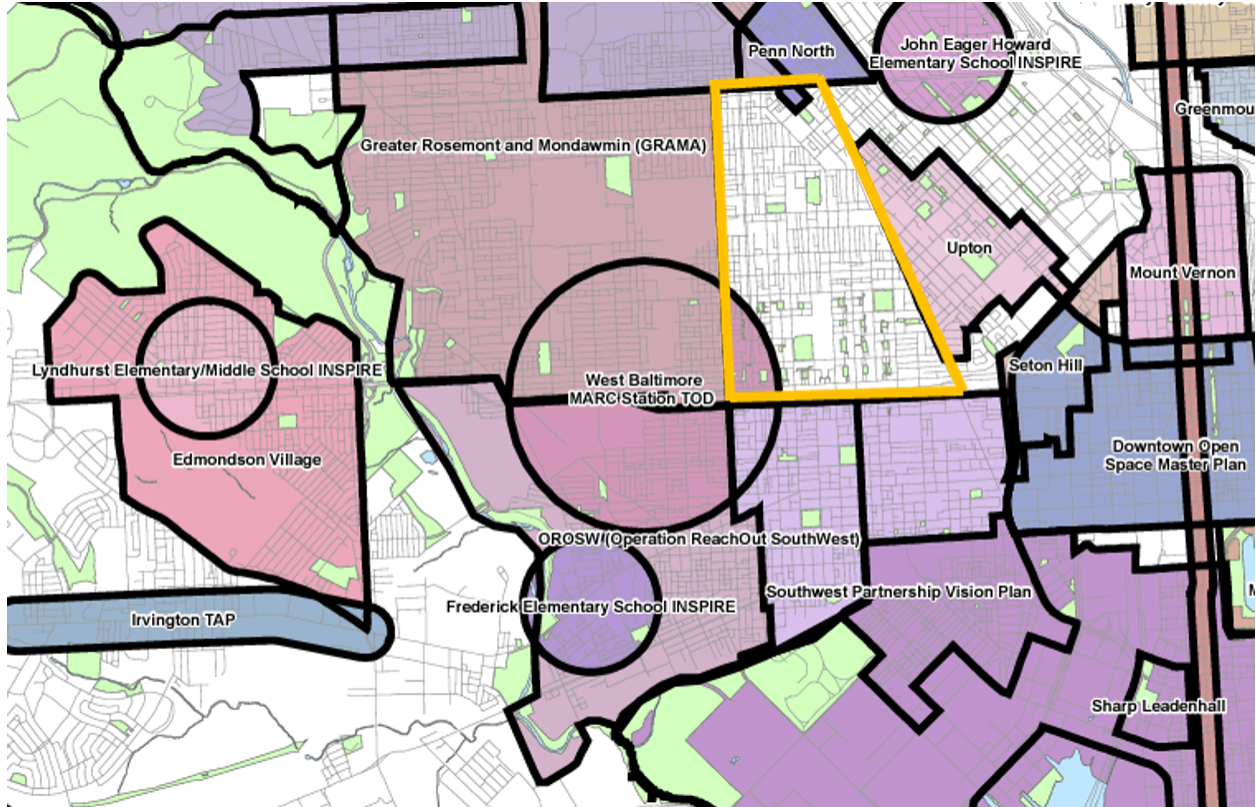
The Johns Hopkins researchers estimate that Baltimore forgoes revenue in property taxes, income taxes, and unpaid water and sewer bills in excess of \$100 million annually due to abandoned and vacant properties. In addition to lost revenue, Baltimore spends another \$100 million annually to mitigate the impact of vacant properties.³² Beyond the fiscal impact on Baltimore’s balance sheet, additional consequences exist. These include public health concerns regarding vacant properties, including lead poisoning, asthma, and poor mental health outcomes.³³

BNIA’s data show that every neighborhood has some level of vacancy or abandonment. However, research indicates that when a community has less than 4 percent vacancy, housing prices rise, and the population grows.³⁴ Of the 55 Baltimore City neighborhoods, 23 are above the 4 percent vacancy threshold. Furthermore, the two highest communities impacted by vacancy and abandonment are Southwest Baltimore and Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, each with 30 percent. Greater Rosemont reported 19 percent of houses categorized as vacant. Those neighborhoods are among those most profoundly impacted by the prison system.

Baltimore’s Planning Department has invested resources to eradicate vacancy issues. Belair-Edison and Cedonia/Frankford, which remain below the 4 percent threshold, are designated as Streamline Code Enforcement Areas. These areas are neighborhoods where the city attempts to

engage owners of vacant properties by sending them \$900 citations that will hopefully prompt them to repair and sell the home. However, these costly citations can accrue and further hamper the community's growth.

Conversely, Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park is carved out of the city's development plan. The following image is pulled from the city's development plan – which documents improvement proposals since 2004. The gold outline is Sandtown-Winchester – which has not seen investment from the Department of Planning in nearly two decades, despite the high vacancy rate.



A fragile housing situation can alter an individual's reentry experience, and research supports that housing can impact someone's initial journey into the legal system.³⁵

Community	Incarcerated Population	Vacant / Abandoned Properties	Elevated Lead Blood Levels	Educational Attainment (GED)	Household Income	Unemployment
Greater Roland Park/Poplar Hill	1	.1 %	0 %	1.2 %	\$125,869	1.4 %
Mount Washington/Coldspring	6	.2 %	0 %	4 %	\$86,715	4.6 %
South Baltimore	8	.2 %	0 %	6.2 %	\$124,827	1.3 %
Canton	10	.4 %	0 %	5.9 %	\$134,209	2.3 %
Cross-Country/Cheswolde	11	.2 %	0 %	7 %	\$63,371	4.7 %
Belair-Edison	241	3.3 %	0 %	14.9 %	\$50,010	5.4 %
Cedonia/Frankford	247	1.2 %	0 %	14.1 %	\$51,098	4.5 %
Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park	277	31 %	7.4 %	25.1 %	\$26,690	8.3 %
Southwest Baltimore	300	29.9 %	8.3 %	29.1 %	\$29,768	6.7 %
Greater Rosemont	325	19.1 %	5.3 %	19.8 %	\$37,490	10.8 %

Section IV:

Health and Wellness

The community indicators discussed in the previous section are features of the Social Determinants of Health framework. This platform uses nonmedical outcomes to calculate and assess health equity at the community level.³⁶ The determinants of health include economic stability, education access and quality, neighborhood environment, caliber of community social supports, and healthcare access and quality. This holistic approach to measuring public health provides key information to decision-makers concerning resource deployment. However, as previously discussed, the historically disadvantaged neighborhoods suffering from persistent healthcare disparities rarely receive desperately needed support.³⁷

Studies show that unsafe neighborhoods can have profoundly negative consequences for health outcomes. Neighborhoods with higher rates of violence are linked to increased blood pressure, obesity, and cardiovascular disease mortality rates – even for those not directly victimized.³⁸ Thus, addressing violence is a matter of public safety and health.³⁹ Incarceration also negatively impacts a community's physical and emotional well-being. Research has found that when controlling for demographics, educational attainment, and health outcomes, individuals with an incarcerated family member or friend had poorer physical health habits, suffered from more stress, and experienced higher rates of symptoms of depression.⁴⁰

Years of neighborhood neglect contributes to a vicious downward spiral, where insufficient public health investments, high poverty rates, poor educational support, lack of economic opportunities, and substantial criminal legal system involvement negatively influence one another. It leads to higher mortality rates from disease, cancer, and violence. High arrest and incarceration rates also diminish a neighborhood's ability to combat public health concerns.

Impact of the uninsured

According to the latest census, 38,626 Baltimore residents under 65 have no health insurance.⁴¹ Unsurprisingly, the number of uninsured in Baltimore is not evenly distributed among all neighborhoods. In fact, the five neighborhoods contributing the most to the state prison population account for 32 percent of all uninsured residents, despite comprising only 13.3 percent of the city population.

The consequences of being uninsured have been well documented, with profound health and financial implications. Individuals without insurance often neglect seeking care for economic reasons, exacerbating chronic or preventable conditions that lead to more significant health

problems. Uninsured individuals are less likely to receive preventative or specialty care, often experience a decline in their overall health, and end up hospitalized for avoidable reasons.

For most people, health insurance is provided by an employer. Consequently, neighborhoods with high unemployment rates or underemployment in the low-wage service sector will experience high uninsured rates.⁴² Navigating Medicaid is challenging, and options for care are limited compared with private health insurance. For those who do seek care, a visit to the doctor can result in long-term medical debt.⁴³

The uninsured experience worse health outcomes due to their surrounding environment, delayed diagnoses, and the likelihood of receiving inadequate care for chronic diseases.⁴⁴ Neighborhoods with a high uninsured population also experience higher mortality rates. Compared to the Baltimore neighborhood that contributes the least to the prison population – Greater Roland Park/Poplar Hill (one person) – the neighborhood that sends the most people to prison – Greater Rosemont (325 people) – has nearly 10 times the number of uninsured residents and experiences twice the mortality rate for heart disease, lung cancer, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, and prostate cancer.

Combating Public Health Issues

In the face of a public health crisis, some neighborhoods are hit harder and lack the support to respond effectively.

In 2020, when the United States was battling the global pandemic, communities of color were hit hardest. Nationally, between 2020 and 2022, the rate at which the Black and white communities contracted COVID-19 remained relatively balanced, while the Hispanic community was hit the hardest.

United States Cumulative COVID-19 Infection Rates by Race/Ethnicity	
Rates per 100,000 population	
White	14,858.4
Black	15,638.8
Hispanic	21,863.4

However, when analyzing the mortality rate from COVID-19, the Black population experienced a higher death rate than the white population.⁴⁵

United States Cumulative COVID-19 Death Rates by Race/Ethnicity	
Rates per 100,000 population	
White	268.5
Black	441.9
Hispanic	466.0

In Baltimore, these disparities are starkly apparent. The Black population accounted for 65 percent of the general population, but 73 percent of deaths.⁴⁶ These numbers are driven by a series of factors that are closely linked to existing healthcare disparities.⁴⁷ Making matters worse, many of the residents from low-income communities who were employed were considered “essential.” This meant that they could not take steps to protect themselves and their families, such as working remotely. This increased their potential to contract the virus. Lastly, as discussed, impoverished individuals often lack adequate insurance and access to primary care, leading to deficiencies in viral screening, diagnoses, and treatment. This, in turn, contributes to a higher mortality rate.⁴⁸

Even when city and state officials support improving outcomes, decades of neglect can stand in the way. The lack of trust between city officials and residents can reduce vaccination rates in certain communities. As of April 2023, there are eight communities where more than half the population is unvaccinated; most of these rank in the top 20 for their contribution to the prison system.⁴⁹

<i>Community</i>	<i>Percent Vaccinated</i>	<i>Incarcerated Population</i>	<i>Incarcerated Population Community Rank</i>
Brooklyn/Curtis Bay/Hawkins Point	48.9 Percent	164	11 th
Clifton – Berea	49.7 Percent	159	12 th
Cherry Hill	46.6 Percent	132	19 th
Dickeyville/Franklintown	49.2 Percent	26	47 th
Greater Rosemont	46.9 Percent	325	1 st
Midway/Coldstream	49.3 Percent	213	7 th
Sandtown-Winchester	46.3 Percent	277	3 rd
Southwest Baltimore	43.3 Percent	300	2 nd
Upton/Druid Heights	49.1 Percent	175	10 th

The impact of COVID-19 has been detrimental to the health and wellness of certain communities over the last three years. Despite reduced cases and mortality across all of Baltimore, the pandemic is a stark reminder for decision-makers going forward about the unique public health risks in historically disadvantaged communities. While it was a pandemic for all, the disparate impact on certain communities could have been mitigated if there had been long-term and consistent investment to strengthen the preparedness of the entire city.

Food Deserts

Lack of access to healthy and affordable food has become a public health crisis in many disadvantaged communities. These neighborhoods are known as food deserts and are frequently found in areas with high poverty, high levels of abandoned or vacant homes, substantial criminal legal system involvement, and high unemployment. Johns Hopkins University researchers found that many disadvantaged Baltimore neighborhoods must rely upon convenience stores and fast food restaurants. These options are more expensive and far less nutritious than shopping at a grocery store.

Food deserts are strongly correlated with race. Research shows that Black communities have the lowest access to healthy food and are more likely to live in a food desert than any other racial group. Johns Hopkins researchers found that one in four Baltimore residents live in food deserts, including 34 percent of all Black households and just eight percent of white households.⁵⁰ The research identified Health Food Priority Areas in Baltimore, defined as:

- Areas with inadequate access to food stores;
- Median household income is at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level;
- Over 30 percent have no vehicle available; and
- The distance to a supermarket is more than a quarter mile.

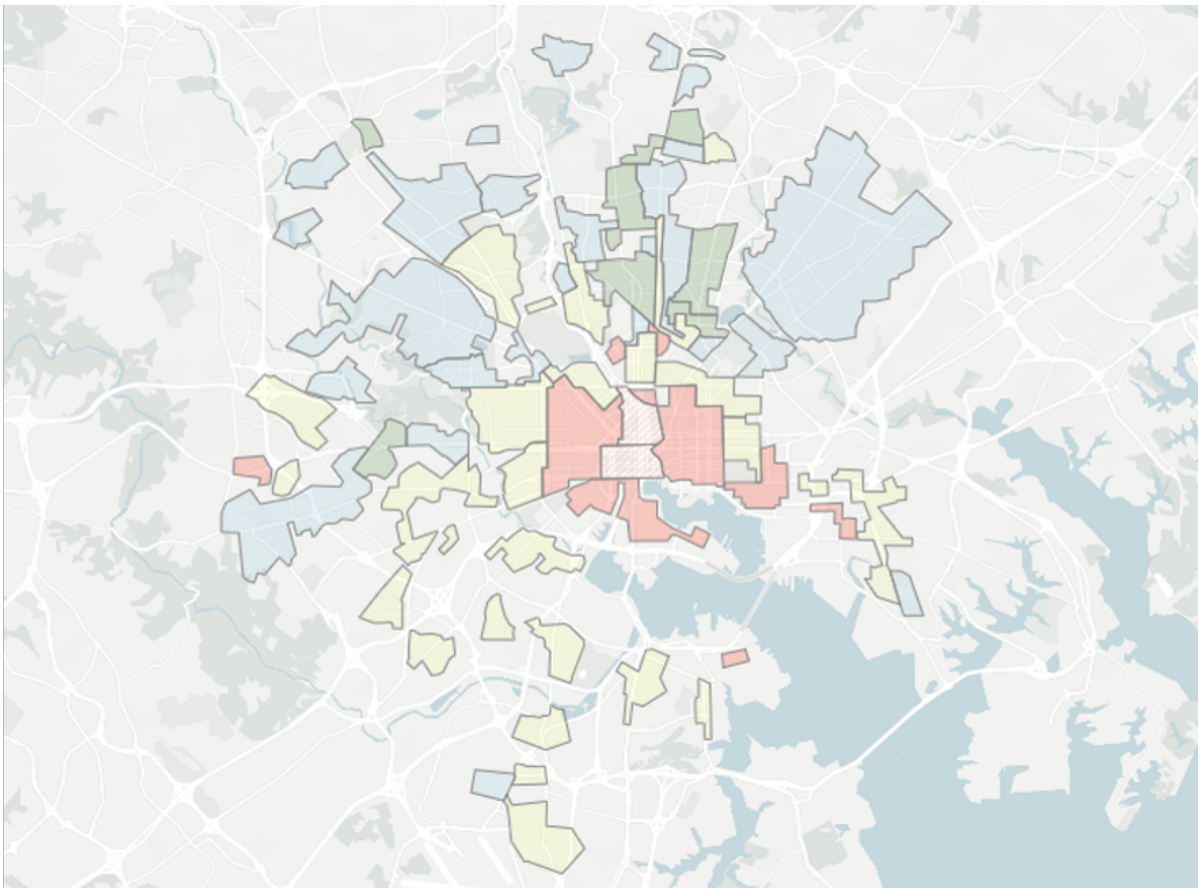
Food deserts are challenging to escape, particularly in households without a vehicle. To access a grocery, residents would have to rely on public transportation – which is often unreliable, unavailable, and sometimes unaffordable.⁵¹ Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, Greater Rosemont, and Southwest Baltimore, the three neighborhoods contributing the most to the prison system, are within the identified priority area.⁵²

Community	Incarcerated Population	Uninsured Adults	Uninsured Children	Area Covered by Food Deserts	Cancer Mortality Rate	Drug / Alcohol-Mortality Rate
Greater Roland Park/Poplar Hill	1	3.2 %	.5 %	0 %	17.6	2.2
Mount Washington/Coldspring	6	5.2 %	3.6 %	0 %	17.1	3.5
South Baltimore	8	7.3 %	3.2 %	0 %	22.1	3.6
Canton	10	5 %	0 %	0 %	20.2	2.5
Cross-Country/Cheswolde	11	7.4 %	5.5 %	0 %	11.5	1.4
Belair-Edison	241	13.9 %	6.8 %	9.2 %	25.1	3
Cedonia/Frankford	247	12.5 %	6.1 %	6.7 %	23.1	3.1
Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park	277	15.5 %	1.5 %	59.4 %	25.2	10.3
Southwest Baltimore	300	18.5 %	5.7 %	37.3 %	25.7	8.5
Greater Rosemont	325	13.4 %	3.2 %	53.8 %	33.4	8.1

Section V:

Redlining

On May 15, 1911, Baltimore Mayor J. Barry Mahool signed into law the first housing segregation ordinance in the country. This kicked off an era of repressive redlining policies, whereby race played a determining factor in the desirability of a neighborhood, and the areas with the highest Black populations were considered the least desirable.⁵³ The practice channeled real estate opportunities into affluent, often white neighborhoods, and deprived poorer, Black neighborhoods.⁵⁴ The result established an A-to-D scale, with A-labels meaning the “best neighborhoods” and D-labels indicating the “hazardous neighborhoods.” D-labeled areas, overwhelmingly populated with Black residents, were outlined in red to signal to mortgage lenders that they should not loan money in those areas.



The areas in red were denoted as D-rated neighborhoods, yellow was C-rated, blue was B-rated, and green was labeled as the most desirable A-rated neighborhoods.

Redlining was outlawed with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. Among other things, it outlawed discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race,

religion, national origin, and other factors. Although redlining is no longer a legal practice, segregation continues today. Formerly redlined neighborhoods remain disproportionately Black and are materially disadvantaged now, as they were before the 1968 prohibition. These communities still suffer from insufficient education, economic development, and infrastructure investment. Consequently, poverty, poor health and wellness, crime, and incarceration plague many of these same communities.

Health Outcomes

Historically redlined communities suffer worse health outcomes than other neighborhoods. Redlining has been shown to correlate with indicators of poor general public health. This includes lower life expectancy at birth, higher asthma rates, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), diabetes, hypertension, stroke, obesity, high blood pressure, and kidney disease.⁵⁵

In Baltimore, formerly redlined neighborhoods have a five-year lower life expectancy, higher mortality rates, higher teen birth rates, and lower rates of prenatal care.

Economics of Redlining

Historically, redlining denied people of color access to homeownership by refusing to issue mortgages, and the resulting economic inequalities remain today. Individuals in formerly redlined neighborhoods still experience disparity in homeownership, home value, and household income.⁵⁶ Real estate is a key way families pass along generational wealth, so policies limiting access to home ownership impact families for decades and beyond.

In Baltimore, formerly redlined neighborhoods remain isolated and disadvantaged. According to a 2016 report by the Mapping Inequity Project, home sales in formerly redlined neighborhoods hold 44 percent less value than home sales in non-redlined areas.⁵⁷ The median household income in Baltimore for Black, Latino, and white households are \$25,000, \$36,000, and \$188,000, respectively.⁵⁸ And nationally, there are twice as many Black families as white families who live in liquid asset poverty, which means they don't have enough money saved to make ends meet should their income be suddenly interrupted.⁵⁹

Redlining has a profound impact on funding for education. Schools in Baltimore receive federal, state, and local funding to run their education system. However, the local funding is dependent on the community's tax contribution, and because many of the communities are suffering from economic instability, the education system suffers. While the state and federal governments tend to provide a larger cut of funding to these areas, it is not enough to fill the gap in spending. As overseen by the State of Maryland, public schools receive the base of their funding at a state level, and the remainder of their budget is supplemented by taxes assessed at the district level.

Maryland has historically provided increased funding for districts with high concentrations of low-income students by applying a multiplier to the base per-pupil amount and adjusting the supplemental district funding by local wealth levels. In FY2022, the multiplier was a factor of 1.91, but Maryland will reduce the multiplier over 11 years to 1.73 in FY2033.⁶⁰ The higher level of federal and state spending in schools in D-ranked areas is likely explained by the larger number of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, which is the largest federal funding program for schools. Consequently, districts affected by redlining receive fewer resources directed toward education.

Violence and Crime

There is a strong correlation between redlining and firearms deaths, and that relationship is particularly profound in Baltimore.⁶¹ Southwest Baltimore, the neighborhood contributing the most incarceration, also had the deepest impact of guns by experiencing 2.8 gun-related homicides and 18.4 shootings per 1,000 residents in 2021.⁶² Another measure of guns' presence in the community is the offender registry. Baltimore City has 2,725 residents on the registry, 97 percent of whom are Black. Of the registry data identifying a neighborhood, Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park ranks second, with 120 residents registered, all of whom are Black.⁶³

The material outcomes of resource deprivation associated with the economic consequences of redlining created the pre-conditions for increased crime rates, which help explain the higher levels of violent crimes in these areas. Neighborhoods with higher poverty and unemployment rates have higher rates of violent crime, and income inequality within a community is associated with higher rates of violence.

Generally, redlined areas tend to see higher rates of incarceration. They also see higher rates of fatal encounters with the police.⁶⁴

Environmental Impacts of Redlining in Baltimore

In formerly redlined areas, there tend to be more vacant lots and abandoned buildings, as well as no green space. These factors produce unintended consequences, including higher temperatures, vulnerability to heat waves, and increased air pollution. Research analyzing 202 cities found that D-rated areas breathe more nitrogen dioxide (smog) polluted air, which can become embedded in the lungs and cause long-term health problems.⁶⁵

The economic inequality created by redlining in Baltimore has also prevented residents from investing their resources into their communities. Residents in wealthier and whiter neighborhoods can invest in street tree plantings and public parks. Improving urban tree canopy coverage has been found to improve public health outcomes, including some evidence that it

supports crime reduction.⁶⁶ Nationally, areas formerly rated D have 21 percent less tree canopy than areas formerly graded A.

The Impact of Sustained Investment

The impact of redlining can be generational if the cycle is not interrupted. Of the 12 neighborhoods once deemed hazardous through redlining policy, six continue to feel the effect. Those six neighborhoods – Greenmont East, Oldtown/Middle East, Patterson Park North & East, Upton/Druid Heights, Sandtown-Winchester/ Harlem Park, and Southwest Baltimore – account for 11 percent of the city population but 20 percent of Baltimore’s contribution to the prison system. The remaining six neighborhoods comprise only 8 percent of the city population and 3 percent of Baltimore residents in the prison system.

These 12 neighborhoods suffered the same discrimination and segregation over 70 years ago but look quite different today. The reason is the choice to make sustained investments in certain areas of the city. For example, the areas directly surrounding the Inner Harbor were developed, starting with a \$2 million voter-approved bond in 1964,⁶⁷ and most recently receiving a \$166 million investment in 2022.⁶⁸ In addition to the city-funded developments, programs were started in the 1970s to jumpstart improvements in certain neighborhoods. Otterbein and Federal Hill are two examples of South Baltimore neighborhoods that were once redlined and are now prosperous communities contributing the least to incarceration.

In the 1970s, Baltimore, like many other cities across the country, introduced an urban homesteading program in which vacant housing units were sold for affordable prices (as low as \$1 in some cases) if the homeowner committed to rehabilitating the home and residing there for two years. The program also provided a low-interest \$37,000 construction loan to make those necessary improvements. Homesteading programs, like Baltimore’s, typically aimed to achieve neighborhood stabilization, affordable housing, and the return of wealthier residents to urban areas.⁶⁹

Otterbein: During the homesteading program, 100 homes within three blocks in the Otterbein neighborhood were sold.⁷⁰ At the time, the community was surrounded by empty parking lots and warehouses. Today, Otterbein is a residential area considered one of the more desirable areas to live in Baltimore, despite it once being a redlined area.

Federal Hill: While Federal Hill did not have a \$1 home program, homes in this area were sold for low prices to revitalize the neighborhood after the success Otterbein saw with its homesteading program. So-called “urban pioneers” rehabilitated historic homes in the 1960s and 1970s as a part of the homesteader’s program. In the 1980s, the neighborhood’s desirability increased as the nearby Inner Harbor saw new development.

Today, those two areas are part of “the white L”, as are the other neighborhoods that have escaped the generational impact of redlining. This is a predominantly white-inhabited area of the city that has received greater corporate and state investments and development opportunities. The area follows the main artery from north Baltimore near Johns Hopkins University and follows the inner harbor. This wealthier area contrasts with the poorer and majority Black neighborhoods found on the east and west sides of the city, which have been named “the Black Butterfly”.⁷¹

Below, table on the next page select data depicting the 12 formerly redlined neighborhoods. Despite sharing the same racial biases and challenges since the 1910s, investment and thoughtful policies have allowed a handful to thrive within the white L, while the others continue the vicious cycle of hardship.

Policy makers created the white L through homesteading programs that revitalized certain neighborhoods and investments to strengthen these thriving communities. At the same time, the Black Butterfly struggled with resource deprivation and the attendant consequences.

	White L	Black Butterfly
Public Transportation	Charm City Circulator (free for riders)	Maryland Transit Authority (riders must pay)
Bank Locations	Access to traditional banks	Lack of banking opportunities and plagued with check cashing, payday lending facilities, and pawn shops
Property Tax	Beneficiary of historic tax credit	Pay relatively high taxes while receiving less
Highway Systems	Built for downtown access	Built over the neighborhoods contributing to displacement
Mortgage Lender	Access to low-interest prime mortgage rates	Access to subprime mortgages, resulting in higher foreclosures.
Public Schools	Well resources and supported by Baltimore County Public Schools	Challenges with closures, resources, and achievement

This experience in Baltimore makes it clear that redlining need not be a permanent predictor of negative outcomes for a neighborhood. In fact, intentional policies and meaningful investments can uplift any community. The neglect of Baltimore’s Black Butterfly was a policy decision, and unless addressed, it will continue to haunt generations to come.

Community	Incarcerated Population	Median Household Income	Adults with College Degree	Homicide Rate	Life Expectancy	Stroke Mortality Rate
South Baltimore	8	\$88,854	63.2 %	0	76.7 Years	6.1
Fells Point	19	\$77,433	68.2 %	1.1	78.7 Years	5.3
Highlandtown	27	\$71,660	47.7 %	1.9	74.5 Years	4.1
Inner Harbor/Federal Hill	18	\$88,854	67 %	1.2	79.2 Years	4.7
Midtown	45	\$38,867	60.6 %	1.3	76.4 Years	5.7
Washington Village Pigtown	58	\$48,175	34.7 %	5.5	70.1 Years	3.4
Patterson Park North & East	113	\$32,410	41.7 %	2.3	72.4 Years	7.4
Greenmount East	156	\$23,277	8.2 %	10.5	67.9 Years	7
Upton/Druid Heights	175	\$15,950	16.1 %	7.7	68.2 Years	4.5
Oldtown / Middle East	176	\$14,105	15 %	6.8	70.4 Years	5.1
Sandtown – Winchester/Harlem Park	277	\$24,374	5.5 %	8.9	70 Years	5.1
Southwest Baltimore	300	\$24,374	8.6 %	8.2	68 Years	7.7

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