

Crime Plan Proposal

Baltimore City Mayor Candidate, Rikki Vaughn

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Introduction

In 2018, the City of Baltimore was ranked the fourth most dangerous city in the United States. There were 342 homicides reported, along with 5,827 cases of aggravated assault. In the “Crime in the United States Report” released by the FBI, it was also acknowledged that 30,200 property crimes were committed in 2018, and 17,008 offenses of larceny and theft are reported that same year. There were 382 sexual assault cases recorded in 2018. Over the last five years crime statistics continue to grow even as city officials invest our resources in public safety and crime prevention initiatives. Since 2015, more than 1,600 people have been killed in Baltimore stemming from gun violence. This trend is expected to grow, as we’ve already reported more than 300 murders this year. To date there’s been 703 non-fatal shootings, this is an increase from the 588 shootings that were reported last year. Our city has seen an unprecedentedly amount of shootings in 2019.

\$952 million dollars was allocated for public safety in the year 2020. The crime rate in Baltimore City is at an all-time high – far surpassing the national average. There are more than 600,000 residents in the City, and 1 in 15 will become a victim of crime. These numbers are alarming and the current plan to combat crime is just not working.

Many of our elected officials and mayoral candidates seems to only consider how to expand the visibility and role of police in Baltimorean’s everyday lives. Their proposals seek to hire more police, put them out on the streets, and increase arrests. Increasing police presence alone will not stop crimes from being committed, rather, this will cause Baltimore City to become a “police state” and threaten the principles of justice, equality, and freedom that all Baltimore residents are entitled to.

Our criminal justice system is not only for those who commit crimes, but to also encourage and promote better lifestyles among our citizens. Instead of increasing our jail capacity, effectively investing in our infrastructure, education, and economy will win the war on crime in our city.

While it is credible to invest in public safety to address this perilous issue, our campaign understands that crime is not an alienated issue in the city. If we want to truly combat crime and make our city a safer place for our children and families, we must begin to seriously consider the prevailing issues that encourage and foster crime, both violent and non-violent offenses.

The issue of public safety in Baltimore is interconnected with our crumbling commitment to education, failure to proactively and competently engage the members of our communities, lack of good jobs and wages earned, and poor accountability and oversight within the Baltimore City Police Department. We have also forgotten that mental illness is not something you treat with handcuffs, and homelessness does petition the human condition to entertain desperate acts that threaten the safety and wellbeing of others, and the individual. Addressing crime successfully happens when we begin to assess all variables that contribute to these damaging statistics, and present a plan that truly has the best interests of this city in mind.

This crime plan does not belittle the significance of having a strong, competent, and heavily resourced police department. We stand by our Baltimore City Police Department and want to ensure they have all the proper training, resources, technology, and support to proactively respond to the needs of the city. In fact, our plan understands the grave responsibility and burden that has been placed on the Baltimore

City Police Department and seeks to ease some of their arduous responsibilities. City Hall can be more effective by implementing public policy with everyone in mind. We cannot fight crime solely by declaring a war of guns, increasing police presence, and making more arrests. You fight crime effectively, when you invest in the city – its people.

As a result, our crime plan addresses the city's needs through four key components, in a concerted effort to reduce crime and invite peace and unity in Baltimore. By emphasizing the necessity of economic development, increased education investments, housing and community replenishment, , along with rebuilding the relationship between public safety and community engagement, we will make Baltimore a safer place for everyone not to just live, but to thrive.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rikki Vaughn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a stylized "V".

Rikki Vaughn

Key Highlights

This crime plan incorporates several initiatives that seek to promote peace, unity, and enhance the well-being of all Baltimore residents.

- **Cut business regulations and provide incentives for businesses in Baltimore to grow and expand.**
- **Formidable re-entry programs.**
- **Hire an additional 1,500 police officers from across the city, state and throughout cities that are compatible to Baltimore. Institute housing incentive for officers living in the city.**
- **Institute oversight committees in each district, which consists of appointed members from neighborhood associations.**
- **Strengthen neighborhood associations and PTAs within school across Baltimore. Assign Police Officer to neighborhood associations.**
- **Refurbishing old school buildings into Youth/Senior Centers with recreational activities and enhanced scholastic resources.**
- **Investing in the infrastructure of our communities to promote job opportunities and increase quality of life for citizens.**
- **Ensure repeat violent offenders are not released back into our communities.**
- **Reinstate the Neighborhood Service Community Relations Unit of the BCPD to rebuild and repair the relationship between Public Safety and the community.**
- **Camera rebate program for all residential and commercial properties in the City.**
- **Addressing mental health and homelessness in our City**
- **Creating quality of life and equity in the African American communities and owned businesses by extending minority participation in government contracts, businesses, and investments.**
- **Rebuilding the relationship with Annapolis for support, resources, and unity.**

Narrative

1.) Economic Development

Our mission is to empower the residents of Baltimore with sustainable economic opportunities that improve the lives of their families and communities. The poverty rate in the City stands at 23.8%. You cannot adequately address crime without also looking at how poverty contributes to it. The city is currently investing 3.8% percent of the total budget to economic development and jobs. This needs to be significantly increased. We accomplish this by first raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and implementing attractive incentives for businesses to come to Baltimore or expand in our City. We need to give the private sector a platform that makes investing in Baltimore and its people a win-win for all. Our economy will grow as we continue to commit substantial resources to public education, housing, and infrastructure. As your Mayor, I will create jobs and increase the wealth of our City. We will cut job-killing regulations, introduce tax reform to City Hall, and create innovative partnerships with the sole purpose of making life better for all of Baltimore's residents.

Everyone deserves an opportunity to work, even those who have paid their debt to society. We believe that a re-entry program is needed to invest in our citizens, and provide them with a means to provide for themselves and their family. Creating partnerships with local businesses and educational institutions will enable individuals who may not have the skills or background to successfully regain entry into the workforce.

In 2017, the per capita income of a Baltimore City resident was \$49,168. This pales in comparison to the per capita income reported for Maryland residents outside of the city at \$60,847. The national per capita income in 2017 was \$51,640. Providing credible opportunities to not just work, but invest in a lifestyle of promise, will empower Baltimore residents and enrich their lives in a meaningful way.

Infrastructure

The top job sectors in Baltimore City are Education & Health Sciences, Construction, Mining, & Logging, and Trade, Transportation, & Utilities. Each of these job sectors are collaborating with the city in one capacity or another, and our mission should seek to strengthen those partnerships to benefit Baltimore residents in a lucrative manner. We can do this by fixing our roads, expanding public transportation mechanisms such as the light rail, giving tax incentives to employers, and rebuilding our crumbling houses and buildings. All initiatives will create sustainable job opportunities for Baltimore residents, which will result in more sustainable lifestyles.

According to the Fiscal Year 20 Adopted Budget, "Per the 21st Century Schools Program, 26 schools in poor repair are being closed and turned over to the City. To date the City has taken ownership of 9 schools and is responsible for costs associated with the upkeep, utilities, and security of the buildings. Some surplus schools have temporary uses, others can be put to community reuse, and the buildings that are not suitable for reuse will be demolished." This will ensure our children are going to safe and

well-maintained schools, with highly-skilled teachers and educational professionals. We must show our children that their success matters. Better school environments that not only teach science and math, but foster pride and love toward our children will encourage students to work harder and focus on their craft.

2.) Housing and Community Replenishment

Housing

The Fiscal Year 2020 adopted budget for Baltimore City allocates \$17 million dollars in affordable housing, but only \$556,289 in promoting homeownership. Property taxes, which is a direct result of homeownership and businesses investing in the city, accounts for 32.7% of the total revenue received by the city. This is our highest source of income in the city. This means that rather than keeping people in affordable housing programs, we should be enabling them to buy homes and invest in our communities. Homeownership instills a sense of pride, and will cause homeowners to want their communities beautiful, clean and safe. As we pull members of our community out of poverty, we must promote homeownership. This will revitalize our communities, restore the beauty of all of Baltimore's neighborhoods, and caution crime to halt.

Community Engagement

The tragic death of Freddie Gray created a deafening blow to the relationship between our local criminal justice system and our communities. We want members of the law enforcement community to live in the neighborhoods they were sworn to protect and serve. This brings humanity to law enforcement, rather than widening the deep divide between citizens and police. As Mayor, I will recruit police officers from all corners of the City, and have them stationed in the very same communities that they live in. This will not only bring a greater sense of safety to neighbors, but it will also encourage better relationships between law enforcement and citizens.

We also seek to collaborate with faith-based, non-profits, and higher education institutions within the City. The goal is to make a unified effort to promote peace, encourage safer neighborhoods, and enhance community involvement throughout the City. This is a concerted effort and we all have a vested interest in making Baltimore better for all citizens.

Security is a significant factor when discussing homeownership and business investment. Our campaign wants to create trust, mutual respect, and a shared understanding between our law enforcement agencies and the citizens of Baltimore. We want law enforcement to be accountable, but we also want community members to be engaged with tackling crime and creating safer neighborhoods across the City. We will encourage every resident, business, and church to install security cameras on their property. We will pay you to do this! We will also push to make sure every officer engaging with the City's residents are wearing body cameras. Increasing the accountability in our communities will effectively confront potential criminals and cause them to reconsider their actions. Having not only the BCPD wearing body cameras, but also homes and businesses to also keep an eye on their communities has proven to be successful in neighboring cities.

To encourage transparency in the community, our plan wants each district within the City to have an oversight committee that consists of members appointed from neighborhood associations. This will ensure enhanced communication between City Hall and the local communities.

3.) Public Safety

While the crime statistics in Baltimore continue to grow, the City should be commended for allocating resources to public safety. 44.3% of the Fiscal Year 2020 budget is directed entirely to public safety. We want to maintain this commitment as we continue to grow other commitments throughout the city. However, the Fiscal Year 2020 adopted budget does show a decrease in police patrolling, which is unacceptable. We want to maintain a strong police presence in the community, not just to prevent crime but to encourage relationship building. As mentioned earlier, we want to hire more officers from within the communities they protect and serve. We also want to recruit highly trained officers within the State to assist with diversity and fresh initiatives. We should seek to promote from within the BCPD and not recruit from other areas in or outside the city. Seasoned professionals who have dexterity in public safety and have committed their lives to serving Baltimore's citizens should be highly regarded and considered a priority when seeking to fill leadership roles.

Homelessness and mental health issues are grave within the City. We intend to partner with United Way, and other leading non-profit organizations to assist our homeless population with securing affordable housing and having access to the resources they need to reclaim their livelihood. We also intend to engage the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene to develop the best practices and protocols for getting citizens with mental health issues the help they need to thrive. Failure to engage individuals with mental health issues, or criminalizing their behavior, will continue to ignore the needs of the individual.

4.) Education

The City has to rebuild its relationship with Annapolis, as two-thirds of City School funding comes from the State. While Baltimore City has committed \$99.2 million in gap funding from Fiscal Year 2018 to Fiscal Year 2020, strengthening the bond between officials in Annapolis and the City is imperative to growing the education investment in the City.

We not only need to ensure our buildings are safe and well-maintained, our teachers and professionals are supported and prepared, but that our relationship with the State of Maryland leadership is weighted not on our political differences, but our common goal of creating equity, opportunity, safety for all children across the state of Maryland.

As Mayor, I will make relationship building with Annapolis a strong priority for my administration. The State has plenty of resources that can galvanize our teachers, students, and resources in a positive way.

As schools are being closed throughout the City, we must continue to utilize those properties for the benefit of our youth. As Mayor, I am firmly committed to refurbishing those vacant buildings into Community Centers, where our youth can enjoy positive recreational activities, enhanced scholastic

resources, mentors, and job training. We need to show our children that we care about their success and this investment will make a positive impact in many of their lives.

Conclusion

We need to show our residents that we care about their success, their dreams, their values, and their well-being. Political promises are just words when there is no action to support them. It is time that we look at all areas that contribute to crime in the City and engage those issues. We must continue to support our police officers and ensure they have all of the resources available to effectively serve the community. We need jobs, we need community engagement, we need real housing opportunities, and we need to invest in educational programs and continue to partner with our stakeholders to ensure that investment. Homelessness and mental health is a huge issue in Baltimore City and should be taken seriously. We cannot help those struggling with mental health by throwing them in jail, we have to take the steps to find the root causes of their issues. We must also give our homeless population resources to be productive members of the community, this includes jobs and training and continued education. What we need most is the people of Baltimore to stand up and reclaim their City. This plan is only a blueprint of how we can begin to reclaim our City. We do not claim to know all of the answers. This is a collective opportunity and a social phenomenon, where we all must cohesively work together to rebuild, repair, and replenish Baltimore to make our home a safer place.