

# **Baltimore Neighborhood *Vital Signs* Project**

*An initiative of the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance*

**Phase I:      Developing Baltimore's "*Vital Signs*"**

**Summaries and Results of**

**Focus Group Series I:  
Community Focus Groups**

Saturday, March 16, 2002  
Saturday, March 23, 2002

**Morgan State University**



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#### Vital Signs Project Steering Committee

Mel Freeman	Belair-Edison Neighborhoods
Cathy Brown	Cherry Hill 2000
Ann Sherrill	Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative
Dr. Matt Crenson	Johns Hopkins University
Israel "Izzy" Patoka	Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods
Betty Robinson	Citizens Planning and Housing Association
Sally Scott	Morris H. Goldseker Foundation
Dr. Jim Kunz	University of Maryland School of Social Work
Guy Hager	Parks and People Foundation
Peter Conrad	Baltimore City Department of Planning
Dr. Sidney Brower	University of Maryland College Park
Dr. Eric Bruns	Family League of Baltimore City / Data Collaborative
Odetta T. Ramos	Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance

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## Phase I: Developing Baltimore's "Vital Signs"

### Summaries and Results of

### Focus Group Series I Community Focus Groups

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## **Baltimore Neighborhood *Vital Signs* Project**

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### **Purpose and Background**

The purpose of the *Vital Signs* project is to measure progress towards collectively established outcomes for Baltimore City neighborhoods over time.

In order to do this, specific indicators must be established to tell us we are making progress towards those outcomes. **Like doctors who take the “vital signs” to determine the health of a patient, the indicators we agree upon will become Baltimore’s “Vital Signs” of neighborhood health.**

The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA) has begun to engage members of the Baltimore community with diverse interests to create a common vision for the future of Baltimore neighborhoods, and to develop the specific indicators – the “*Vital Signs*” - to measure progress towards that common vision over time.

In the fall of 2002, BNIA will produce an annual report – the *Vital Signs* report – documenting and explaining the indicators and trends towards success over time citywide, and along each neighborhood.

It is our hope that these “*Vital Signs*” will be used to shape policy decisions, funding priorities, community building strategies, and neighborhood organizing efforts to move these “*Vital Signs*” in a direction that promotes Baltimore’s progress towards strong neighborhoods, and a stronger city. These “*Vital Signs*” can be used to hold each of us – neighborhood residents, non-profit partners, private industry, city agencies, and more - accountable for making and acting on decisions that improve Baltimore neighborhoods.

Baltimore is ready to join over two hundred communities across the country, including Boston, Jacksonville, and Portland, that have engaged in similar projects. Each has been able to show marked success as a result.

### **Developing Baltimore’s *Vital Signs***

BNIA has organized a series of focus groups designed to engage a variety of views to develop the “*Vital Signs*.” The groups are challenged to think differently about the future of their neighborhoods, and come to consensus on long-term neighborhood goals and indicators relative to specific topic areas.

The first set of focus groups consisted of neighborhood residents and leaders from across Baltimore to answer two major questions:

- § “If you knew you would leave your neighborhood can come back in 10 years, what is the vision you want to see?”
- § “What will tell you we are successful in getting there? What are the indicators and measures that will tell us we are moving in the right direction?”

This work is the basis upon which we move forward to gain further input from a variety of stakeholders. The next stage is to engage those organizations working with, and on behalf of, neighborhoods to improve and maintain the quality of life. Next, we will engage policy makers, investors, and others.

## **The *Vital Signs* report**

This first report is a baseline of those “*Vital Signs*”, measuring the current conditions of our neighborhoods. The report itself will display the information on GIS (Geographic Information Systems) maps, tables, and charts. Profiles of the neighborhoods, based on these indicators, will also be available. Explanations of these data will be highlighted by stories about the accomplishments of neighborhood groups that are working towards their vision for the future. The report will be published in a hard copy, and also in an interactive format on our website [www.bnia.org](http://www.bnia.org).

Although there have been several recent reports and initiatives utilizing data about Baltimore, our project is unique in that it measures not only the current conditions of each neighborhood, but attempts to measure and track the improvement of these conditions over time and towards goals that are collectively established by multiple stakeholders, including, most importantly, neighborhood residents and leaders.

### *Vital Signs Project Steering Committee*

Mel Freeman	Belair-Edison Neighborhoods
Cathy Brown	Cherry Hill 2000
Ann Sherrill	Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative
Dr. Matt Crenson	Johns Hopkins University
Israel “Izzy” Patoka	Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods
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Dr. Eric Bruns	Family League of Baltimore City / Data Collaborative
Odetta T. Ramos	Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance

## ***About the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance***

The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA) is an alliance of citywide organizations dedicated to providing data and information to support efforts to improve the quality of life in Baltimore City neighborhoods. Alliance members include the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, Annie E. Casey Foundation, the City of Baltimore, the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative, the Neighborhood Design Center, the Safe and Sound Campaign, Morgan State University Institute for Urban Research, the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers, and various neighborhoods throughout Baltimore City.

Our goal is to develop a comprehensive and integrated Neighborhood Information System where (1) data from a variety of sources is collected, disseminated, and accessible in a user-friendly way (now available on the BNIA website and in the BNIA office), (2) residents and others are trained on accessing the data as well as interpreting and using data to enhance neighborhood improvement strategies, and (3) indicators or the “*Vital Signs*” are developed measure progress towards desired outcomes for Baltimore City neighborhoods.

For more information contact BNIA at (410) 235-0944 or on the website at [www.bnia.org](http://www.bnia.org)



***The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA) is an alliance of citywide organizations dedicated to providing data and information to support efforts to improve the quality of life in Baltimore City neighborhoods.***

Alliance members include: The Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative, the Neighborhood Design Center, Citizens Planning and Housing Association, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the City of Baltimore, the Safe and Sound Campaign, Morgan State University Institute for Urban Research, the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers, Belair-Edison neighborhoods, Cherry Hill 2000, and the Greater Northwest Community Coalition.

By building and contributing to a comprehensive and accessible Neighborhood Information System, alliance members work together to:

- Provide data about Baltimore and its neighborhoods in a widely available, user-friendly way.
- Offer training on how to access, understand, and use data for neighborhood improvement, and
- Designate indicators to measure the success of our City and its neighborhoods over time

#### ***Data - "One Stop Shop" for data about Baltimore's neighborhoods***

BNIA brings together data from a variety of data providers and disseminates it in a user-friendly, accessible, and available way, utilizing the latest Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping technology.

- § Data about Baltimore's neighborhoods are available on the BNIA website (<http://www.bnia.org>) and in the BNIA office.
- § Data currently compiled includes geographic and statistical data regarding *conditions* of Baltimore neighborhoods, gathered from the census, city and state agency data, social service and community information, and residents. (Program specific analysis and data collection is referred to the appropriate data provider partners who are the experts in that work)
- § BNIA negotiates data exchange with data partners, and obtains data from primary sources to fill any gaps.

#### ***Technical Assistance - Neighborhoods using data***

BNIA ensures neighborhood residents, community associations, and other groups will have access to data. Access means that users can receive data through the BNIA resources (located on the BNIA website or in the BNIA office), understand what data is, how to interpret what data show, and how to use it effectively to make well informed decisions about goals and priorities, strategic policy changes, community building and organizing activities, and planning.

- § BNIA has developed a comprehensive curriculum to guide its members and other partners in their work with neighborhoods, and has begun to implement a training strategy, focusing on access to and understanding of data.
- § Training is provided in several ways: quarterly Introductory Trainings, workshops integrated in other trainings (such as that of CPHA), and by request.
- § Knowing that many residents do not have access to technology in their homes, key partnerships with the public libraries, job training centers and community centers are being established in order to provide portals or "Access Points" to the resources on the BNIA website.

#### ***Neighborhood "Vital Signs" Project - Measuring progress towards neighborhood success and strength***

BNIA facilitates a community driven process to develop a set of desired outcomes for Baltimore's neighborhoods, and the indicators that will measure progress towards these outcomes, area by area and citywide, over time. Like doctors who take the "vital signs" to determine the health of a patient, the indicators we agree upon will become Baltimore's "Vital Signs" of neighborhood health.

- § BNIA will compile the data necessary to measure the indicators identified during this process, and will publish a baseline report in the fall of 2002 that reflects Baltimore neighborhoods' "vital signs." The report will be an annual publication that documents and explains these trends using intricate analysis and highlighting neighborhood initiatives.
- § It is our hope that these "vital signs" will be used to shape policy decisions, funding priorities, community building strategies, and neighborhood organizing efforts to move these "vital signs" in a direction that promotes Baltimore's progress towards strong neighborhoods, and a stronger city. The indicators can also be used to hold each of us accountable for making and acting on decisions that improve Baltimore neighborhoods.





# Baltimore Neighborhood *Vital Signs* Project

*An initiative of the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance*

## Phase I: Developing Baltimore's "*Vital Signs*"

### Summaries and Results of

### Focus Group Series I Community Focus Groups

#### *Introduction*

The document enclosed reflects the work of over 70 neighborhood residents and neighborhood leaders who gathered on the mornings of March 16 and March 23, 2002 to participate in the *Vital Signs* Project community focus groups.

Based on the topic areas that are being explored throughout this process (listed below), participants were selected from recommendations from BNIA partner organizations, as well as several "umbrella" neighborhood groups and the *Vital Signs* Project steering committee members. They were selected to participate based on their work, knowledge, and passion about a particular topic area relative to their neighborhoods. These participants were considered the "experts" that not only understand their neighborhood's immediate needs, but also the long-term vision they strive to reach every day.

Each participant was assigned to a group to discuss one of the following ten topic areas:

Housing	Urban Environment/Ecology
Sanitation	Personal and Family Health
Education	Children, Youth, and Families
Neighborhood Economic Development	Workforce Development *
Public Safety	Transportation *

These community focus groups are the **first phase** in an on-going process to gauge input from multiple stakeholders from around Baltimore City to develop Baltimore's *Vital Signs* of neighborhood health. BNIA is committed to measuring and reporting on our *Vital Signs* in an annually published report.

\*Note that the groups for Transportation and for Workforce Development have not yet been completed. They will occur in separate sessions and are not included in this publication.

#### *Methodology*

Each participant was assigned to a group according to their interest in the topic area given, (i.e. Housing or Public Safety). Each focus group worked for four hours. Discussions were lead by trained and reputable facilitators. The Community Mediation Center, and several BNIA partners, recommended facilitators who were familiar with data and its application in Baltimore (they were each researchers) and had extensive experience in facilitation.

Each Facilitator was coupled with an equally qualified Recorder. The Recorder took notes, kept a running tape recorder, and worked with the Facilitator to ensure the perspectives and views of each participant were carefully and accurately reflected on the flip charts and in the notes.

At least one Data Partner was present for each group as a reference for questions regarding data currently measured and indicators standards.

During the sessions, participants were challenged to answer the following questions related to the topic area to which they were assigned:

- “If you knew you would leave your neighborhood and come back in 10 years, what is the vision and outcomes you want to see in 10 years?”
- “What will tell you that your neighborhood successfully achieved the outcomes? What are the indicators and measures that will tell us we are moving in the right direction?”

During that time, each group developed consensus around at least five (5) outcomes for Baltimore neighborhoods, and brainstormed a list of indicators that could track progress towards those outcomes over time. Facilitators used the “What Makes a Good Indicator” Criteria (see page iv) to guide the groups in their work.

Since this kind conversation is new to Baltimore, there were several items listed by the group did not fit the criteria listed. In some cases, the indicators listed would measure short-term program goals or strategies, in other cases the listed indicators were goals themselves, and in others data simply does not exist to measure them. (However, it is our intention to analyze these items and place them in a format or index where the intention of the group is maintained).

The day ended with a working lunch where participants shared the results of their discussions. Several asked to see the summaries of each of the focus groups work, including their own (the request sparked the idea for this document.)

In addition, each participant completed an evaluation form to help the organizers of the sessions understand what participants learned in their groups, and any suggestions they had for improvements

The focus group sessions were designed and organized by BNIA consultant Kate Besleme. Ms. Besleme was the former director of the Community Indicators Project at Redefining Progress based in California where she consulted with communities around the nation and the world to develop indicator programs. She is a recent graduate from the University of Maryland at College Park with a Masters in Business Administration and a Masters in Public Policy.

## ***Results***

Enclosed in this document are the summaries of the focus group sessions. These are the notes taken directly from the Flip Chart pages, as well as the hand-written notes from the Recorders for each group.

As you will see from this work, residents from different parts of Baltimore City having a diverse array of perspectives and experiences, were able to come to consensus on common goals for Baltimore’s neighborhoods, and brainstormed common indicators that measure progress towards those goals.

Some goals and indicators appear in many of the focus groups. For instance, the issues of lead poisoning, asbestos, and air quality were included in the Health topic area as well as in the Urban Environment/Ecology topic area. Another example is the issue of drug treatment and addition, which appeared in the Public Safety topic as well as the Health topic area (under the goal regarding mental health services). A third example is the issue of jobs and job-training were including in the Children, Youth, and Families topic area, as well as in the Workforce Development topic area.

One theme common to all topic areas are the goals and indicators articulating a strong and vibrant sense of community. Participants felt that without a strong community association or strong community presence, neighborhoods themselves cannot be strong. Community voice in decision -making about neighborhoods was also important to many groups.

Another issue common to all groups was access to resources. Although ensuring access to resources for neighborhood residents is a strategy that will have an effect on the over-all conditions we measure, it is important to acknowledge and take note of the fact that various resources are needed at a community level in order for neighborhoods to remain strong. The word “resources” refers to funding, as well as services such as clinics, after-school programs, information, and education.

Overall, despite the fact that the participants were from very different neighborhoods, they have very similar visions and outcomes for their neighborhoods. The geographic diversity (see appendix B) was not a hindrance to the participants. Rather, it was a chance for participants to tell their stories and understand that their neighborhood experiences are similar across Baltimore. This understanding provided the strength, power, and focus to the sessions.

Below is the list of goals articulated in each topic area. These are taken directly from the notes of the focus groups, and have not been edited:

#### Housing

- Well-maintained homes
- Adequate and expanded resources (funding and grants)
- Safe, Clean, affordable, inclusive neighborhoods with opportunities for education for all
- Community-based Empowerment/Leadership
- Enforcement of Codes and Laws (Housing)

#### Sanitation:

- All residents and businesses are educated about sanitation issues
- All Baltimore Residents and businesses have trash receptacles
- Sanitation laws are enforced by neighborhood residents and officials
- All Baltimore communities receive equal and timely response to sanitation service requests and complaints (including transit spaces and storm drains).

#### Public Safety:

- Provide healthy, nurturing environments for youth to become tomorrow's leaders.
- Ensure that all vacant, abandoned, and substandard housing are secured, demolished, or brought up to code
- Ensure full institutional and community support for a community policing system.
- Ensure sufficient drug education and treatment.

#### Education

- Students graduate as productive citizens, ready to enter the worlds of work, higher education entrepreneurship, and leadership
- Parents are involved
- Community – business – school partnerships increases
- Parity in school quality

#### Neighborhood Economic Development

- Thriving Commercial Districts
- Employment and business ownership opportunities – Local
- Neighborhood friendly planning
- Strong neighborhood/Commercial district linkages

#### Urban Environment/Ecology

- Better Transportation alternatives
- Better air, soil, water and vegetative quality
- Greater sense of stewardship and awareness
- Better facilities and spaces devoted to the environment

#### Children, Youth, and Families

- Increase the sense of community in Baltimore neighborhoods to address children, youth, and family needs
- Increase in community voice, collaboration and participation in the decision making process of issues, concerns and projects that affect children, youth, and families
- Ensure adequate and effective resources for children, youth, and families in all Baltimore neighborhoods
- Ensure a stable community for the welfare of children, youth, and families
- Ensure children, youth, and families have access to gainful employment (living wage) and other opportunities for career advancement and development

#### Health

- Good quality preventive health care available for all
- Increase health awareness, education, and resources
- Proper nutrition for all
- Access, Utilization, and education of mental health services
- Improved outreach
- Healthy environment free of environmental hazards

(Please Note: Many of these goals are in themselves strategies. The *Vital Signs* Project Steering Committee intends to state them as outcomes in the final version).

Participants completed an evaluation form at the end of the session. The results from these evaluations (see appendix C) were also very positive. Overall, the participants gave high marks for the session, and were impressed not only by the Facilitators, but also by the level and substance of the conversation. They were excited about this new type of conversation, and are hopeful about the role of indicators to help shape city and neighborhood outcomes.

### ***Next Steps***

The work of the Community Focus Groups is the springboard from which the *Vital Signs* Project Steering Committee will launch into the next phases of the process.

The *Vital Signs* Project Steering Committee, as well as the data partners present at the groups will analyze the results of the focus group sessions. According to the "What Is a Good Indicator" criteria, and careful to maintain the spirit of the goals established by the focus group participants, indicators will be combined, indexed, and collapsed to formulate outcomes and measurable indicators. Some of the goals may be restated or combined in order to fit the criteria.

In May, we will convene the next set of focus groups. These "Technical" focus groups are composed of members of the Baltimore community that represent organizations working with neighborhood residents to improve neighborhoods. Organizations such as community development corporations, umbrella organizations, organizations dedicated to children and youth, city agency representatives, direct service non-profit organizations, and the like have been asked to participate. They will be challenged to have similar discussions along the same topic areas, and merge their ideas with those of the Community Focus Groups.

Starting in late May/Early June, we will conduct analysis, interview several participants from both focus group sessions, and begin drafting the report. Participants in the Community Focus groups and Technical Focus Groups, as well as other stakeholders in Baltimore, will be able to review the outcomes and indicators as articulated in the draft report.

The report reflecting the outcomes and indicators will be published in the fall of 2002, and will be available on the BNIA website ([www.bnia.org](http://www.bnia.org)).

### ***Measuring Civic Health indicators***

Some of the information that has surfaced from the focus groups includes issues that are currently not measured in a comprehensive way. These indicators relate to community cohesion, neighborhood association strength, involvement, sense of community, resident perceptions- all indicators that are important to all members of the Baltimore community as stated above.

The *Vital Signs* Project Steering Committee recognized this need early in the process, knowing that more time is needed to design the methods, measurements, and process to obtain this information. Therefore the following process as begun to take place:

BNIA applied for, and was accepted by, the National Civic League as one of five cities to participate in their Civic Health Indicators Project. The project will ultimately compare our work with those of the 5 cities. The staff of the National Civic League will help BNIA measure these important items, develop indicators to track progress in these areas, and establish a process (survey) to measure civic health annually. The results of this work will be included in the *Vital Signs* report in 2003.

Also, a survey is currently being conducted with neighborhood associations to learn more about their goals, membership base, and programmatic activities. The University of Baltimore Jacob France Institute was commissioned by BNIA to conduct the survey and prepare the written results. The results will be available in July of 2002, and will be the first such data collection of its kind. These results will help prepare for the larger measurement process needed to obtain the data for these important indicators.

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## **What Makes a Good Indicator: Criteria for Assessing Usefulness to the Community**

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### ***Measure progress towards a goal***

Does the indicator measure a condition that people have decided is important to the community?

### ***Compel, interest, and excite***

Does the indicator resonate with the intended community audience?  
Is it attractive to the media?

### ***Focus on resources and assets***

Is the indicator framed in a positive way?  
Does it focus on problems or assets?

### ***Focus on causes, not symptoms***

Does the indicator help to forewarn of future problems and focus on causes, rather than symptoms, of problems?

### ***Make linkages and relationships***

How does the indicator link to other issues (e.g. social, environmental, economic)?  
What other indicators would be affected by changes in this one?  
Does this help to round out the set of indicators in each topic?

### ***Relate to the whole community***

Does the indicator affect the community as a whole or only one narrow group?  
Do the indicators help communicate to an outsider what is most important to the community?  
Do the indicators address assets and problem areas?

### ***Understandable***

Is the indicator simple and clear enough to be understandable to the community as a whole?

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## **What Makes a Good Indicator: Criteria for Assessing Data Quality**

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### ***Accessible and affordable***

- How easily can the data for each indicator be obtained and how much does it cost?
- Are partnerships within the community possible to access the data cost-effectively and efficiently?

### ***Comparable (standardized)***

- How easily does this compare with indicators used for other local projects?
- Does it require a special survey that other communities would not be likely to replicate?

### ***Consistent and reliable***

- Is the information source likely to produce high quality data over a number of years?
- Are any indicators for the data that does not exist highlighted in the report?

### ***Credible***

- Is the indicator believable to the participants who selected it? To the community as a whole?
- Does the data source help reinforce credibility or detract from it?

### ***Measurable***

- Is the indicator framed in a way that can be answered by a number, percentage, or proportion?
- Does the data exist to address the indicator, or is there a practical way to obtain the data needed?

### ***Relevant***

- Does the indicator address one of the community goals?
- Does it address the issue the community wants to know about?
- Does it help to communicate what is important?

### ***Valid***

- Is the indicator truly measuring what it is intended to measure, and not a by-product?
- Is the indicator well grounded and founded in fact?
- Can you support, defend, and justify it in logical or scientific terms?

# **Summaries and Results**

**March 16, 2002**

**Housing**

**Sanitation**

**Public Safety**

**Education**

**Neighborhood Economic Development**





# Neighborhood “Vital Signs” Project

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## Community Focus Group March 16, 2002 HOUSING

### Brainstorming

- 1) *East Baltimore – urban renewal – community groups – need for a compensative plan for the community. Need to be able to access the experts/leaders in the community, as well as develop more leaders*
- 2) *Vacancies*
- 3) *Illegal activities (prostitution, drugs, access to vacancies, trespassing)*
- 4) *Availability of funds to educate citizens on the maintaining the foundation of the property...particularly senior citizens*
- 5) *Reverse the appearance of dilapidated homes*
- 6) *Division of homes into multifamily dwellings. With multifamily dwellings there are rear access issues*
- 7) *Lack of code enforcement*
- 8) *Home owners having to watch homes deteriorate (I believe this was in the context of absentee landlords)*
- 9) *Vacant lots: gas leaks, maintenance issues, lack of planning, what do you do with vacant lots*
- 10) *De-stabilization (Memorial Stadium); single to multifamily units; reduced commitment to home's up-keep, especially outside*
- 11) *Landlords: absentee; lack of involvement, no responsibility, no way to track landlord*
- 12) *Section 8 housing: running out of sect. 8 housing, it eventually goes back to the landlord. How to keep mixed income / affordable housing*
- 13) *Thru-traffic*
- 14) *Lack of standardized education*
- 15) *Flipping – banks are holding homes hostage*
- 16) *Drugs – street corners, youth*
- 17) *Loitering, children out late*
- 18) *Lack of leadership / resources in the community; especially paid professional experts*
- 19) *Lack of partnerships with business owners*
- 20) *Enforcement of truancy laws*
- 21) *Gentrification, displacement, increased property taxes*
- 22) *Assistance for aging residents*

As a next step the group generated condensed topic areas and listed each number (listed above) that the group felt fit into the topic area (this was not an inclusive activity and flowed directly into the second session, where the next page starts off)

Well maintained homes: 5, 8, 10, 22, and 12

Enforcement of codes / laws: 20, 6, 3, 15, 16, 2, 17, 9, and 12

# Neighborhood “Vital Signs” Project

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## Community Focus Group March 16, 2002 HOUSING

### GOALS

#### Indicators

##### Well-Maintained Homes

- 23) *Reduction in the # homes needing maintenance*
- 24) *#Of new homes/new construction vs. rehabbing*
- 25) *Number of outstanding violations*
- 26) *Marketability and housing values—number of days on market*
- 27) *Tenure—how long people stay in a home after purchase (no flipping)*
- 28) *Owner Occupancy of single family/households and Rental Unit (reduce absentee land lordship)*

##### Adequate and Expanded Resources, (Funding and Grants)

- a. *#Projects started and completed in area*
- b. *Increase in% of qualifying people who receive assistance*
- c. *Increase in # of part-time and full-time neighborhood staff*
- d. *Amount and # of grants received*
- e. *# Of unsolicited gifts/funds*
- f. *Amount of \$ received from residents*

##### Safe, Clean, affordable, inclusive neighborhoods with Opportunities for education for all

- a. *Number of Smiles per block*
- b. *Certificates of Appreciation*
- c. *Fewer Break-ins*
- d. *Fewer Lead paint violations*
- e. *Fewer Code violations*
- f. *Number of people walking during the day and night*
- g. *Planted tree wells*
- h. *Increase in satisfaction with neighborhood*
- i. *Income –vs. Housing costs (mixed income housing, some indication that gentrifications does not price out long term residents)*
- j. *Retention of neighbors*
- k. *Photograph taken in 2002 and then again in 2012.*
- l. *Home ownership*
- m. *Student performance in local schools*

# Neighborhood "Vital Signs" Project

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## Community Focus Group

March 16, 2002

### HOUSING

#### GOALS

##### Indicators

#### Community-based Empowerment/Leadership

- a. *Expanding capacity to meet goals... Education*
- b. *Newsletter and Survey distribution*
- c. *Number of Project Groups*
- d. *Dues paying members/participants in community association meetings and projects*
- e. *Amount of \$ in Neighborhood association bank account*
- f. *Number of Volunteers*
- g. *Number of Active committees*
- h. *Community resident experts who are involved in neighborhood based projects*

#### Enforcement of Codes and Laws (Housing)

##### Indicators:

#### Loitering

- a. *#Reports to housing authorities*
- b. *Tenure (average years in neighborhood would increase)*
- c. *#Code violations*
- d. *Amount of walking traffic*
- e. *Response time to report of violation*
- f. *Correction of violation/resolution time*
- g. *Presence of a "welcome packet for each old and new neighbor*
- h. *#/proportion of vacancies*
- i. *Recreational activities for youth and older adults*
- j. *Participation of elected officials in neighborhood meeting (number of hours spent in community)*



SANITATION

MARCH 16, 2002

<b>TOPIC: SANITATION GOALS (FINAL FLIP CHART) AND INDICATORS</b>			
<b>Goal 1: ALL BALTIMORE RESIDENTS &amp; BUSINESSES ARE EDUCATED ABOUT SANITATION ISSUES</b>	<b>Goal 2: ALL BALTIMORE RESIDENTS &amp; BUSINESSES HAVE ADEQUATE TRASH RECEPTACLES</b>	<b>Goal 3: SANITATION LAWS (CURRENT &amp; NEW) ARE ENFORCED (BY NEIGHBORHOOD &amp; OFFICIALS) FOR RESIDENTS &amp; BUSINESSES</b>	<b>Goal 4: ALL BALTIMORE COMMUNITIES RECEIVE EQUAL &amp; TIMELY RESPONSE TO SANITATION SERVICE REQUESTS AND COMPLAINTS (INCLUDING TRANSIT SPACES AND STORM DRAINS)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communication and information</li> <li>• no trash in community (1<sup>st</sup> appearance, how it looks)</li> <li>• success stories</li> <li>• neighborhood shown off by Mayor</li> <li>• fewer complaints about violations, fewer phone calls</li> <li>• school systems have curriculum in place (K-12 &amp; college)</li> <li>• children pass test about sanitation</li> <li>• children practice sanitation laws and cleanliness, abide laws</li> <li>• more residents putting trash out properly (scheduled days)</li> <li>• more collaboration with public housing and section 8 officials (discussed followed this suggestion about who has jurisdiction over sanitation issues in public housing and who to call)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appearance – fewer trash bags, shopping bags anywhere</li> <li>• more and better programs in city for residents and businesses to access receptacles</li> <li>• more communal receptacles along commercial corridors and emptied more to reduce overflow</li> <li>• no empty houses</li> <li>• more houses with garbage disposals</li> <li>• more communities that apply for bulk trash and roll off receptacles</li> <li>• fewer rats/pigeons, dogs, seagulls and critters in neighborhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new laws about each house posting address in back and front</li> <li>• fewer complaints and call backs</li> <li>• appearance, more beautiful, more friendly faces and attitudes</li> <li>• fewer repeat calls for requests for city services</li> <li>• more communities share success stories and best practices</li> <li>• more upscale residents move in, community more attractive to potential, tax paying, voting home owners</li> <li>• increase in fines issued</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• less response time between complaint and service</li> <li>• less of a sanitation-related (rat bites, kids play in yard, people sit outside after dark) health disparity in city</li> <li>• equal tools and trucks in neighborhoods</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more communication among homeowners, renters, projects, section 8, churches, businesses, &amp; city about sanitation</li> <li>• trees trimmed/forestry mentioned here (folks decided to move to Goal 4)</li> <li>• more visible advertising about where to call and reminders, public education campaign/ads</li> </ul>			
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**TOPIC: SANITATION FINAL FLIP CHART INDICATORS**

<p><b>Goal 1:</b> ALL BALTIMORE RESIDENTS &amp; BUSINESSES ARE EDUCATED ABOUT SANITATION ISSUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MORE PUBLIC ADVERTISING ABOUT SANITATION</li> <li>• NUMBER OF CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH ARE TAUGHT SANITATION LAWS IN SCHOOL AND PRACTICE/ABIDE THE LAWS</li> <li>• FEWER COMPLAINTS ABOUT SANITATION VIOLATIONS</li> <li>• MORE NEIGHBORS PUT THEIR TRASH OUT PROPERLY</li> <li>• MORE COMMUNICATION AMONG RESIDENTS ABOUT SANITATION – PUBLIC HOUSING, SECTION 8, RENTERS, HOMEOWNERS, BUSINESSES.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goal 2:</b> ALL BALTIMORE RESIDENTS &amp; BUSINESSES HAVE ADEQUATE TRASH RECEPTACLES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FEWER PLASTIC TRASH BAGS</li> <li>• MORE &amp; BETTER PROGRAMS TO ENSURE ACCESS TO RECEPTACLES FOR ALL RESIDENTS &amp; BUSINESSES</li> <li>• FEWER TRASH RECEPTACLES OVER FLOWING IN THE COMMUNITY</li> <li>• FEWER RATS &amp; CRITTERS IN THE COMM.</li> <li>• GREATER ACCESS TO ROLL-OFFS FOR BULK TRASH IN THE COMMUNITY</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goal 3:</b> SANITATION LAWS (CURRENT &amp; NEW) ARE ENFORCED (BY NEIGHBORHOOD &amp; OFFICIALS) FOR RESIDENTS &amp; BUSINESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FEWER COMPLAINTS &amp; CALL BACKS</li> <li>• COMMUNITIES ARE MORE BEAUTIFUL</li> <li>• MORE COMMUNITIES SHARE SUCCESS STORIES &amp; BEST PRACTICES</li> <li>• COMMUNITIES ARE MORE ATTRACTIVE TO TAX-PAYING HOMEOWNERS</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goal 4:</b> ALL BALTIMORE COMMUNITIES RECEIVE EQUAL &amp; TIMELY RESPONSE TO SANITATION SERVICE REQUESTS AND COMPLAINTS (INCLUDING TRANSIT SPACES AND STORM DRAINS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LESS RESPONSE TIME BETWEEN COMPLAINT &amp; SERVICE</li> <li>• LESS HEALTH PROBLEMS RELATED TO SANITATION AND FEWER DISPARAGING HEALTH ISSUES AMONG BALTIMORE NEIGHBORHOOD</li> <li>• MORE FINES FOR VIOLATIONS</li> <li>• EQUAL TRUCKS &amp; TOOLS TO EACH COMM.</li> </ul>
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**Public Safety  
Visioning – Public Safety – March 16, 2002**

***Problems***

open garages  
youth drug trafficking  
lack of resident involvement  
lack of space for youth  
petty crime  
loitering  
lack of speed control  
drug buyers  
lack of drug treatment  
unsupervised youth  
loud and foul music  
vacant areas and escape routes for drug traffickers  
lack of resident coordination with leaders and officials

***Goals***

“No vacant lots and no vacant houses”  
“No loitering”  
“More community policing in my neighborhood”  
“Drug treatment on demand”  
“Safer traffic conditions”  
“Better traffic control”  
“More landlords who encourage participation in public safety”  
“Lawn furniture not chained down”  
“Kids involved in recreation programs”  
“See city officials keep their word..doing what they should...Want a means to throw them out if they don't keep their word”  
“Like to see city officials that are accountable..with a report card or a recall”  
“In ten years I would like to see petty crime taken seriously”  
“Youth and senior citizens and police working together to maintain public safety”  
“Collaboration between police and the community”  
“People feeling safe in their neighborhoods at night – feel free to come out when they want to.”  
“Better communication with State's Attorney's Office and the Police to keep children off the street”  
“All kids going to school”  
“More properly staffed recreation centers”  
“Renters taking pride in their home and community”  
“More youth involved in public safety in their community”  
“A safer environment for pre-schoolers in the community”  
“More licensed day care centers”  
“Less vacant lots and more homeowners”  
“Want people to feel safe reporting crimes in the neighborhood”

“Decrease intimidation factors”

“Community needs to understand what it takes to keep drug dealers off the street. How much drugs do they have to have to be arrested”

“Increase resident knowledge of the sentencing process”

“Decrease drug activity”

“Community more involved with the judicial system”

“Fewer bars”

**Goal 1: Provide a healthy, nurturing environment for youth to become tomorrow’s leaders.**

- a. increase in number of recreational centers per 1000 youth
- b. increase in number of staff per 100 children (at recreational center)
- c. increase in number of children participating in recreational center activities
- d. decrease in truancy rates
- e. increase number of youth members of neighborhood associations (# of youth attending meetings/total # of youth in community)
- f. increase in school attendance
- g. increase in number of educational programs per recreational center
- h. increase in after school programs/ 1000 youths
- i. decrease in crimes committed by juveniles between 3-9PM
- j. decrease in juvenile arrest rates in neighborhood
- k. decrease in violent crimes committed by juveniles (homicide, suicide, accidents)

**Goal 2: Ensure that all vacant, abandoned, and substandard housing are secured, demolished or brought up to code.**

- a. decrease in number of vacant houses per total households
- b. increase in number of fenced spaces per number of vacant spaces
- c. more community utilized space (trees, garden, benches)
- d. more city dollars allocated to Parks for greater community involvement in neighborhood
- e. increase in number of secured vacancies
- f. decrease in crime activity

**Goal 3: Ensure full institutional and community support for a community policing system in Baltimore.**

- a. more foot patrol per population
- b. more police participation in community projects
- c. increase in number of responses per number of 911/311 calls (#911/#311)
- d. decrease in response time to 911/311 calls
- e. increase in total number of citizens reporting crimes to police/total crimes



**BNIA Focus group**  
**Public Safety**

**March 16, 2002**

- f. increase in number of block watch, COP, court watch, window watch, phone trees
- g. more city/law enforcement officials attending community meetings
- h. increase in law enforcement informational packets distributed to community centers on a regular basis (from the state attorney's office)
- i. increase in community members participating in community association meetings
- j. increase in number of prosecutions/arrest
- k. increase in resident attendance at city hall meetings
- l. decrease in traffic accidents
- m. increase number of speed bumps

**Goal 4: Ensure sufficient drug education and treatment.**

- a. increase in various drug treatment centers that are culturally competent-giving priority to neighborhood residents
- b. greater dispersion of drug treatment centers (not just in poor areas)
- c. more inpatient/outpatient drug treatment slots/total population
- d. drug education in schools and recreational center/number of centers
- e. increase in budget for population based on need (\$/drug user)
- f. equal funding for drug education/treatment for men and women



**BNIA Focus Groups**  
**March 16, 2002**  
**Education Topic**

(10 original participants; I think 2 left at break and 1 new person came in)

Final Goals & Indicators

**GOAL 1:** *Students graduate as productive citizens, ready to enter the worlds of work, higher education, entrepreneurship, and leadership*

Indicators:

- ❖ number of flourishing businesses (possibly defined as started up by graduates and lasting 5 years)
- ❖ number of students completing technical training (e.g. computer training)
- ❖ number of students involved with/completing internships with community groups and businesses
- ❖ number of students completing job readiness skill training
- ❖ reduction in number of behavior incidences
- ❖ drop-out rate
- ❖ number of students entering and completing college, technical school, trade school, etc. (all forms of higher/additional education)

*Participants noted there are two important, but not accounted for issues here-- goals for/needs of special education students & respect (improving/increasing 'respect' - between & among students, teachers, administrators, and parents came up several times but was never fully included in formal goals to participants' satisfaction; some discussion around offering cultural competency courses to address this issue &, for example, an indicator being # of students completing cultural competency course, but group never reached closure on this issue)*

**GOAL 2:** *Increase parental involvement*

Indicators:

- ❖ number of parent volunteers & mentors
- ❖ number of parents involved in decision-making processes (school system/central office, school improvement teams)
- ❖ number of parents on school internal working groups
- ❖ number of parents participating with PTAs/PTOs
- ❖ number of parents attending school board meetings
- ❖ number of parent advocates; number of parents engaged in legislative process (around education issues)
- ❖ number of parents observing classroom activities/sessions

- ❖ number of parents attending parent-teacher conferences, # of meetings between parents and teachers
- ❖ number of parents attending ARDs (IEP meetings) for special education students
- ❖ number of parents engaged in grassroots/community educational organizing initiatives (e.g. BEN)

**GOAL 3:**     *Increase community, business - school partnerships*

Indicators:

- ❖ number of schools open / holding education and community activities during evenings and weekends
  - For example,
    - ❖ number of schools with evening GED programs
    - ❖ number of schools offering after-school programs for students and parents
- ❖ number of positive parenting programs offered by schools
- ❖ number of school-based mental/physical health programs (or # of schools with accessible mental health services)

**GOAL 4:**     *Parity in school quality*

Indicators:

- ❖ adherence to statewide school standards
- ❖ number of certified teachers
- ❖ all students graduating meet statewide standards
- ❖ adequate resources per child
  - For example
    - ❖ number of working computers per child
    - ❖ adequate number of books per child
- ❖ ratio of teachers to children
- ❖ parity in curriculum/courses offered
- ❖ adequate facilities/buildings (physical plant issues)

**Neighborhood Economic Development**  
**Facilitator: Marjoleine Kars**  
**March 16, 2002**

**Brainstorm Goals:**

Thriving Commercial Districts which:

- are clean, well-lit, and people feel safe
- have adequate parking
- are reachable by mass transit that works
- with wide range of stores to accommodate needs of range of neighborhood residents in terms of age, gender, ethnicity or race, and income.
- stores should provide people with essentials of daily life (ie. grocery, hard ware, books, services) so people don't have to leave their neighborhoods for such things.
- contain community centers for kids and young adults to promote community, provide meaningful activities that keep kids and districts safe.
- that look nice through physical improvements through awnings, banners, trees
- have restaurants with outdoor areas.
- with strong merchants' associations that engage in collective marketing and other cooperative initiatives.
- have coalitions between Merchants' Association and Neighborhood Associations as a way to build community and help in satisfying/balancing the needs of all neighborhood residents
- revitalized and redeveloped struggling districts (such as Belvedere/York Rd)
- that are **compatible** with the neighborhood in which they exist:
  - they should use existing space, not tear things down and build new
  - fit size and scale of neighborhood
  - are sensitive to streetscaping
  - maintain the architectural integrity of the neighborhood

Location of commercial districts should be such that people have access; yet commercial districts should fit neighborhoods in terms of size.

Commercial Districts should stay commercial, ie., churches and non-profits who move in spaces that previously contained businesses are a problem, esp. in terms of tax issues.

Reduce the number of absentee landlords who fail to care for their properties

Few vacancies in commercial space

Fiscal breaks to small businesses

Job training centers

Increased access to capital for small businesses

Entrepreneurial training for residents

Overhaul of zoning laws to better serve small businesses and non-business owners.

Enforcement of zoning laws that do work.

Enforce laws that deal with loitering and cleanliness

Spread development across neighborhoods rather than focus on downtown

People want to see preservation of existing buildings rather than a lot of new building development.

Better mass transit so all areas of the city are accessible

Planning should be sensitive to and foster neighborhood stability - preserve middle-class tax base; help communities which are turning themselves around and make sure city decisions help these communities, not set them back

Pass new laws (city/county/state/fed) that encourage small businesses

### **Focus group participants and facilitator grouped the above concerns into 4 goals:**

Goals:

1. Thriving Commercial Districts
2. Employment and Business Ownership Opportunities
3. Neighborhood-friendly City-wide Strategic Planning
4. Strong Neighborhood/Commercial District Linkages

### **Indicator Brainstorm:**

#### **For goal #1, Thriving Commercial districts:**

- \* track sales tax revenues (increases would indicate success)
- \* volume of business that is neighborhood derived and volume of business that comes from outside the neighborhood or, other way to put it, percent of market share of neighborhood shoppers in a commercial district
- \* percent of neighborhood residents who shop at commercial business district x times per week
- \* number of businesses v. number of non-profits in commercially-zoned businesses
- track property values through property taxes to see whether business values are increasing
- \* track occupancy rates by types of businesses

lots of discussion about how neighborhood compatibility should be defined (physical compatibility and whether needs of residents are being met) and could be measured - some wanted qualitative measures, other quantitative. In the end, group came up with:

- \* measuring how much existing space is being used vs. number and size of newly constructed buildings
- \* map existing square footage in use by business and track square footage of businesses over time (this would show whether businesses are being brought in that use much more square footage than existing businesses which would indicate businesses that do not fit the neighborhood profile in terms of size)
- \* track the Main Street Program and compare other districts with do not have a Main Street Program.
- \* track the Main Street Program over time to see whether it serves more commercial \* districts (i.e., this would measure catchment areas)

### **Goal #2 Employment and Business Ownership:**

ratio of locally-owned businesses to number of non-locally owned businesses  
ratio of locally-employed people to residents who are not locally employed.  
ratio of people who use the neighborhood job center and get neighborhood jobs to those who use the center and do not get local jobs  
ratio of women and minorities who get business loans to total number of people getting business loans.  
ratio of businesses in a district who get tax breaks to those who don't.  
track the size of businesses who get tax breaks to see whether small businesses get them.  
ratio of empowerment zone \$ to job creation  
Distribution and use of empowerment zone \$ over time.  
track residency and vacancy rates

### **Goal #3 Neighborhood-friendly City-wide Strategic Planning**

Distribution and use of city/state/federal \$ in terms of geographic location and size of commercial zones, and in terms of rehab vs. new construction; small vs. large businesses; and individuals vs. developers.

ratio of # of complaints about code/zoning violations that receive follow-up to total number of complaints.

percentage of capital improvement \$ that goes to new construction vs. to rehab - and ratios of both to total capital improvement money

What percentage of capital improvement \$ goes to downtown vs. neighborhoods

Ownership v. tenants in buildings and businesses (to get at neighborhood stability)

Owner occupied houses and businesses (same goal)

vacancy rates (same goal)

Zoning:

track type of zoning decisions

track whether city has revised zoning laws and if so, how?

### **Goal # 4 Strong Neighborhood/Commercial District Linkages**

Percentage of merchants who are members of merchants' associations

Percentage of merchants who are members of neighborhood/merchants' associations

Number of organizations that include merchants and residents

Number of neighborhood promotional activities such as parades, races, festivals, retail promotions, etc.





# **Summaries and Results**

**March 23, 2002**

**Urban Environment/Ecology**

**Children, Youth, and Families**

**Health**

**Not available: Workforce Development  
Transportation**



**Neighborhood "Vital Signs" Project**  
**Focus Group**  
**March 23, 2002**  
**Urban Environment/Ecolo**  
**Facilitator: Marjoleine Kars**  
**Recorder: Nidhi Tomar**  
**Data partner: Guy Hager**

We started with a discussion about what participants thought "Urban Environment/Ecology" entailed. Participants came up with issues around:

- Individual/community behavior and stewardship
- watersheds
- education
- preservation
- community influences ecology and ecology influences community
- water quality
- sewage
- contamination of water, soil, air
- sanitation
- green spaces such as parks, gardens, "wilderness areas"
- health and safety issues
- ways in which ecology connects to people's everyday lives

**PART ONE: Visioning goals:**

Ten years from now, we want in our Baltimore neighborhoods [below are all the goals I recorded on the flip chart, in the order they went up]

- \* excellent public transit
- \* greater tree canopy
- \* protection of stream quality through better infrastructure (sanitation) and control of erosion
- \* more art, such as sculptures, music and cultural events in the city
- \* happy people making use of the outdoors
- \* affordable housing with gardens
- \* mixture of housing in terms of income
- \* green spaces incorporated into new developments
- \* bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways
- \* transit stops with nice landscaping, clean and safe shelter, good signs
- \* better signs in the city
- \* community involvement in ecology
- \* awareness of everyone's needs in making ecological decisions
- \* increased funding
- \* smart government services
- \* fewer cars and more alternatives

- \* more access to parks, greens, harbor, etc., through people-friendly means, such as trails, walkways, etc., not through six-lane highways.
- \* clean and green schoolyards that are safe, user-friendly, and educational
- \* educational programs in schools to bring nature close to kids
- \* public transportation from inner-city to nature outside the city
- \* neighbors, neighborhoods, and organizations working together cooperatively and for the greater good of all
- \* everyone has access to a garden through community gardens and other green spaces
- \* reduced reliance on chemicals
- \* more public restrooms
- \* reduction of homelessness
- \* conversion of vacant houses to affordable housing
- \* clean parks, waterways, and streets
- \* renovation and restoration of historical fabric of the city
- \* coalition building by requiring cooperation across agencies or neighborhoods part of the money granting process.
- \* environmentally-sensitive city planning department
- \* comprehensive plan for parks and execution of this plan
- \* no billboards in the city
- \* media support for ecology so environmental thinking will become "cool," "sexy," and "hip"
- \* better information dissemination about funding opportunities, success stories, and other opportunities out there for communities
- \* at least one computer per community so people can access information
- \* regional awareness, not just city neighborhood awareness, because ecological concerns transcend the city
- \* everyone knows what phyto remediation is
- \* less dog poop
- \* locally grown trees planted in the city, not trees from Ohio or some other place
- \* access to affordable, healthy, and locally grown food in each neighborhood (through stores/farmers' markets/ community gardens)
- \* neighborhoods are aware of global warming and do their part to help reduce it
- \* no crime on the streets

***Out of all these visions, we came up with 4 major goals for which to find indicators:***

- I) Ten years from now, we want better transportation alternatives
- II) Ten years from now, we want better air, soil, water, and vegetative quality
- III) Ten years from now, we want a greater sense of stewardship and awareness
- IV) Ten years from now, we want better facilities and spaces devoted to the environment

## **PART TWO: INDICATOR BRAINSTORM**

### **Goal 1: Fewer cars and better transportation alternatives**

miles of designated bike ways

# of city busses with bike racks

# of people who bike as a form of transportation

# of people who use something besides a car to go to work

% of people who work within a mile of their home

decrease in annual mileage driven

annual mileage through alternative transportation such as bikes, public transportation, canoe, etc.

# and location of transit stops that have been improved in terms of landscaping, shelter, cleanliness, safety, etc.

people's perceptions of the safety of cycling in the city

### **Goal 2: Improved air/water/soil/vegetation quality**

air temperature differentials

% of impervious surface area to total land area

% of tree canopy to total land area by neighborhood

% increase in light-rail track (will contribute to better air quality if people use cars less)

among of sewage leaking into streams

measure saline/ph/nitrogen levels in soil and water

measure water quality at the household faucet, rather than, as is done now, when it leaves the water-treatment plant

bird census per neighborhood (to measure how wildlife is doing) - # of species of birds and change in species of birds

test soil for chemicals and other pollutants

measure water quality in streams

# of non-diesel buses to total buses

# of alternative fuel buses to total buses

# of registered cars with low emissions to total # of registered cars

measure asthma (we are looking for reduction)

measure cancer cases (we are looking for reduction)

### **Goal 3: Greater Environmental Awareness, Involvement, and Sense of Responsibility in Residents**

# of volunteer hours contributed by able neighborhood population towards the environment

# of kids who live in neighborhoods without parks who visit regional parks

# of neighborhoods without parks (we want to see a decrease)

# of registered vehicles with Chesapeake Bay or Farm Preservation license plate (indicates willingness to spend money towards the environment)

# of people who live within .25 mile of a park

diversity by race/ethnicity/age/gender/ability, etc., in environmental organizations and programs in the city  
# of school/after-school programs that get kids to parks and outdoor spaces  
# of Baltimore schools that teach units on the environment  
# of organizations that are involved with parks  
% of people who value public parks in comparison to other city services  
% of people willing to contribute to parks  
% of households and businesses that recycle by type of material  
increase in type of materials accepted by city for recycling  
total volume of household waste (we want to see this decrease)  
total volume of proper disposal of hazardous household waste (we want to see this go up)  
people's perceptions of park safety

**Goal 4: Improved facilities, programs, and spaces devoted to the environment**

# of historic structures on public land that have been rehabilitated or preserved  
acreage incorporated into historic districts  
# of properties that have been rehabilitated in historic districts  
# of school-yard habitats in city schools  
amount of school space in asphalt v. green space  
# of kids that have participated in outdoor-programming  
# of permits and estimated attendance for events in public parks  
increase # of city facilities designed for natural light/heat/air (i.e. buildings with green design)  
# of art works in parks  
% of events in parks that include art  
government \$ spent on specific facilities using capital funds vs. funds for maintenance and programs  
increase in # of public restrooms that are clean and patrolled/watched (i.e. to prevent use for prostitution or drug dealing)  
increase in pedestrian-friendly lighting in streets  
decrease in number of billboards  
# of parks that have safe pedestrian access  
# of parks that have inviting, well-lit and safe entrances  
# of positive stories about the environment in the media  
# and location of transit stops that have been improved in terms of landscaping, shelter, cleanliness, safety, etc.

**Visioning – Children, Youth, and families – March 23, 2002**

***Problems***

Children that have to take care of other children

Disrespect by youth – “they are short-tempered, angry and want to control everything”

Education, psychology, and capitalism

“problems with families not understanding how to obtain the happiness that their grandparents had”

children play in the street unattended. No place for recreation.

Teenagers having no respect as far as smoking marijuana on vacant house steps

“no dinner table time...people are in school or working two jobs and don’t have time to be with their teen...there are no activities for children to migrate to. So children are sitting in front of the TV. They don’t have focused activity.”

Families do not find the public schools to be acceptable. Young families move out because the schools are so bad. Only one child who lives in our community goes to the public school. All others go to private schools or have moved out.

Need extended families to know how to access information and advocate for youth

Unemployment and vacant housing

Lack of stability in the home

Lack of respect for oneself and others

“I’d like to see more people involved, like me”

“Gentrification”...”pushing poor people out”

***Goals***

“Families in communities know how to access and evaluate the education and counseling and the health of their family and individual families”

“Each community has a central socializing place in the community that invites children, youth and families. And the community has the resources to keep that community place up”

“Less vacant houses more home ownership”

Community voice is heard and government is accountable...”City is in partnership”

Community voice in partnership in decisions with government offices on all levels

“community residents engage and take ownership in the issues that impact their community”

“Every community has an association and increased attendance at meetings”

“For the community to establish block unity”

“Accessibility to needed services (full service markets, cleaners).

“Like to see 90% of children graduate from high school”... “And they go to college and get gainful employment – no minimum wage.”

“like to see neighborhoods remain stable”

“Dedicated leadership political and educational devices”

“Black community understand the importance of media, communication, and sharing of information”

“More computer access and literacy”

“Want peace patrol to grow bigger”

“Community has to band together but first of all the people need to know what you want to do”

“Money or dollars do not come into the community unless the community is involved in that process.

**Goal 1: Increase the sense of community in Baltimore neighborhoods to address children, youth, and family (CYF) needs.**

- a. each community association have its own building (or share with other assn.)
- b. citywide PAC (political action committee) that respects the interests of all neighborhoods in Baltimore.
- c. Increase in PTA in neighborhoods
- d. Increase in boys and girls clubs, and increase in membership in existing clubs.
- e. Increase in active community associations.

**Goal 2: Increase in community voice, collaboration, and participation in decision-making process of issues, concerns, and projects that affect CYF in Baltimore neighborhoods.**

- a. implementation of community suggestions by public and private partners.
- b. quarterly reporting by agencies (public and private) of all dollars coming into communities and description of how it is directly or indirectly addressing community needs.
- c. resident membership on public and private agencies board of directors.

**Goal 3: Ensure adequate and effective resources for CYF in all Baltimore neighborhoods.**

- a. needs assessment for resources
- b. # of community places for socializing for CYF (especially intergenerational) within neighborhoods
- c. # of non-traditional programs for CYF (substance abuse, health, recreational – all of which have extended hours. Such as youth programs that operate in the evenings and on weekends)
- d. # of community association initiated projects that were completed
- e. # of volunteer hours in each of Baltimore neighborhoods
- f. # of playgrounds and # of safe playgrounds (# accidents/children)
- g. # of community service people from the court/legal system who have worked in each neighborhood of Baltimore
- h. resident’s knowledge of resources that exist as measured by a survey



- i. # of community associations disseminating information on resources in the area

**Goal 4: Ensure a stable community for the welfare of CYF.**

- a. # of vacant houses/total house
- b. # of children attending the schools in their own neighborhoods
- c. # of juvenile crimes (violent/non-violent) reported
- d. # petty crimes reported
- e. truancy rate (# of children skipping school without permission)
- f. rate of school absenteeism (# of children missing school)

**Goal 5: Ensure CYF have access to gainful employment (living wage) and other opportunities for career advancement and development.**

- a. # of CY graduated from high school
- b. # of youth that are passing standard school literacy tests
- c. # of employed residents earning a livable wage in each neighborhood of Baltimore
- d. # of youth employment training programs in Baltimore city and # of students/staff at each program
- e. # of families needing government assistance in each neighborhood
- f. # of residents unemployed in each neighborhood of Baltimore
- g. average income of residents in each neighborhood of Baltimore
- h. # of residents living at or below the poverty level in each neighborhood of Baltimore
- i. measure of racism in each neighborhood of Baltimore (discussed that this could be addressed by looking at all these indicators by racial/ethnic categories)
- j. home upkeep in each neighborhood of Baltimore (develop criteria for grading “upkeep” and collect this information)
- k. # of vocational schools in Baltimore city and # of successful placement of residents in jobs that pay a living wage



Vital Signs Focus Group  
March 23, 2002 Health

After brief introductions and a review of the goals and house rules of the day, the group was divided into two teams of three for a 20 minute brainstorming session. The following list documents the ideas shared when the teams reunited:

- Good quality, comprehensive and universal health care. Focus:
  - Prevention
  - Immediate access
  - Utilization AND Access (prenatal and preventative care; mental health)
  - Increase awareness of health issues and resources to address issues
- Early childhood development training
- Parenting classes
- Social and recreational activities for African American men
- Access to health care (for all). Keep pharmacy assistance program.
- Outreach and information/resources available in communities
- Central organization for special needs population
- Links to and access of legal rights
- Advocates needed for those delivering services
- Increased awareness of health issues for neighr (i.e. health stats to serve as warning and preventative measure)
- Promotion of healthful activities
- Good quality prenatal and well-child care
- Motivating and increasing neighborhood involvement/participation and utilization of services.
- Preventative medicine and good preventative health care (e.g. stress reduction programs). Focus:
  - Education – including resources available. Expand to include preventive health care practices throughout the life span and across life stages.
  - Life long focus on practicing healthy behaviors and life styles.
  - Immunization
  - Good nutrition
  - Availability of quality food/produce and healthy eating habits
- Solid mental health; including a positive attitude. Focus:
  - Reducing stigma, understanding as an illness
  - Neighborhood awareness
  - Accessing and understanding care
- Encourage physical and social activities for seniors to improve physical and mental health
- Elimination of substance abuse
- Drug free communities
- Lead free homes
- Decrease in health disparity
- Clean environment for physical and recreational activities (parks, swimming)
- Peaceful, healthful, safe society where the quality of life enhances longevity.

Five common outcomes were selected and indicators (asterisked below) were then extrapolated from selected outcomes:

**Outcome #1: Good quality preventative health care available for all.**

1. Increase in the number of children in the neighborhood receiving well-child care from birth through age 18.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# children living in neighborhood receiving well-child care (0 – 18)}}{\text{total \# children living in neighborhood}}$$
2. Decrease the amount of lead paint children are exposed to.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# homes free of lead paint}}{\text{total \# of homes in neighborhood}}$$
3. Increase air quality
  - \* 
$$\text{AQI at benchmark} - \text{AQI at baseline} = \text{AQI change}$$
4. Increase in the number of pregnant moms receiving prenatal care in the first trimester.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# women who received prenatal care during first trimester, target time}}{\text{total \# women pregnant and in their first trimester during target time}} = \%$$
5. Decrease in the infant mortality rate.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of children in neighborhood who died under age 1}}{\text{total \# children aged 1 year or less in neighborhood}}$$
6. Decrease in the number of children born with very low birth weight.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of children in neighborhood born during target time with very low birth weight}}{\text{total \# children born during target time in neighborhood}}$$
7. Decrease in the number of premature births.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of children in neighborhood born premature during target time}}{\text{total \# children born during target time in neighborhood}}$$
8. Decrease the number of non-emergency ER visits.
  - \* 
$$\text{\# Non-emergency ER visits benchmark} - \text{\# non-emergency ER visits baseline}$$
9. Decrease the number of children with infectious diseases.
  - \* 
$$\text{\# children with infectious diseases benchmark} - \text{\# children with infectious diseases baseline}$$
10. Increase in the number of children able to fight communicable diseases.
11. Decrease in the number of teen pregnancies.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# women pregnant target time under age 20}}{\text{total \# women pregnant all ages target time}}$$
12. Increase the number of people utilizing health screenings.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# hospital patients screened for health issues}}{\text{total \# neighborhood members}}$$

**Outcome #2: Increase health awareness, education, and resources.**

1. Increase availability of health information, education, health professionals and educators.
  - \* # health education programs in neighborhood benchmark -- # health education programs in neighborhood baseline
2. Increase in number of neighborhood residents living a more healthy lifestyle.
  - \* # neighborhood residents with healthy lifestyle benchmark -- # neighborhood residents with healthy lifestyle baseline.
3. Increase in number of professional and paraprofessional health providers with specific health education duties.
  - \* # para/professionals with health education duties benchmark -- # para/professionals with health education duties baseline
4. Increase in the number of neighborhood residents surveyed on health issues to determine impact and amount of health education received and utilized.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# neighborhood residents surveyed on health issues}}{\text{total \# neighborhood residents}}$$
5. Increase funding.
  - \* \$ spent on health awareness, education, and resources benchmark -- \$ spent on health awareness, education, and resources baseline
6. Create an interactive health resources guide to increase awareness of available programs.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of neighborhood members who were referred to various programs from resources guide}}{\text{total \# neighborhood members served through various programs}}$$

**Outcome #3: Proper nutrition for all.**

1. Decrease in the number of fast food restaurants.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of fast food restaurants in neighborhood}}{\text{total \# restaurants in neighborhood}}$$
2. Increase in the number of healthful restaurants and grocery stores.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of healthful restaurants and grocery stores in neighborhood}}{\text{total \# restaurants and grocery stores in neighborhood}}$$
3. Decrease in the number of bars and liquor stores.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of bars and liquor stores in neighborhood}}{\text{total \# bars and liquor stores in neighborhood}}$$
4. Decrease in the number of people diagnosed with obesity/diabetes/poor health behavior-related diseases.
  - \* # people diagnosed with obesity/diabetes/hypertension, etc. benchmark -- # people diagnosed with obesity/diabetes/hypertension, etc. baseline

#### **Outcome #4: Access, utilization and education of mental health services.**

1. Decrease (eliminate) the number of people on mental health services waiting lists. Immediate access to substance abuse treatment and other mental health services.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of neighborhood residents waiting for mental health services}}{\text{total \# of neighborhood residents requiring mental health services}}$$
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of neighborhood residents waiting for substance abuse treatment}}{\text{total \# of neighborhood residents requiring substance abuse treatment}}$$
2. Increase awareness and education of mental health to eliminate stigma (via public survey).
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of neighborhood residents with negative connotation of mental health issues/services}}{\text{total \# neighborhood residents}}$$
3. Enough funding to meet mental health needs of the neighborhood.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\$ amount spent on mental health services}}{\text{\$ amount needed to adequately serve all neighborhood residents with mental health services needs}}$$
4. Increase the number of mental health providers to clients with dual diagnoses.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# people dually diagnosed with mental health disorders benchmark}}{\text{\# people dually diagnosed with mental health disorders baseline}}$$
5. Increase the number of residential drug treatment programs.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# residential drug treatment programs benchmark}}{\text{\# residential drug treatment programs baseline}}$$
6. Increase length of stay for mental health patients.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{Avg. length of stay in mental health program benchmark}}{\text{Avg. length of stay in mental health program baseline}}$$
7. Increase in quality of mental health programs.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{Neighborhood residents perception of quality of mental health programs available benchmark}}{\text{Neighborhood residents perception of quality of mental health programs available baseline}}$$

#### **Outcome #5: Improved outreach.**

1. Increase number of outreach workers who maintain ongoing contact with neighborhood residents.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of outreach workers with ongoing contact duties benchmark}}{\text{\# of outreach workers with ongoing contact duties baseline}}$$
2. Increase follow-up care.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of neighborhood residents with receiving follow-up outreach}}{\text{total \# neighborhood residents in served by outreach programs}}$$
3. Increase number of services tailored to the specific neighborhood needs (e.g. school, streets, violence). Let residents make up their own mind about attending.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of tailored outreach services}}{\text{total \# of outreach services}}$$
4. Neighborhood resources centralized and distributed to all neighborhood residents systematically.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# residents aware of outreach benchmark}}{\text{\# residents aware of outreach baseline}}$$
5. Increase the number of outreach screenings.
  - \* 
$$\frac{\text{\# of residents screened for outreach benchmark}}{\text{\# of residents screened for outreach baseline}}$$

**Outcome #6: Healthy environment free of environmental hazards.**

1. Increase in the number of lead-free homes.  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# of lead-free homes}}{\text{total \# of inhabited homes in the neighborhood}}$
2. Increase in the number of asbestos-free buildings.  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# of asbestos-free buildings}}{\text{total \# of inhabited buildings in the neighborhood}}$
3. Increase in the amount of green park space  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# of green park acres}}{\text{total \# neighborhood acres}}$
4. Increased utilization of neighborhood parks.  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# residents visiting parks regularly}}{\text{total number of neighborhood residents}}$
5. Increase the number of living trees lining neighborhood streets.  
\*  $\text{\# living trees on streets benchmark -- \# living trees on streets baseline}$
6. Increase in the number of clean streets and alleys.  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# clean streets and alleys}}{\text{total number of streets and alleys in neighborhood}}$
7. Increase in the number of children tested for lead paint poisoning at the appropriate age.  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# of neighborhood children tested for lead paint poisoning at the appropriate age}}{\text{total number of children in the neighborhood}}$
8. Increase in the number of playgrounds.  
\*  $\text{\# playgrounds benchmark -- \# playgrounds baseline}$
9. Increase in coordinating policies and neighborhood decisions between policymakers (key players) and neighborhood/neighborhood residents.  
\*  $\text{\# playgrounds benchmark -- \# playgrounds baseline}$
10. Eliminate pests/decrease in the number of cockroaches/rats.  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# homes with rats/cockroaches}}{\text{total \# homes in neighborhood}}$
11. Increase in the number of green vacant lots.  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# green vacant lots}}{\text{total \# vacant lots}}$
12. Decrease in the number of asthmatics.  
\*  $\frac{\text{\# of neighborhood residents with asthma}}{\text{total number of neighborhood residents}}$





# Appendices

A: Invitation Letter

B: Map showing representation

C: Evaluation Analysis



February 28, 2002



INVITATION LETTER

As a neighborhood leader, you work hard everyday to improve the quality of life for the people in your community. As a result of your work, you have been recommended by several members of the Baltimore community to join other neighborhood leaders like you from across Baltimore City to **participate in a special focus group session**.

The goal of this session is to envision the future of Baltimore neighborhoods, and develop a process for neighborhood leaders to measure progress towards that vision over time. Please join us on:

**Saturday, March 23 from 9am-1pm**  
(Breakfast and registration begins at 8:30am. Lunch is also provided)  
**McKeldin Center, Room 319                      Morgan State University**

*The focus group sessions are sponsored by the  
Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance and the Morgan State University Institute for Urban Research*

There are 10 focus group topics. We would like your expertise on the topic of **[TOPIC AREA GOES HERE]**

This is the first in a series of focus groups conducted by the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA) to identify key citywide indicators measuring the strength and health of our neighborhoods. ***The focus groups will lead to a set of outcomes for our neighborhoods and to the creation of indicators that measure progress towards those outcomes over time.***

The work you and others are doing to improve your neighborhoods has never been documented in this form in Baltimore. But how do you know that you are making progress?

Documenting and measuring the outcomes is the best way to show how Baltimore residents, neighborhood leaders, public officials, non-profit organizations, businesses, and foundations are collectively enhancing and maintaining strong Baltimore neighborhoods. That is the goal of this project.

Like doctors who take the "vital signs" to determine the health of a patient, **the indicators we develop will become Baltimore's "vital signs"** to tell us whether our neighborhoods are healthy. BNIA will compile the data necessary to measure the indicators you identify during the focus groups, and will publish a baseline report in the fall of 2002 that reflects Baltimore neighborhoods' "vital signs." The report will be an annual publication.

It is our hope that these "vital signs" will be used to shape policy decisions, funding priorities, community building strategies, and neighborhood organizing efforts – that each decision helps to move these "vital signs" in a direction that highlights Baltimore's progress towards strong neighborhoods, and a stronger city. The indicators can be used to hold each of us accountable for making and acting on decisions that improve Baltimore neighborhoods.

Baltimore is ready to join over two hundred communities across the country that have participated in similar focus group sessions and are tracking progress toward their goals. (See the enclosed newspaper articles)

Please join us for this important event! As a participant, you will receive a special gift, breakfast and lunch. We are happy to reimburse mass transit expenses that you might incur. Please confirm your attendance by calling the BNIA office at (410) 235-0944, or use our email address at [bnia@bnia.org](mailto:bnia@bnia.org). Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. I can be reached at (410) 235-0944, or at [odette@bnia.org](mailto:odette@bnia.org). To learn more about BNIA and this process, please review the enclosed Fact Sheet.

Thanks for your participation and I look forward to seeing you on March 23!

Sincerely,

Odette T. Ramos  
Director

## Examples of Outcomes and Indicators

The following chart is a list of **examples** of outcomes and indicators. These are just examples, and do not represent the “best” outcomes and indicators.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Result/Outcomes</b> <i>What do we want to see?</i>	<b>Indicator</b> <i>What do we measure to know we are making progress?</i>	<b>Data</b> <i>What are the specific data sources?</i>
<b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>	Baltimore’s streets are safe	Rate of recorded adult and juvenile violent criminal offenses	Maryland Department of Juvenile Justice and the Baltimore City Policy Department: # and concentration of Part 1 offenses: murder, aggravated assaults, rape, etc, calculated by total, drug-related and non-drug related.
<b>SANITATION</b>	Baltimore’s streets and alley’s are clean-always	Number of illegal dumping violations	Baltimore City –Calls for Service file
<b>HOUSING</b>	Housing is affordable to Baltimore residents	Percentage of income spent on housing (rent or mortgage)	Census Bureau
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Children enter school ready to learn	Percentage of children entering kindergarten that attended preschool	Baltimore City Schools: Preschool matriculation
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	Neighborhood commercial districts meet the needs of the neighborhood in which they are located	Location of neighborhood commercial districts throughout the city	Geographic Information System (GIS) maps
<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	Jobs are available that pay wages to lift families out of poverty	Ratio of available low-skilled jobs that pay \$8.50 or above to low-skill job seekers	Jacob France Institute analysis
<b>CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES</b>	Baltimore’s children are born healthy	Percentage of mothers receiving pre-natal care during first trimester	Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH): Births to mothers receiving pre-natal care in first Trimester (recorded on birth certificate)
<b>URBAN ENVIRONMENT/ECOLOGY</b>	Parks, gardens, and recreation facilities are accessible to every Baltimore neighborhood and are well-maintained	The distances that Baltimore neighborhoods are from a park	A GIS city base map and Census Bureau data will show the location and number of parks relative to the concentration of resident
<b>PERSONAL AND FAMILY HEALTH</b>	Baltimore residents receive health care	Number and percentage of emergency room visits where a patient is treated with a non life-threatening illness and that could have been prevented	Baltimore City Health Department: types of emergency room visits
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Baltimore’s public transit system is dependable, reliable, and safe	On-time rate Passenger satisfaction with the transit system	MTA on-time statistics Rider surveys





TO: Odette Ramos  
 FROM: Kate Besleme  
 RE: Evaluations from the “Vital Signs” Project Community Focus Group on March 16 and 23, 2002  
 DATE: March 24, 2002

The evaluation was designed to determine the overall level of satisfaction that participants experienced the day of the focus group, the effectiveness of the plenary session and the focus group sessions, and to provide space for qualitative comments about the focus group. The questions were answered using a 5 point scale in which 5 indicated “very satisfied” or “strongly agree” and 1 indicated “not at all satisfied” or “strongly disagree”). Of those that participated a total of 55 evaluations were completed and returned – 35 participants completed and returned their evaluations for the March 16<sup>th</sup> focus group, and 20 participants for the March 23<sup>rd</sup> focus group.

### OVERALL RESULTS

Table 1 shows the overall results for the “Vital Signs” Community Focus Groups by question and by day. Based on question 1, the overall level of satisfaction for participants for both days was 4.5, with 5 being very satisfied and 4 being satisfied. Except for Question 5a (asking whether or not participants think about their neighborhood in a new and different way as a result of the focus group), participants were more than just “satisfied” with their experience, and more than just “agree” that they understand how goals and indicators are relevant to their work, to their neighborhoods and to the “Vital Signs” project. The open-ended comments (provided below) also indicate that the facilitation was excellent, that participants felt their voices were heard and their input in the process valued, and that they learned something new from each other.

The areas for improvement largely focused on three main issues:

- participation (e.g. needed more geographical and racial diversity);
- logistics (e.g. needed more time, better directions, less heat and more circulation); and
- process (e.g a few participants were “monopolizers,” and one participant felt her participation was inhibited by the facilitator).

It should be noted that this was the only less than positive statement made about the facilitators/recorders. The facilitators and recorders were truly exceptional and made the experience for participants very rewarding!

**Table 1. Average score per question, Aggregate total and by day**

	Average score per question, Aggregate total and by focus group day		
	Total	16-Mar	23-Mar
Question 1	4.5	4.5	4.6
Question 2			
Question 3	All Yes's	All yes	All yes
Question 4a	4.5	4.5	4.4
4b	4.5	4.5	4.4

4c	4.4	4.6	4.2
Question 5a	3.8	4.1	3.5
5b	4.1	4.4	3.8
5c	4.1	4.4	3.7
5d	4.1	4.4	3.8
5e	4.1	4.6	3.6
5f	4.6	4.5	4.6
5g	4.4	4.3	4.5
5h	4.4	4.4	4.3
5i	4.3	4.4	4.2
5j	4.2	4.0	4.3

### RESULTS FOR MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup> FOCUS GROUP

Table 2 shows the overall results by question and broken down by topic area for the March 16<sup>th</sup> group. Based on question 1, the overall level of satisfaction for participants was 4.5, with 5 being very satisfied and 4 being satisfied. Question 2 simply asked what topic area respondents participated. According to question 3, all participants believed their expectations for the focus group were met.

**Table 2. Average scores by question, March 16<sup>th</sup> focus group**

	Average score per question, total and by each topic area					
	Total	Nghd Econ	Public Safety	Sanitation	Housing	Education
Question 1	4.5	4.0	4.4	4.9	4.3	4.6
Question 2						
Question 3	All yes	All yes	All yes	All yes	All yes	All yes
Question 4a	4.5	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.3
4b	4.5	4.2	4.8	4.6	4.3	4.4
4c	4.6	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.9	4.6
Question 5a	4.1	3.8	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.1
5b	4.4	4.0	4.6	4.4	4.3	4.6
5c	4.4	4.0	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.6
5d	4.4	4.0	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.6
5e	4.6	4.3	4.6	4.4	4.9	4.8
5f	4.5	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.4	4.4
5g	4.3	3.5	4.4	4.6	4.0	4.7
5h	4.4	4.0	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.4
5i	4.4	3.8	4.0	4.5	4.7	4.7
5j	4.0	2.5	4.6	4.6	4.0	4.1

#### *Plenary Session Results*

The evaluation of the plenary session, taken from questions 4a, 4b, and 4c, shows that participants agreed that: a) they understand what the “Vital Signs” project is about and how



important it is for Baltimore neighborhoods, b) they learned about BNIA and how the services they offer can be helpful for their neighborhoods, and c) they plan to use, and encourage others to use, the resources BNIA offers to help improve their neighborhood. The average total scores are 4.5, 4.5, and 4.6, respectively.

### *Focus Group Session Results*

The evaluation of the focus group session, taken from questions 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f, 5g, 5h, 5i, 5j, indicates that participants agree that the session helped them to: a) to think about their neighborhoods in new and different ways, b) to understand what indicators are and how they can be helpful to measure progress toward neighborhood goals, c) to understand how indicator can be helpful to measure progress toward their vision for Baltimore City, d) to understand they their neighborhood group can develop their own indicators to measure the impact they are making on neighborhood conditions and to make progress toward their long-term goals, e) to understand that other neighborhoods in Baltimore City have similar goals for their neighborhoods. They also agree that: f) the discussion was very open and they were able to give a lot of input, g) they know how important their input is in developing “vital signs” for Baltimore, h) the handouts were clear and understandable, i) they will share the handouts with their neighborhood, and j) Morgan State provided a good space for the event. The average total scores are 4.1; 4.4; 4.4; 4.4; 4.6; 4.5; 4.3; 4.4; 4.4; 4.0, respectively.

### *Open-ended Results*

Aspects of the focus group that participants liked the best included:

- free exchange of ideas,
- supportive atmosphere in dealing with an area with no expertise [unclear who has no expertise], meeting other people active in neighborhoods,
- information exchange, bouncing ideas off each other,
- good exchange of ideas,
- kept on topic and on time,
- respectful discussion and atmosphere,
- community involvement,
- open discussion,
- the guidelines for participation, the demeanor of the facilitator and the recorder,
- the respect, honesty and forthrightness of the participants,
- understanding the need for indicators,
- the relaxed atmosphere, the ability of the facilitators,
- developing neighborhood goals for Baltimore;
- encourage us to learn more about indicators to generate action,
- friendly open discussion,
- good facilitator;
- good size group and diversity of neighborhoods,
- education of laws on sanitation; proper times for trash being put out,
- education on sanitation, good facilitator
- members from diverse neighborhoods with good ideas;
- orderly process;
- learning what's going on in other areas
- participation by all present;

- excellent facilitator;
- spirited but mannerly discussion
- defining indicators and how to measure,
- group participation
- we were able to draw something from each other;
- very well facilitated;
- I can take some ideas to the community
- good space,
- good facilitator;
- good dialogue,
- facilitation;
- being heard;
- starting and ending on time
- I like the way everyone participated
- participation by others;
- knowledge of the group
- we stayed on the task;
- good ideas;
- diversity in the background of persons in the group

Aspects of the focus group that participants liked least included:

- facilitator seemed to inhibit (my) participation;
- didn't always stay on track;
- facilitator seemed to want to "force" a 5th goal which did not seem to be valid or wanted
- temperature in room impeded concentration;
- recorder sometimes missed important info,
- cross-talking
- several persons monopolized the discussion
- not your fault but too hot;
- not enough time to fully develop on some themes
- that it's a 10 year focus
- broader community (geographic) representation needed
- hard to agree on goals;
- got bogged down on quantitative vs. qualitative
- all was well even though several participants spoke more often than others,
- need to be putting ideas into quantifiable terms was tough;
- too dang hot
- very warm;
- got sidetracked a lot

Suggestions that participants gave that could make the focus group more effective:

- more info on exactly what was expected
- to have a setting that has tables and chairs
- it would be helpful if facilitator had more of a background in indicators;
- equal representation in terms of geography;
- the directions to Morgan State were not to specific location and no information on parking was given,
- more time;
- more participants from different groups and communities

Additional comments made about the focus group:

- the group was very expressive and to the point
- very good discussion;
- informative
- the facilitator and recorder were motivated, provocative, and equal to their tasks

**RESULTS FOR THE MARCH 23<sup>RD</sup> FOCUS GROUP**

Table 3 shows the overall results by question and broken down by topic area for the March 23<sup>rd</sup> focus group. Based on question 1, the overall level of satisfaction for participants was 4.6, with 5 being very satisfied and 4 being satisfied. Question 2 simply asked what topic area respondents participated. According to question 3, all participants believed their expectations for the focus group were met.

**Table 3. Average scores by question, March 23<sup>rd</sup> focus group**

	Average score per question, total and by each topic area			
	Total	CY&Families	Health	Urban Env
Question 1	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.6
Question 2				
Question 3	All yes	All yes	All yes	All yes
Question 4a	4.4	4.1	4.5	4.7
4b	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.7
4c	4.2	4.6	4.0	4.1
Question 5a	3.5	3.0	3.5	4.0
5b	3.8	3.4	3.5	4.3
5c	3.7	3.6	3.5	4.1
5d	3.8	3.7	3.5	4.3
5e	3.6	3.1	3.5	4.2
5f	4.6	4.1	5.0	4.7
5g	4.5	4.3	4.8	4.4
5h	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.4
5i	4.2	3.7	4.8	4.1
5j	4.3	4.3	4.8	3.8

*Plenary Session Results*

The evaluation of the plenary session, taken from questions 4a, 4b, and 4c, shows that participants agreed that: a) they understand what the “Vital Signs” project is about and how important it is for Baltimore neighborhoods, b) they learned about BNIA and how the services they offer can be helpful for their neighborhoods, and c) they plan to use, and encourage others to use, the resources BNIA offers to help improve their neighborhood. The average total scores are 4.4, 4.4, and 4.2, respectively.

### *Focus Group Session Results*

The evaluation of the focus group session, taken from questions 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f, 5g, 5h, 5i, 5j, indicates that participants agree somewhat that the session helped them to: a) to think about their neighborhoods in new and different ways, b) to understand what indicators are and how they can be helpful to measure progress toward neighborhood goals, c) to understand how indicator can be helpful to measure progress toward their vision for Baltimore City, d) to understand they their neighborhood group can develop their own indicators to measure the impact they are making on neighborhood conditions and to make progress toward their long-term goals, e) to understand that other neighborhoods in Baltimore City have similar goals for their neighborhoods. They seemed to be in more agreement, however, that: f) the discussion was very open and they were able to give a lot of input, g) they know how important their input is in developing “vital signs” for Baltimore, h) the handouts were clear and understandable, i) they will share the handouts with their neighborhood, and j) Morgan State provided a good space for the event. The average total scores are 3.5, 3.8, 3.7, 3.8, 3.6, 4.6, 4.5, 4.3, 4.2, 4.3, respectively.

### *Open-ended Results*

#### Aspects of the focus group that participants liked the best included:

- Facilitation, group, agenda
- The openness of the members of the group; the facilitator's approach
- Individual input, facilitator, obtained info I could put to immediate use
- Our facilitators were excellent; they "pulled" out of us and we could contribute freely
- Being able to share ideas; having a moderator; I love the couches; and how the moderator explained the process of goals and data gathering
- Communication; everyone's opinion was heard
- The time was long enough for discussion, but short enough to keep up focused; 2) having a facilitator and recorder guide the process 3) location
- 1) the group that discussed how racism impacts poverty, 2) the ease of interaction and direction of facilitator, 3) how much we accomplished in time frame
- 1) excellent facilitator 2) openness of discussion 3) skills of recorder
- Liveliness of interaction, getting to know other group leaders, abilities of facilitators to focus and move group process
- 1) mix of people -many old hands in parks and environmental issues; 2) recognition of diversity 3) free of open discussion
- people participation; creative ideas; had a good time
- processing of vision into measurable indicators; collaborating with individuals from other communities
- working with others in other neighborhoods
- interaction; worked together; facilitator was good
- open, focus
- developed useful measures/ideas
- easy free discussion; competent coordinator; reasonable time use
- I thought that it was a focus group that accomplished its goal, it was a very good focus group

#### Aspects of the focus group that participants liked least included:

- Lack of time to do it (for the day)
- Can't read from big distances
- We strayed off the subject at times
- time limits
- no way of organizing all of the suggestions; not enough diversity in group; not enough time; parking problem
- short; pressed for time
- poor air and lighting
- too little emphasis on big issues: global warming

Suggestions that participants gave that could make the focus group more effective:

- do more often, great exercise in thinking creatively
- longer session
- more time; continue more sessions
- increase diversity of participation
- I would not change a thing
- More frequent meetings
- I would not change anything unless it meant more time to dialogue

Additional comments made about the focus group:

- the group was very expressive and to the point
- Odette and Nidhi rule
- The focus group should have been asked what data source(s) should be used and who will do the measurement
- Good session
- good way to get to know a small group of people; networking

**ISSUE OF COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPANTS**

The issue of compensation for participants was raised during the facilitator debrief session following the March 16 focus group. Several facilitators agreed that some form of compensation beyond free meals and a mug was necessary in order to give something back to those who are taking time out of their schedules. This is something that the Board of BNIA might want to discuss for future focus group events involving community leaders.



## Focus Group Evaluation Form

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1. Taking all things into consideration, please rate your overall satisfaction with the first “Vital Signs” Project Community Focus Group.  
(Use a 5 point scale in which 5 indicates “very satisfied” and 1 indicates “not at all satisfied”)

5 Very satisfied

4 Satisfied

3 Neutral

2 Somewhat satisfied

1 Not at all satisfied

2. What topic area did you participate in?

5 Housing

4 Sanitation

3 Public Safety

2 Neighborhood Economic Development

1 Education

3. Were your expectations met by this focus group? If no, why? *(Please be specific)*

Yes

No, Why?

4. For each statement, please circle the number that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree.  
(Use 5 point scale in which 5 indicates “strongly agree” and 1 indicates “strongly disagree”)

Plenary Session:

- |  |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. I understand what the “Vital Signs” project is about and how important it is for Baltimore neighborhoods.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| b. I learned about the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA) and how the services they offer can be helpful for my neighborhood. | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| b. I plan to use the resources BNIA offers to help improve my neighborhood, and will encourage others to do so as well.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |

Focus Group session:

- |   |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. I learned to think about my neighborhood in a new and different way. | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| b. The session helped me understand what indicators are and how they can be helpful to show the progress toward my neighborhood's goals.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| c. The session helped me understand what indicators are and how they can be helpful to measure the progress towards our vision for Baltimore City.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| d. The session helped me understand that my neighborhood group can develop our own indicators to measure how our efforts are having an impact on the overall conditions in the neighborhood and helping to make progress towards our long term goals. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| e. The session helped me understand that many other neighborhoods in Baltimore City have similar goals and vision for their neighborhoods to ours.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| f. The discussion was very open and I felt I was able to give a lot of input.   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| g. I understand how important my input is in developing these neighborhood "vital signs" for Baltimore.   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| h. The handouts I received were clear and understandable.   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| i. I will share these handouts with my neighborhood.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| j. The facility provided a good space for this event.   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| k. Please list at least three aspects of the focus group that you liked the best.   |   |   |   |   |   |
| l. Please list at least three aspects of the focus group that you liked the least.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| m. How would you change the focus group to be more effective?   |   |   |   |   |   |
| n. Please provide any additional comments about the focus group.  |   |   |   |   |   |

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**Please return this evaluation form to the registration table or to your facilitator.**

**Thank you for your time in completing this evaluation. Your comments count!**

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