

Census
Demographics

Housing and
Community
Development

Children
and Family
Health

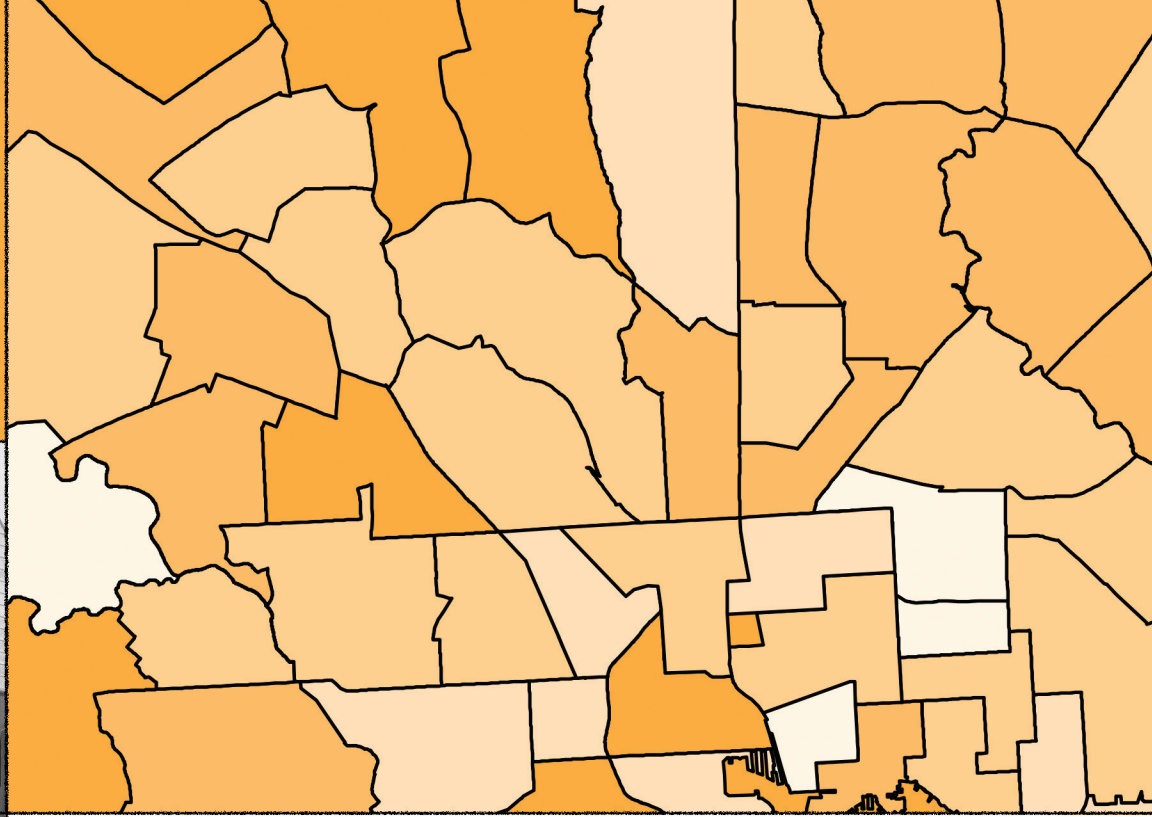
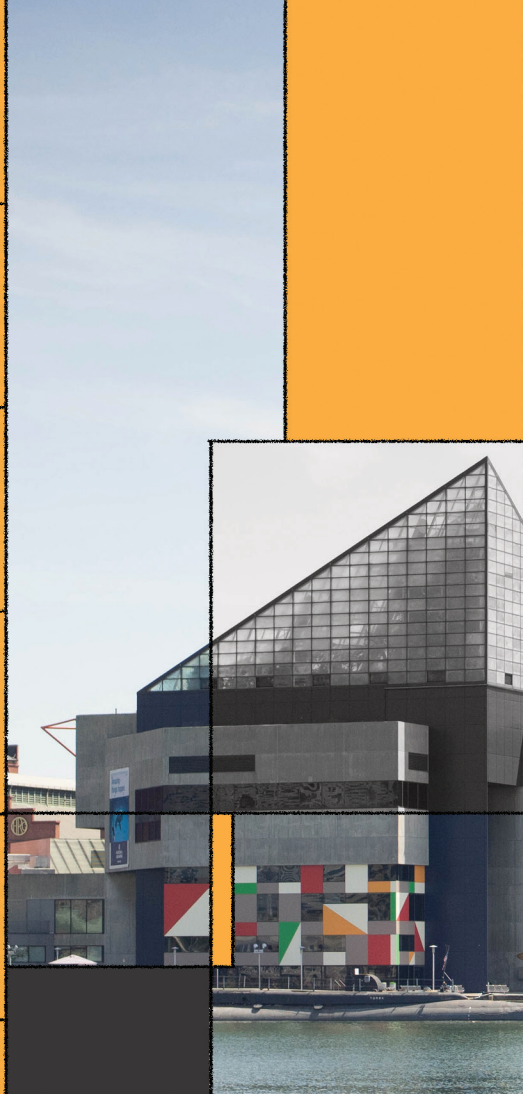
Crime and
Safety

Workforce and
Economic
Development

Education
and Youth

Arts and
Culture

Sustainability



SPRING 2016
VITAL SIGNS 14

Measuring Progress Toward
a Better Quality of Life in
Every Neighborhood





BNIA

BALTIMORE NEIGHBORHOOD
INDICATORS ALLIANCE

Jacob France Institute

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OF BALTIMORE

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Introduction



Photo: Dorret Oosterhoff

In 1998, the Annie E. Casey Foundation approached the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers (ABAG) to explore the interest in Baltimore for developing a neighborhood indicators initiative. That initial exploration led to a two-year-long planning process resulting in the gathering of several citywide nonprofit organizations, city government, neighborhoods, and foundations, which led to the creation of the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA). BNIA then became a partner in the Urban Institute’s National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP), which is now a network of more than 36 cities across the United States dedicated to developing and maintaining neighborhood data systems and the democratization of data. In 2006, BNIA moved to the University of Baltimore’s Jacob France Institute in an effort to expand on the capabilities of BNIA and was renamed the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance – Jacob France Institute (BNIA-JFI).

BNIA-JFI has been producing the *Vital Signs* report annually to provide outcome indicators that “take the pulse” of Baltimore neighborhoods progress towards a better quality of life in every neighborhood. The goal of this effort is for neighborhood residents, organizations, and other stakeholders to use data and the *Vital Signs* report to strategically and effectively foster new ways of thinking about improving our City, neighborhoods, and government over time. In 2012, Baltimore City Council passed a resolution that endorsed the report to “reflect the diverse conditions of neighborhoods and provide the basis for a system of tracking progress toward a shared vision” for Baltimore.¹

The Purpose of Vital Signs

Neighborhoods, as a growing body of research shows,² 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, tracking the “ecometrics” of neighborhoods is necessary to assess the situation 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 BNIA-JFI for more than a decade. The community-based indicators available in *Vital Signs* 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.

¹ See Baltimore City Council Resolution 12-0059R “Vital Signs: Measuring Progress Towards a Better Quality of Life in Every Neighborhood” www.baltimorecitycouncil.com
² Robert Sampson (2012) *Great American City*

Neighborhood Context of Justice and Equity

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. 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/Harlem Park where Freddie Gray lived. This latest edition of *Vital Signs* continues 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. For communities like Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, *Vital Signs* shows the confluence of compounding negative effects that result from low employment, high housing vacancy, and high incarceration. While geography need not be one's destiny, neighborhood context significantly impacts the ability of residents to participate fully in social, economic, and political life. The community-based indicators in *Vital Signs* highlight the structural issues that affect neighborhoods as places and can expose the magnitude of the issues that neighborhoods face in order to help communities set clear, measureable goals towards removing barriers.

Giving a 'voice' to local context by focusing on quantitative measures of neighborhood trends can help foster collaborative solutions by res-

idents, 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. Based on the synthesis of several years of neighborhood research in Baltimore, BNIA-JFI has shown three key goals that lead to a healthy balance for a more just and equitable Baltimore.³

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. Increasing housing diversity in Baltimore'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.

Key Indicators	Baltimore City In <i>Vital Signs 14</i>
Percent of Housing Units that are Owner Occupied	56.1%
Affordability Index – Spending more than 30% of Income on Rent	51.8%
Rate of Housing Vouchers per 1,000 Rental Units	131.3

2. *Reduce or maintain vacant and abandoned housing below 4% in every neighborhood.* When thinking about issues of justice, vacant housing does not immediately rise to the top

of most people's consideration. However, 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%.

Key Indicators	Baltimore City In <i>Vital Signs 14</i>
Percentage of Residential Properties that are Vacant and Abandoned	8.1%

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.

Key Indicators	Baltimore City In <i>Vital Signs 14</i>
Percent of Employed Population with Travel Time to Work of 45 Minutes and Over	20%

3 BNIA-JFI (2016) "What Happened in Baltimore and What Can We Do? A Neighborhoods' Perspective"

What's New in *Vital Signs 14*?

Beyond the key indicators identified above, this edition of *Vital Signs* tracks over 100 indicators on the quality of life in Baltimore's neighborhoods. These indicators, when combined into each community's profile, generate a picture of what is happening in each neighborhood. From home prices to walkability to crime rates to clogged storm drains, the indicators in *Vital Signs* corroborate (or dispel) perceptions of residents, business and other stakeholder about the quality of life in Baltimore's neighborhoods. As communities continue to plan ahead over the next decade, these indicators can now be used as inputs into strategic planning processes as well as tracking and monitoring the effectiveness of neighborhood-based activities.

Focus on Arts & Culture Indicators

Expanding upon previous sets of arts and culture indicators, *Vital Signs 14* includes activities, events, and public art installations that create spaces for community-building. As Baltimore continues to diversify demographically, these opportunities for social interaction become increasingly important for neighborhood vitality and quality of life. Arts and culture can also catalyze community development and increase employment opportunities through both creative placemaking and growth in the creative economy. Based on national research regarding the effects of arts and culture within

communities, *Vital Signs* focuses on both available and actionable data in order to better target goals for more vitality in Baltimore's neighborhoods.

- In 2014, there were 1.2 works of public art per 1,000 residents (750 works of public art total) in the City of Baltimore. Of these works, 218 were publically-funded murals.
- In 2014, there were 1.4 events event permits requested per 1,000 residents for activities such as parades, festivals, block parties, and marathons.

Understanding the Housing Market

Following national trends in other metropolitan areas, the percentage of renter households is increasing in Baltimore. However, rent affordability is a burden for more than 50% of Baltimore renter households, and some neighborhoods are experiencing low affordability overall.

- Canton has become the neighborhood with the highest percent of households earning \$75,000 or more (61.7%). With a median home sales price of \$275,000 and a rate of housing voucher use of only 16.3 per 1,000 rental units, the neighborhood is receding from its affordability of just a few years ago.

The housing market in Baltimore has been slowly recovering from the national economic recession that began in 2007. *Vital Signs 14* shows that many more homes were sold in 2014 than in previous years, although the median sales prices decreased with the increase in volume of sales.

- Between 2013 and 2014, the total number of homes sold in Baltimore City increased by 58.5% from 4,935 to 7,822. However, the median sales price of homes sold decreased by 14.1% from \$147,000 to \$126,325.

Despite these positive trends, the supply of housing in Baltimore today greatly outnumbers current demand which, over many decades, has resulted in deferred maintenance of residential properties and ultimately abandonment.

- Between 2013 and 2014, the percentage of homes receiving a vacant house notice (VHN) in Baltimore City increased from 8.0% in 2013 to 8.1% in 2014. Also, the percent of homes no longer receiving mail from the U.S. Postal Service increased from 7.6% to 8.4%.

New indicator in *Housing & Community Development*:

The rate of housing vouchers per 1,000 rental units measures the ability of voucher holders to find housing in the private rental market. In 2014, there were 131.3 housing vouchers used per

1,000 rental units in Baltimore City. The CSAs with the highest rates of housing voucher use per 1,000 rental units were Belair-Edison (420.3), Madison/East End (328.8) and Washington Village (276.1). The CSAs with the lowest rates were Greater Roland Park/Poplar Hill (5.9), Fells Point (12.8) and South Baltimore (14.4).

Better Trends in Crime

Baltimore experienced continued downward trends in several crime indicators in 2014.

- The Part I crime rate in Baltimore City decreased from 63.3 offenses per 1,000 persons in 2013 to 60.5 offenses per 1,000 persons in 2014.
- In 2014, there were 211 homicides in Baltimore City, down from 235 in 2013.

New indicator in Crime & Safety:

The rate of adults arrested per 1,000 adults aged 18 and above reflects all persons who were arrested and processed through the Central Booking and Intake facility, excluding juveniles. In 2014 the rate for Baltimore City was 48.7 arrests per 1,000 adults. The communities with the highest rates of arrests were Downtown/Seton Hill (241.5 arrests per 1,000), Madison/East End (154.6), Southwest Baltimore (147.3), Clifton-Berea (131.9), and Washington Village/Pigtown (129.5).

Economy

Overall economic conditions in Baltimore City continued a slow but gradual recovery with increases in jobs and decreases in unemployment between 2013 and 2014.

- From 2013 to 2014, the number of jobs filled by employees in Baltimore City increased 2.7% from 335,497 in 2013 to 344,588 in 2014.

New Indicator in Economic & Workforce Development:

The number of total jobs filled by employees measures the number of jobs, even if two jobs are held by one person, in Baltimore City. The CSAs with the highest number of jobs were Downtown/Seton Hill (78,077), Oldtown/Middle East (27,526), and Orangeville/East Highlandtown (15,337). The CSAs with the lowest number of jobs were Edmondson Village (229), Dickeyville/Franklintown (235), and Forest Park/Walbrook (432).

Data Stories

Every data point in *Vital Signs* represents a human story—of why the data exists in the first place and how people and organizations are working to move the needle on any one of the indicators. Several Baltimore community and non-profit groups, research organizations, and local government agencies provided data

stories to take a deeper look at an indicator and help frame the context for why specific indicators matter for quality of life in neighborhoods. *Vital Signs 14* includes the following stories:

- *Building Areas of Strength Through Vacants to Value (Housing & Community Development)*. The Vacants to Value initiative employs a number of data-driven strategies aimed at reducing vacant, blighted properties in the city. Story written by Baltimore City Department of Housing.
- *The Maryland Homeowners' Tax Credits (Housing & Community Development)*. In Maryland, there is a twenty-year-old, highly underused tax credit that can help many families and individuals prevent foreclosure. Story written by the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition.
- *Geography Should Not be Destiny (Children and Family Health)*. The variation in life expectancy by neighborhood is astonishing, not just for the 19-year difference between some CSAs, but that these areas often border each other, or are within a short walk or drive. Story written by the Baltimore City Health Department.
- *The Need to Reduce Arrests (Crime & Safety)*. Fewer arrests translate into fewer people cycling through the Baltimore jail and Maryland's prisons, and fewer people may face challenges around getting a job because of an arrest or conviction. Story written by the Justice Policy Institute.

- *Providing Creative Space for Entrepreneurs (Workforce & Economic Development)*. The importance of new business to Baltimore City's economy can be seen in that 59.8% of all business are less than four years old. Story written by the Impact Hub Baltimore.
- *CitySpeaks on College Readiness (Education & Youth)*. In 2014, the Fund undertook a citywide study of Baltimore residents' experiences with their schools, speaking with 859 people in all 55 community statistical areas in Baltimore. Story written by the Fund for Excellence.
- *Murals per 1,000 Residents (Arts & Culture)*. The Baltimore Mural Program has produced over 250 murals across the city, creating an outdoor public museum for the enjoyment of the people of Baltimore. Story written by the Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts.
- *Energy Efficiency Measures to Nonprofits (Sustainability)*. The Energy Retrofit Loans and Grants to Non-profit Agencies Serving Low-income Families program provides low-interest loans and grants to nonprofit organizations who serve the city's most vulnerable populations. Story written by the Baltimore City Office of Sustainable Energy.
- *New Community Indicator for Grow Baltimore (Census Demographics)*: To help communities track progress toward Baltimore's attainment of the Grow Baltimore goal of netting 10,000 more families, BNIA-JFI has developed a new the Five-Year Homeowner Retention Index that measures the percent of owner-occupied households that remain under the same ownership between 2008 and 2013.
- *The Relationship Between Travel Time to Work and Population Decline (Sustainability)*: Research by BNIA-JFI has shown that at the neighborhood level, the indicator that is the strongest correlator to population decline is long commute times, particularly travel time to work over 45 minutes.

How to Use Vital Signs Data

The indicators available in *Vital Signs* have been chosen based on national trends, academic research on community-based indicators, local planning processes, and ongoing community engagement to ensure that the overall set of indicators is relevant to Baltimore's communities.

- *National best practices*: Through the NNIP network, BNIA-JFI is connected to 36 other cities for learning and staying ahead of the curve regarding research and development of neighborhood based data-driven initiatives. BNIA-JFI is committed to transforming data for policy-relevance and

enhancing access to the data through technical assistance and online functionality.⁴

- *Local planning processes*: Several local and regional plans over the past decade have included specific indicators to monitor the effectiveness of plan implementation, such as the City's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Sustainability Plan, and the regional Opportunity Collaborative Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. The *Vital Signs* indicators are intended to serve as a means of tracking and evaluating the relevant neighborhood impacts of these city and regional plans.
- *Grant-writing resources*: Community-based organizations and non-profits rely on *Vital Signs* data to help make a data-driven case for leveraging resources into their neighborhoods. Analysis of grant applications for programs such as Community Development Block Grant, Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers Common Grant, and Maryland Sustainable Communities Grant identified several indicators that organizations require for satisfying basic data requirements for community-based funding.

The *Vital Signs* report and the compendium of data available longitudinally for Baltimore's neighborhoods is more than just a once-a-year presentation of information.⁵ The release of *Vital Signs 14* marks the beginning or continuation of diverse, cross-sector conversations throughout Baltimore on how to transform these data into

Also in the past year, BNIA-JFI's primary research has produced information actionable at the neighborhood level. *Vital Signs* coordinates the incorporation of the research results along with other indicators:

⁴ For more information on transforming data into useful information, see "What Counts: Harnessing Data for America's Communities" edited by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and the Urban Institute (2014)

⁵ See how "data intermediaries" around the country help communities access and use neighborhood data in "Strengthening Communities with Neighborhood Data" by G. Thomas Kingsley, Claudia J. Coulton, and Kathryn L.S. Pettit (2014). Urban Institute.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Download Your Profile: BNIA-JFI produces 55 Community Profiles, one for each CSA in Baltimore
2. Put it on Your Agenda: Encourage your community association (formal or informal!) to discuss the indicators in the community profile at their next meeting agenda
3. What's in Your Profile? Join the conversation across the City to reflect on what you see. Any interesting trends? Any surprises? Let BNIA-JFI know on Facebook or Twitter [@bniajfi](#) [#VitalSigns14](#)

the means for improving the quality of life in every neighborhood. The indicators and data in *Vital Signs* are organized into eight sections each of which describes an issue or area that is central to quality of life in Baltimore City. The data within each of the sections provide a picture of the conditions within Baltimore City's neighborhoods and their progress over time. These sections are:

- Census & Demographics
- Housing & Community Development
- Children & Family Health and Well-being
- Crime & Safety
- Workforce & Economic Development
- Education & Youth
- Arts & Culture
- Sustainability

Data within each of these sections are divided into additional subsections that allow for indicators to be clustered together around specific topics, such as housing conditions or safe neighborhoods, educational attainment, or student performance.

Vital Signs is a compilation of a large amount of data from a wide range of sources. There are over 150 indicators for each of Baltimore City's 55 community statistical areas (CSA), which means that there are over 8,000 data points in *Vital Signs*

14. Interesting facts and trends, graphics and community rankings are all included in the sections. Positive or negative changes over time are highlighted throughout the sections for easy interpretation of the data. Each chapter in *Vital Signs* also includes a *Rankings & Definitions* section, which lists the five highest and lowest communities by their value for each indicator. With so much information in this report, it has been produced in a way that should serve as a reference guide to communities throughout the year.

Vital Signs is also 'open data'.⁶ All of the indicators from previous *Vital Signs* are online⁷ for everyone to see and download for use in a variety of innovative ways. Policy makers use the data to provide context and neighborhood interdependencies across indicators. The data are used by neighborhood groups as well through *Community Profiles* for each of the City's 55 Communities which are available online for quick access to data specific to each neighborhood's needs.

Data Consistency⁸

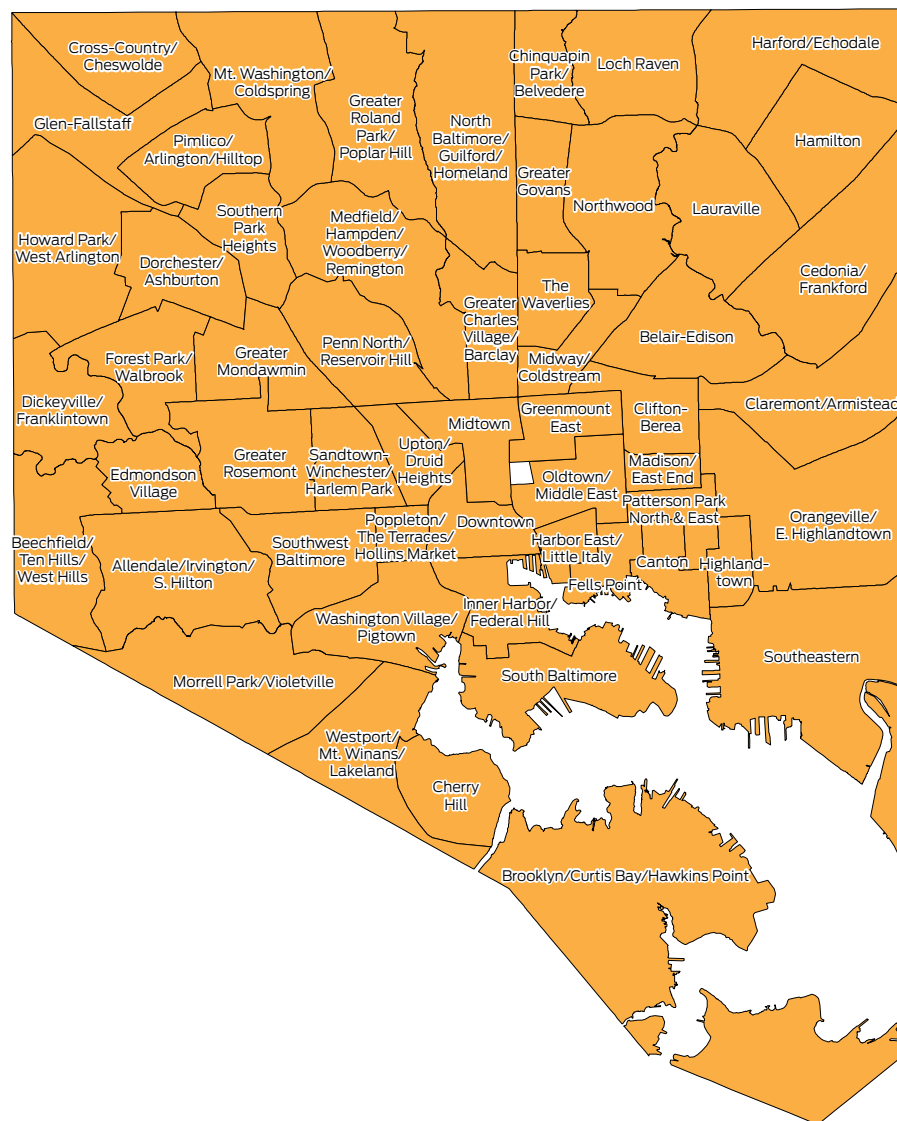
The purpose of *Vital Signs* is to continuously monitor quality of life for Baltimore's neighborhoods so that when indicators are moving in a negative direction, communities have the chance to take immediate, hopefully preventative, measures to turn the trend around. Beginning in 2011, several new indicators were added to *Vital Signs* reflecting changing times and changing needs.

Geography and Data

The geographic level at which data is provided is important to understand. Wherever possible, *Vital Signs* uses Community Statistical Areas (CSAs) as the geographic level for which data is provided. CSAs are clusters of Census Tracts that correspond to Baltimore's neighborhoods boundaries and are consistent statistical boundaries for which data can be acquired. Neighborhood lines often do not fall along CSA boundaries, but CSAs are representations of the conditions occurring within those particular neighborhoods. The CSAs were originally created in 2002 and were revised for *Vital Signs 10* using new 2010 Census Tract boundaries.

Many of the data sources in *Vital Signs* are based on administrative records (housing code violations, vital statistics, 311-service calls, foreclosure filings, etc.) precisely because U.S. Census information was only available at the neighborhood level once every 10 years. Starting with *Vital Signs 10*, however, data from the American Community Survey has been made available for the City's neighborhoods. The new data collection methodology adopted by the Census Bureau means that while the data will be available more frequently, the indicators are not directly comparable with the 2000 Census or from one year to the next. Throughout *Vital Signs 14*, use of the 5-year 2010 - 2014 ACS data is noted for clarification.

Community Statistical Areas (CSAs)



- 6 See Eric Burnstein and Seema Iyer (2014) "NNIP and Open Data in Baltimore" www.neighborhoodindicators.org/activities/projects/nnip-and-open-data
- 7 Visit www.bniajfi.org to access *Vital Signs* data and archives online
- 8 For specific changes to indicator definitions and calculations, see *Changes & Explanations* section of *Vital Signs 14*



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