

Introduction

In this paper I will present a policy for reducing violence in Baltimore City, Maryland. The proposal seeks to do this by reforming Baltimore's institutional violence machine, the criminal justice system. This system has become a mass incarceration system and has served to deprive individuals of the needed capacity for reentry into Baltimore's communities. This deprivation fosters conditions that make it possible that a significant number of homicide perpetrators and homicide victims are believed to have had previous, multiple interactions with the criminal justice system (Kennedy, 2010).

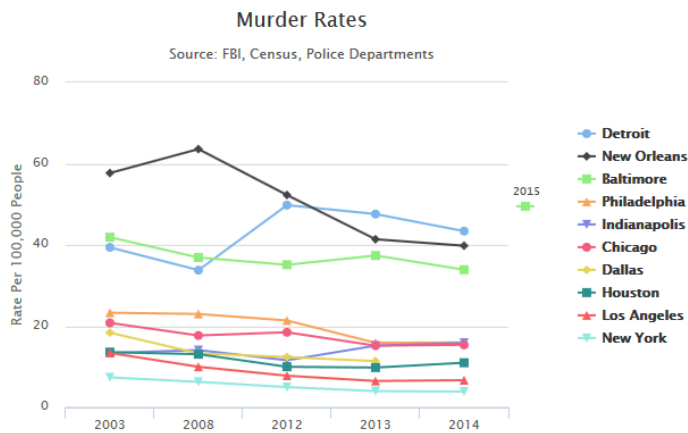
This paper is a continuation of research presented earlier this semester titled "Understanding Baltimore's Violent Spaces." In that paper I outlined the history of structural, institutional, economic, and social violence taking place in Baltimore. Through researching the urban segregation, declining population, underdevelopment, active gang networks, flourishing drug market, and racial inequity, it is clear that Baltimore represents a complex case. There is no single policy that will reduce the level of gun violence and homicides in the City. Rather, Baltimore needs a multi-faceted approach to reducing violence and improving the socioeconomic conditions of its underdeveloped neighborhoods. These two objectives must go hand-in-hand. The policy proposed in the attached memorandum targets violence through improving the socioeconomic standing of formerly incarcerated individuals and their neighborhoods.

Current Context

Just four years ago, there was hope that Baltimore was going to divert from its decades-long history of high violent crime. On January 1, 2012 *Baltimore Sun* reporter Justin Fenton wrote, "The annual number of killings in Baltimore has fallen below 200 for the first time in more than three decades, a symbolic threshold that seemed elusive for a crime-weary city just four years ago."

That hopefulness faded, however, as the City was unable to keep the homicide rate below that threshold. In stark contrast, only four years later the city is witnessing a record-high per capita rate of homicides. As of December 8, the total number of homicides in 2015 stands at 322, a rate of approximately 51 homicides per 100,000 people. Compared to 2014 rates nationally, Baltimore would have been the most deadly city in the United States. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Murder Rate Trends for Top Ten Cities by 2013 Homicides



(Sardonzy, 2015 and *Baltimore Sun* data for 2015)

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The City's primary response in 2015 has been to project a tough stance on violence, through the creation of the War Room. The War Room is a cross-agency coordinated effort to target violent offenders. The Baltimore City Police Department is leading War Room operations with assistance from the mayor's office, city and federal prosecutors, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the U.S. Marshals Service (Campbell and Anderson, 2015). This tough stance on crime echoes Baltimore's aggressive approach to crime that characterized the 2000s.

Legacy of Aggressive Policing and the Mass Incarceration Effect

During the years of Martin O'Malley's mayorship, Baltimore adopted an aggressive, zero-tolerance approach to crime based on the Broken Windows theory. As a result, in 2008, Baltimore City was ranked as the top-jailer in the United States based on the incarceration rate per capita in the City jail (Justice Policy Institute, 2010). Moreover, Baltimore residents disproportionately make up the state prison population. In 2015 one-third of Maryland state prison inmates are Baltimore City residents; Baltimore City only makes up 1/10 of the state population (Justice Policy Institute and Prison Policy Initiative, 2015).

Despite the high rates of incarceration, Baltimore’s homicide rate remains relatively unchanged. The longer-historical trend since 1975 is a definitive increase and the last 15 years show only a small decline. The underlying logic of my proposed policy is that supporting reentry services for individuals returning to Baltimore neighborhoods from jail or prison will have positive impacts on their well-being, the community’s well-being, and the City at large. The 2010 Justice Policy Institute report found that, “Reported conditions in [the Baltimore City] jail do not lend themselves to rehabilitation and may actually worsen a person’s chances of succeeding on the outside.” (48) A jail reentries strategies report commissioned by the Office of the Mayor in 2013 emphasizes the correlated need for reentry services: “The number of individuals processed through the jail on an annual basis, and the collateral consequences of continued engagement in the criminal justice system on these individuals, their families, and the community emphasize why implementing a jail reentry strategy is critical,” (James, 2013, ix).

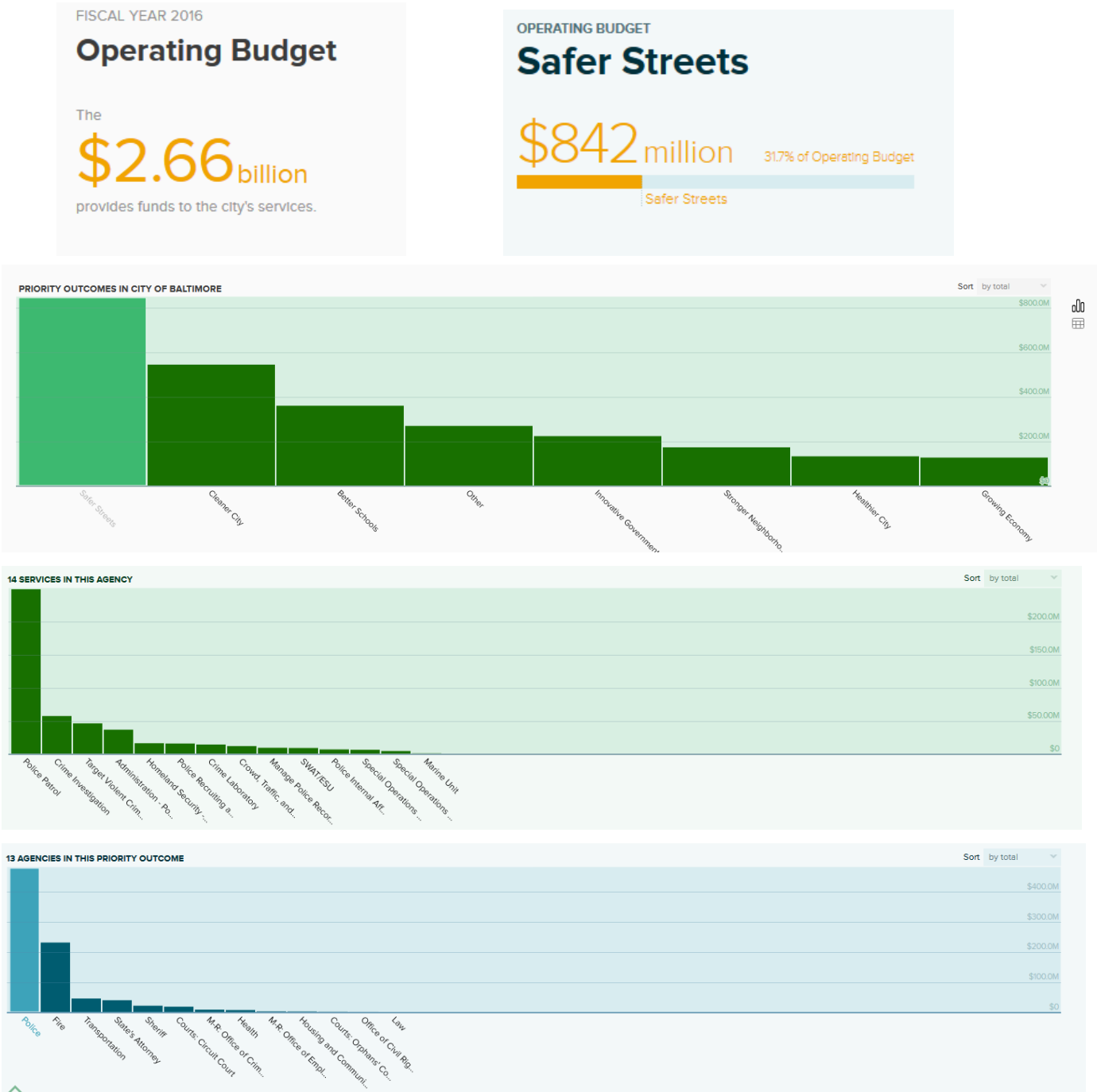
Stakeholders

The policy proposed tackles an institutional problem. Therefore, the main stakeholders must include departments within those institutions. At the forefront of the implementation will be the Office of the Mayor, the Mayor’s Offices of Human Services and Criminal Justice, and Baltimore City and Maryland jails and prisons. The policy is written to this institutional audience. However, it is imperative that the policy have the endorsement and support of community organizations that are already engaged in work to provide reentry services, improve socioeconomic conditions within Baltimore neighborhoods, especially those identified in the policy, and to mediate violence. The responsibility of garnering this support is with the Office of the Mayor. Without community partnerships the policy risks being perceived as a top-down institutional approach and risks lacking the legitimacy of local neighborhood voices and knowledge.

Funding

Baltimore City has set “Safer Streets” as its top priority in fiscal year 2016 budget. Safer Streets receives nearly 32 percent of the overall budget, however that money is primarily allocated to police services (18 percent). Reentry services are not an explicit funding area in the budget. I identified one line item aimed at reentry, an ex-offenders workforce program, which has an allocation of only \$2.4 million for 2016. Other reentry programming is likely receiving funding, but it is not identified as a major or priority sector in the budget.

Figure 2: Baltimore City FY2016 Funding Breakdown



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Defining Success

The policy proposal details specific indicators to measure policy success, but the overall desired outcomes are:

1. Reduction in violence
2. Reduction in incarcerated population
3. Socioeconomic improvement in Baltimore's most underserved neighborhoods

Known Challenges to Implementation

There are a number of potential barriers to implementation of the policy. Below I've outlined the major barriers along with strategies to overcome them.

Potential Barriers	Strategies for Success
Community resistance to locating reentry service centers in their largely residential neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a meaningful platform for resident participation in the planning process - Host community information sessions about the negative effects of incarceration - Make information on the benefits for families and neighborhood economic development widely available
Community and policymaker perception of rewarding ex-offenders with services	
Lack of funding and/or bureaucratic "red tape"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gain commitment from mayor's office to carry out exhaustive funding search from City budget and external sources - Establish partnerships with community organization and support of residents to push for accountability on behalf of City administration - Ensure that reentry service centers are part of the ongoing Baltimore rezoning proposal such that services can be offered in the identified neighborhoods - Hold City to its commitments to "Safer Streets" and its 2013 interest in improving reentry
Policy perceived by ex-offenders as an extension of the Institution and associated mistrust and/or lack of use of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish resource information sessions as part of the jail and prison intake process - Establish services within the jail and prison system that will motivate individuals to continue upon reentry (e.g., education attainment, professional certification)

	- Low barriers to access services, including transportation from jails and prisons and accessibility via public transportation
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Despite these challenges, this ambitious policy is much needed and has the potential to disrupt the violent cycle of the criminal justice system.

Broader Relevance

Moreover, there is no doubt that the improved approach to reentry services proposed in the following policy memo are relevant outside of Baltimore. Across the United States there are over 2.2 million people in prisons and jails. That number has grown over 500 percent in the last 30 years. (The Sentencing Project, 2015). As Michelle Alexander (2010) argues, the U.S. system of mass incarceration has resulted in relegating ex-offenders to second-class citizens, and it has disproportionately affected black men as the Baltimore case illustrates.

An extraordinary percentage of black men in the United States are legally barred from voting today, just as they have been throughout most of American history. They are also subject to legalized discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service, just as their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents once were. (Alexander, 2010)

A successful model in Baltimore will hold promise for cities across the country.

Note: A policy proposal is attached.

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