



PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT NEWS RELEASE

Philadelphia, July 30, 2014 – City Council on Wednesday announced a comprehensive strategy using data analysis, mapping technology and community engagement to empower Philadelphia’s leaders to craft policies that will improve the quality of life in each of the City’s neighborhoods. The Community Sustainability Initiative (CSI) is a challenge to residents, businesses, institutions and government to make every Philadelphia neighborhood a Community of Choice.

“We cannot declare Philadelphia to be the great city we know it can be until we implement a strategy for every one of our neighborhoods, particularly those in desperate need of investment and revitalization,” Philadelphia City Council President Darrell L. Clarke said. “My colleagues in City Council believe every neighborhood in Philadelphia can become a Community of Choice. City Council is not just measuring the health of our neighborhoods – we are establishing goals for where our neighborhoods ought to be. More strategically guided investments will ultimately save taxpayer dollars and promote equity across the city.”

In collaboration with public policy consultants The Reinvestment Fund, and Econsult Solutions, City Council has compiled data on quality of life indicators across the city. The CSI establishes seven core measurements for the following areas:

- **Housing Demand:** Median sales price, building permits, residential sales price
- **Housing Distress:** Act 91 notices, foreclosure filings
- **Crime & Safety:** rate, 311 report rate, % vacant buildings, % vacant lots
- **Education:** Great Philly Schools quality rating, crime within ¼ mile of school
- **Amenities:** Distance to nearest library, bank, recreation center
- **Prosperity:** % cost burdened, median household income, % owner occupied
- **Commerce:** Availability and diversity of food establishments, retail and personal service options

Used in conjunction with mapping technology, this data will demonstrate the health of neighborhoods based on these consensus quality of life indicators. More significantly, the data

will speak for underserved communities that have not been able to advocate more successfully for themselves.

The data collection will be refined and complemented by community input, which City Council will solicit via neighborhood outreach in coming months.

“The primary purpose of using data and technology in this way is to statistically gauge what makes Philadelphia’s neighborhoods attractive places to live,” said Ira Goldstein, president of Policy Solutions with The Reinvestment Fund. “Working with real-time information, policy-makers can focus decisions on how to revitalize declining neighborhoods while reinforcing already strong neighborhoods.”

“A neighborhood’s health should not solely be determined by its residents’ wealth,” Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr. (4th District) said. “City Council is now empowered with the CSI’s innovative platform, and communities will soon be empowered to tell us exactly what they need to become better places to live.”

Also on Wednesday, City Council released a report on initial policy and program recommendations developed using CSI.

“This report demonstrates how the CSI platform can help lawmakers tailor budgeting and policy decisions to address specific issues. We know anecdotally that some recreation centers are in better shape than others. The CSI platform will enable City Council to target additional resources to the recreation centers – and by extension, the neighborhoods – that need them most,” said Stephen Mullin, president of Econsult Solutions. “Cities across the country will be watching to see how City Council will use the CSI to make government nimbler, more responsive and smarter.”

The CSI platform will be continuously updated as new data become available and as communities begin to benefit from the insights that CSI provides.

“I know firsthand that Philadelphians are excited to contribute time and labor to improve their communities – they often just don’t know where to begin,” said Councilman Bobby Henon (6th District). “Ultimately, the goal is to make CSI accessible to all in order to promote more collaborative and better government.”

“The beauty of CSI is that it clarifies the connection between amenities some take for granted, such as good neighborhood schools, and overall neighborhood quality,” said Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell (3rd District). “To anyone who doubts that strong neighborhood schools are not optional for strong neighborhoods, I am confident City Council will soon be able to say, ‘The data don’t lie.’”

Said City Councilwoman Marian Tasco (9th District): “This is about reinforcing neighborhoods that are already strong, and revitalizing neighborhoods that need a boost. One neighborhood that is losing population and falling into disrepair is one too many. City Council will use the CSI to troubleshoot where needed and intervene before trouble finds a long-term home. The CSI is about more efficient and effective delivery of public services, and I couldn’t be more thrilled to be a part of this great project.”

City Council’s initial Philadelphia Community Sustainability Initiative report is available [here](#).