



From the desk of City Council President Zeke Cohen

Fellow Baltimoreans,

This is a special moment for Baltimore and the people who call it home. Everywhere I go, there is a tremendous sense of enthusiasm about the future of our city.

To make that future a reality, I asked a dedicated group of Baltimoreans to join our transition committee to help chart a path forward on some of the most pressing issues facing our city and our residents.

I'm proud to say that the leaders who stepped up to join us represent the best of our City. Changemakers in government, business, philanthropy, health, education and beyond collaborated with us to find meaningful solutions for Baltimoreans.

I couldn't be more grateful for the contributions that each of them have made. I am thrilled to begin sharing the outcomes of our collective work with you, and I look forward to reconvening with our team within 100 days to assess our progress. In the meantime, let's continue fighting to make Baltimore the city our residents deserve.

With gratitude,

Zeke Cohen
Baltimore City Council President

74th Baltimore City Council - Mission Statement

For organizations to thrive and succeed, they need to articulate a clear mission and vision for what they hope to accomplish and why.

At the outset of the 74th term of the Baltimore City Council, Council President Cohen convened the fourteen members to develop a shared Mission Statement. During their first meeting of 2025, Council President Cohen introduced a resolution to enshrine this Mission, which his fellow council members unanimously voted to pass.

This is the first time in the Council's history that a formal mission statement was made by its sitting body. The Mission Statement establishes important shared values and formalizes the City Council's commitment to the people of Baltimore.

Mission Statement 74th Baltimore City Council

The Baltimore City Council is a collaborative body dedicated to delivering reliable, equitable, and sustainable results, which enhance the quality of life for all Baltimoreans.

Through agency oversight, legislation, fiscal stewardship, and advocacy, we ensure the City gets the basics right, while also striving toward long-term, systems-level transformation.



Transition Committee Chairs



Normandy Amprey



Lester Davis

Changemakers in government, business, philanthropy, health, education and beyond collaborated with us to find meaningful solutions for Baltimoreans.



Peter Bodde
Chair, Oversight Workgroup



Julia Baez
Chair, Innovation Workgroup



HyeSook Chung
Chair, External Partnerships
Workgroup

Members of the Transition Committee

Steering Committee

Lester Davis, Chair

Alicia Wilson
Anthony Jenkins
Bill Paterakis
Courtney Jenkins
David Rosario
Iya Dammons
Joe Jones
Kevin Lindamood
Peter Bain

Normandi Amprey, Chair

Kurt Schmoke
Ray Kelly
Redonda Miller
Shanaysha Sauls
Shelonda Stokes
Tim Regan
Tony Foreman
Wanda Heard

Innovation Workgroup

Julia Baez, Chair

Brad Byrnes
Courtney Cass
Darius Graham
Jesse Salazar
Joshua Michael
Maria Tildon

Mark Anthony Thomas
Panagis Galiatsatos
Ricarra Jones
Rodney Horton
Steve Chu
Tracy Lingo



Oversight Workgroup

Peter Bodde, Chair

Howard Libit
Jamal Turner
Jon Laria
Kevin Daniels
Kim Lagree

Kim Trueheart
Pat Moran
Rachel Monroe
Rachel Kutler
Rev. Kevin Slayton
Sheryl Goldstein

External Partnerships

HyeSook Chung, Chair

Adam Rosenberg
Annie Milli
Arch Mckown
Bree Jones
Christina Flowers
Elway Williams
Holly O'Shea
Jake Wittenberg

Jed Weeks
Lesley Malin
Melissa Buckley
Natasha Guynes
Roger Hartley
Roger Schulman
Seema Iyer
Ted Eccleston
Talib Horne

Transition Report - Executive Summary

At the outset of this work, the Transition Committee came together to explore the biggest challenges facing Baltimore city and potential solutions that the City Council could pursue.

Throughout that work, this committee identified recurring themes that impacted residents. One major issue that frequently surfaced was lack of meaningful coordination across agencies with external stakeholders.

Another significant point was the inefficient or ineffective delivery of city services, underscoring a need for increased oversight of City agencies and expenditures.

Members of this Committee also highlighted the need for more robust development of external partnerships with philanthropic partners, and the need for heightened fiscal stewardship to ensure those partnerships function efficiently, by avoiding silos and redundancy.

The overall Transition Committee consisted of a nineteen-member Steering group and three workgroups that spanned the following topics:

- External Partnerships with City government
- Oversight of City Agencies
- Opportunities for Innovation Within the City Council

Over four months, the transition team's workgroups identified key themes based on interviews with experts, SWOT analyses, and best practices observed in peer cities. Each offers significant opportunity for leadership on behalf of the City Council President, Baltimoreans, neighborhoods, and communities.

Enhanced Oversight and Accountability

Residents have frequently expressed frustration with a lack of responsiveness and efficiency from City agencies, and a lack of accountability when City services don't meet the expectations of our residents and the needs of their communities.

To create the level of oversight and accountability that our residents deserve, this committee recommended developing:

- Robust and transparent oversight mechanisms and processes
- Training for committee chairs and councilmembers to deepen their understanding of City Council oversight functions
- Developing a collaborative framework for oversight across branches of government

Dedicated to delivering reliable, equitable, and sustainable results, which enhance the quality of life for all Baltimoreans.

Implementation of Innovative Resident Engagement and Communications

Many residents have reported feeling less connected to City government and resources than ever before. A rapidly shifting traditional and social media landscape increase challenges for community engagement. Addressing these challenges should include:

- Implementing technological solutions to streamline constituent engagement and relationship management
- Developing data tools that improve government communication and transparency
- Diversifying the communications tools used to engage with residents

Finding innovative solutions to connect our communities is at the heart of our work.

Youth Career Pathways and Civic Engagement

Baltimore's youth and workforce are this City's most precious resources. Developing innovative solutions to improve educational and career outcomes for City residents will help Baltimore thrive for generations to come. The Council President and City Council can help further that work by:

- Mobilizing resources to address barriers to education and youth employment
- Developing collaborative programming that guarantees students a career or college pathway upon graduation
- Enhancing existing apprenticeship and training opportunities across the City

Workforce development should start at home.

Workforce Development for the City of Baltimore

Workforce development should start at home. The City of Baltimore is facing a number of urgent challenges and opportunities that deserve the best and brightest talent performing to find innovative solutions. The Council President and City Council can enhance that synergy by:

- Partnering with education and philanthropic stakeholders to create a talent pipeline into City agencies.
- Building a modern fellowship program that can source homegrown talent from our colleges, universities and crucially our HBCU's.
- Studying best practices to incentivize the recruitment and retention of top talent.

In the weeks ahead, the Council President will begin to roll out more details about this committee's findings and recommendations to Transition Committee members as well as the general public. As Council President builds upon the critical work of implementing these recommendations, committee's members will be invited to reconvene in 100 days to assess our progress and continue to chart the path forward.

External Partnerships Workgroup

This working group focuses on building collaborative relationships between the Council and key external partners, including neighborhoods, nonprofits, foundations and universities.

The workgroup formed on the premise that strengthening these partnerships will empower Baltimore city to address complex social issues that require collective action and cannot be solved by government alone.

Challenges: External Partnerships Workgroup

Duplicative Services and Lack of Coordination

- Nonprofit and for-profit entities often provide overlapping services without effectively addressing community needs due to insufficient sector collaboration.
- A lack of general operating funding undermines the long-term sustainability of nonprofit organizations and philanthropic efforts.

Inconsistent Structure for Community Associations

- The absence of standardized frameworks creates inefficiencies and limits the effectiveness of community associations in advocacy and service delivery.
- Barriers to talent development.
- Challenges in workforce development persist due to limited employment opportunities, weak skills training pathways, and inadequate investment from local businesses.

Partnerships will empower Baltimore City to address complex social issues that require collective action.

Recomendations: External Partnerships Workgroup

Map and Optimize Nonprofit & For-profit Ecosystems

- Comprehensive Sector Mapping: Create a nonprofit and for-profit funding sources and services to identify redundancies and gaps in key sectors such as housing, public safety, and health services, ensuring balanced coverage across both sectors.
- Cross-Sector Collaboration: Foster collaboration between nonprofit and for-profit entities to address systemic challenges such as permitting inefficiencies and housing revitalization, utilizing shared data insights to guide policy development and funding allocations for both ecosystems.
- Equitable Support and Sustainability: Ensure equitable support for nonprofits and for-profits by streamlining payment processes and grant reporting requirements, with a focus on empowering smaller, community-based organizations and fostering sustainability across both sectors.

Strengthen Baltimore's Talent Ecosystem

- Model Employer: Position the city as a resident employment leader through apprenticeships, internships, and entry-level city roles.
- Incentivize Corporate Engagement: Partner with businesses to prioritize local talent, create high-wage career pathways, and improve post-secondary and CTE programs.
- Leverage Union Partnerships: Collaborate with unions to offer early trade exposure and workforce training for residents.

Oversight Workgroup

Delivering the transparent and responsive government that Baltimoreans deserve requires rebuilding trust between City government and residents.

The Oversight Workgroup was established to help inform the City Council's approach to effective oversight of city services and identify national best practices in delivering effective and accountable policy and services to City residents.

Effective oversight should always result in increased accountability. The Oversight Workgroup was focused on ensuring that Baltimore City government operates transparently, efficiently, and in alignment with their mission to serve the residents of Baltimore.

Rebuilding trust between City government and residents.

Challenges: Oversight Workgroup

Fragmented Oversight Structure

- Challenges exist with proactive oversight. The absence of a clear system for identifying and addressing emerging issues. This leads to a lack of cohesion and coordination with legislative efforts.

Lack of Accountability and Transparency

- Inadequate training and structured processes are hindering agencies from being held accountable for their performance, which undermines public trust and the effectiveness of government initiatives.

Inefficient Public Service Delivery

- The prevalence of vacant homes, slow permitting processes, and poor public service delivery exemplify governance inefficiency in Baltimore City. However, each issue can be fixed with sustained and coherent oversight.

Insufficient Empowerment for City Employees

- There are numerous limitations to the development of Baltimore City government's workforce, preventing innovation and initiative from city employees.

Recommendations: Oversight Committee

Strengthen Oversight Training and Expertise

- **Enhance Training and Expertise:** Provide robust training for committee members and staff in areas like investigative techniques, policy evaluation, and performance measurement. This should include modules on leveraging community data to inform oversight efforts.
- **Recruitment Strategy:** Recruit staff with expertise in areas such as auditing, public administration, and urban planning to address specific challenges like vacant homes and permitting delays.

Implement a Collaborative Oversight Process

- **Regular Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage regularly with stakeholders like the Inspector General and Comptroller.

- Community-Driven Feedback Mechanisms: Conduct and create feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and public hearings, to ensure oversight priorities reflect constituent concerns.
- Structured Agency Performance Review: Map processes for reviewing agency performance in addressing vacant properties, improving permitting processes, and delivering services effectively.

Innovation can help unlock new possibilities for Baltimore City.



This February, the City Council conducted a fire safety walk in the Remington neighborhood of District 12, hosted by Councilman Jermaine Jones.

Councilmembers from across the city joined the Baltimore City Fire Department, American Red Cross and community members to raise awareness about fire prevention.



BCFD and the members of City Council were able to install free smoke alarms for residents without properly functioning smoke alarms.

Innovation Workgroup

Baltimore is a city that faces unique challenges and opportunities. The Innovation Workgroup sought to develop and cultivate innovative strategies to improve City services and basic government functions.

Innovation can help unlock new possibilities for Baltimore City. From using modern data tools to inform fire safety strategies to implementing new technologies that can strengthen relationships between City agencies and residents, innovative approaches could help save lives and make more impactful policy decisions.

Challenges: Innovation Workgroup

Limited Professional Development Opportunities

- Constraints exist on training and career advancement hinder city employees' growth, innovation, and long-term retention.

Coordination Challenges Across Agencies

- Barriers to developing transparent dashboards or engaging multiple stakeholders and government agencies.

Lack of Transparency and Stakeholder Communication

- Disconnected communication between government agencies and community stakeholders leads to mistrust and disengagement, particularly in underserved areas. disconnected from local government.

Barriers to Community Engagement

- City agencies have difficulty reaching all community members, especially those with limited technological access or distrust of government.

Lack of Tracking Systems

- Challenging to move from the reactive space due to lack of tracking system, leading to delays in addressing. Without such systems and metrics agencies find it challenging to define the success and efficacy of their programming.

Recommendations: Innovation Workgroup

Develop a Comprehensive Resident Engagement and Feedback System to Ensure Transparency and Inclusivity

- Outreach & Engagement: Conduct door-to-door outreach in underserved areas and utilize digital platforms like social media and a dedicated city app to inform residents and gather feedback.
- Targeted Campaigns & Feedback: Launch campaigns tailored to community needs and offer regular opportunities for residents to share feedback through surveys, town halls, and public comment sessions.
- Implement a Constituent Response Management (CRM) System: Bolster infrastructure to track outreach, service requests, and feedback for data-driven decision-making and issue resolution.
- Transparency & Accountability: Publicly share performance metrics and issue resolution rates to demonstrate responsiveness and show how feedback leads to improvements.

Mobilize Resources and Boosting Civic Engagement for Youth Career Pathways

Build Equitable Career Pathways

- Engage Youth: Host town halls and surveys to identify barriers and co-develop solutions, ensuring youth

voices shape programs.

- Focus on Underutilized Sectors: Expand access to high-growth industries like renewable energy, tech, and manufacturing, targeting investments where needed.

Align Resources and Incentives

- Incentivize Participation: Use legislation to encourage businesses to hire local interns, apprentices, and graduates.
- Coordinate Resources: Align city, nonprofit, and corporate resources to reduce duplication and ensure programs meet job market needs.
- Engagement Events: Host town halls, career fairs, and mentorship events to connect youth with employers, gathering feedback for program improvements.
- Data-Driven Approach: Use data analytics to track trends, identify gaps, and measure program success, sharing findings for continuous improvement.



Recommendations: Cross-Committee

As our workgroups developed their recommendations, a number of recurring themes and issues surfaced that require coordinated efforts across multiple committees. To address these challenges, our workgroup chairs drafted several joint recommendations:

Fully Implement the Elijah Cummings Healing City Act

- **Expand Trauma-Informed Care Initiatives:** Expand trauma-informed care initiatives, integrating resident feedback loops to refine implementation. Use focus groups and surveys to ensure programs are meeting community needs.
- **Leverage Cross-Sector Partnerships:** Leverage partnerships with government and external organizations to address systemic challenges, such as substance use and housing instability, through a trauma-informed lens.

Integrated Strategy for Collaborative Oversight, Constituent Engagement, and Transparency

- **Collaborative Oversight:** Regularly collaborate with key oversight stakeholders, such as the Inspector General, Comptroller, and relevant agency representatives, to share data, identify systemic issues, and ensure joint accountability.
- **Community Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish multiple channels for residents to share input on key issues, such as permitting delays and housing concerns. This includes hosting public hearings, focus groups, and surveys, with targeted outreach to historically underserved communities to ensure diverse participation.
- **Transparency Through Technology:** Develop interactive dashboards and tools to keep residents informed on oversight activities, agency performance, and progress on critical issues like vacant properties and permitting reforms.
- **Ongoing Communication:** Use social media, newsletters, and community events to provide regular updates on city efforts, improvements, and resolutions. Create dedicated platforms for reporting challenges and ensure clear follow-up on actions taken.

Establish and Standardize a Community Association Network

- **Citywide Coordination and Best Practices:** Launch a citywide network of community association presidents to share best practices and address challenges.
- **Annual President's Summit:** Host a President's Summit in mid-2025 to set priorities, build relationships, and tackle issues like vacant homes and permitting delays.
- **Unified Advocacy Efforts:** Support joint advocacy efforts to amplify the collective voice on citywide issues.
- **Ensure Equitable Representation:** Develop standards for diversity, transparency, and democratic decision-making in community associations.
- **Resident Engagement and Capacity Building:** Engage residents through surveys and feedback to align priorities with community needs.
- **Capacity Building:** Support associations in underserved areas to enhance their advocacy capacity.
- **Align with City Efforts:** Partner with associations to address challenges like vacant properties and housing inequities, using data sharing and joint planning.
- **Integrate associations into city initiatives** for improved service delivery and equitable development.
- **Streamline communication** with platforms for real-time updates and two-way interaction.
- **Build Accountability and Sustainability:** Regularly evaluate the network's impact and adjust strategies based on feedback.
- **Offer training** for association leaders on governance and advocacy.
- **Ensure ongoing support** through funding, technical assistance, and integration into city governance.

Charting Progress: Key Milestones Under the Council President's Leadership During the First 100 Days

The Baltimore City Council President has already begun implementing key recommendations from this committee.

Through strategic initiatives and immediate policy actions, the Council President is laying the foundation for long-term, sustainable improvements in governance and public trust:

- Hired the first-of-its-kind, Director of Oversight to develop and implement oversight processes to increase transparency and accountability through enhanced discovery and legislative hearings.
- Implemented a formal resolution to create the first collective mission statement in the history of the Baltimore City Council.
- Hosted a two-day retreat dedicated for City Council members to develop actionable strategies to improve governance and community impact.
- Forged partnership with Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott and City Schools CEO to strengthen career pathways for students.
- Submitted the first legislative package of Baltimore City Council's 74th term to address critical issues impacting quality of life throughout Baltimore.
- Launched a multi-member door-knock initiative with the Baltimore Fire Department to connect residents with vital City agencies and services.
- Piloted a Constituent Services management program with five district offices.
- Conducted legislative oversight hearings into recent BGE rate increases and led a coalition of elected officials in local, state and federal office to support Baltimore residents and ratepayers.

The Council President is incredibly proud of the recommendations this committee has been able to develop and remains committed to implementing them to move Baltimore City forward.

This work requires the help of everyone. Council President will reconvene this committee within the next 100 days to report on our progress, and additional successes.

The Council President's office hopes to continue to collaborate on making Baltimore the best place to live, work and play that it can be.

