

Squeegee Collaborative Overview: A Resource for Leaders

Purpose & Context

This document is intended to be a reference for business and community leaders to talk to their networks about the work of the Squeegee Collaborative and recommendations and process. Squeegee activity is now and has always been a source of much debate and tension in Baltimore. When discussing this plan with your community, please remember that we may not always agree on the specifics, but the overall goal of this work is to improve the health and future of Baltimore, including everyone who lives in the region. Many individuals have strong feelings and emotions tied to this topic. It is important to remember that squeegeeing is a symptom of deeper issues in our community, including generations of disinvestment in young black boys and men, and lack of equitable access to education, workforce development, and long-term career opportunities for many members of our community. Young people who go to the corner to squeegee have told us, the Squeegee Collaborative, that this is not what they want to be doing, but often feel they have no other choice. It is our role as a City to provide access to better opportunities and to support the young people in accessing the resources they need to thrive.

Process Recommendations

- We recommend that you share all of resources from the Squeegee Collaborative, including a link to the full current proposal, in advance of any meeting or conversation.
- Intention: think about your intention in the conversation. Are you seeking discussion? Questions? Buy in? Feedback? Community building? What is the purpose around which you may host a meeting?
 - We would encourage you to create a space for open, vulnerable, and meaningful conversation. This does not mean you are seeking consensus.
 - Any discussion related to squeegeeing activity in Baltimore will bring varied perspectives. Remember that all viewpoints are valid, and all perspectives are incomplete. We each bring our own experiences, biases (good & bad), and our own limited viewpoints.
- This is not a one-time conversation. Experiences from past plans have taught us that our commitment to this work must sustain over time (years, not weeks). The current plan is iterative, will be responsive, and will integrate data and evaluation as we try different services, models, and diversions. Feedback is welcome and invited. And, this work requires radical empathy, expansive thinking, and an understanding that squeegeeing is a symptom of other, deeply rooted issues that we as a City are and must address to help reach our greatest potential.
- Root in abundance. We have a tremendous opportunity. Baltimore is a city full of greatness, potential, and opportunity, right now, at this moment.
- Allow people space to share without needing to answer or respond to everything. Write things down and email them to the squeegeecollaborative@baltimorecity.gov.
- Lean into discomfort and practice expansive empathy to understand root causes and the comprehensive solutions that are necessary to address these issues.

Format for a meeting

- Share vision statement
- Summarize plan (below)
- Invite questions and feedback
- Encourage support and participation
 - This is a process, things will not change overnight. Invite folks to participate in the process and help to serve as ambassadors of the work.

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Vision Statement

The goal of the Squeegee Collaborative is to eradicate squeegeeing in Baltimore by creating positive pathways to work, entrepreneurship and support services for squeegee workers, while providing enforcement that balances the public safety interests of squeegee workers and motorists.

Background and Context

- Dating back as early as the 1980's, Baltimore has grappled with a persistent challenge with youth panhandling – or squeegee workers, that dart across high traffic intersections washing windshields to earn money. Over the past 40 years, the City has developed multiple plans, deployed a series of strategies aimed at curbing the activity. An analysis of past attempts to address the issue of squeegeeing identified plans lacked the resources, evaluation, accountability, and governance framework to address this issue over the long-term.
- In July 2022, Mayor Scott convened the “Squeegee Collaborative,” a group of over 100 individuals representing young people, businesses, community and government leaders to develop a city-wide, public, private partnership and community-based response to the challenges and opportunities squeegeeing brings to the City.

Key Components

The Collaborative developed a plan consisting of three main pillars

1. **Support Services:** The vast majority of young people who squeegee do so to help earn money for themselves and their families. In working with an advisory group of young people, the Collaborative has identified a wide-range of services that they need. The goal is to help fill the needs of these young people so they no longer need to go to the corners to make money by coordinating access to a myriad of services (public, private, and non-profit offerings).
 - a. This includes a network of providers, organized with a “service navigator” (modeled after a care navigator for a hospital patient), who will help the young people access all the services they need for stability including: education, workforce development, socio-emotional, physical and mental health, and entrepreneurship.
 - b. Additionally, we will incentivize squeegee workers to participate in workforce, education and entrepreneurship training by providing a base income for up to 1 year. Squeegee workers would be required to commit to no longer participating in squeegee activity and regularly and consistently participating in service offerings.
 - c. The Baltimore Police Department will deploy Cadets in training to the corners to engage with young people and help share the services that are available.
2. **Accountability:** Past plans have offered services, but failed to support these services with accountability and diversion tactics. While services will be the forefront of this work, there will also be measures in place to create further accountability around squeegee activity, including:
 - a. Disallowing squeegee activity in high traffic areas; working with the young people to develop a code of conduct and consequences for breaking the code; and, deploying outreach workers through Baltimore City schools to get school-aged youth back into school.
 - b. As has always been true, criminal activity such as theft, malicious destruction of property, vandalism, etc. will continue to be enforced.
 - c. Starting with a public marketing campaign to educate drivers and tourists, we will also institute actions for drivers who disrupt traffic in disallowed squeegee zones.

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Key Components continued

3. Governance, Data & Measurement: Perhaps the most important component of all is the coordinated infrastructure plan that will allow this work to sustain for the long-term, and provide the mechanisms to evaluate and assess effectiveness.
 - a. The Mayor's Office of African American Male Engagement will serve as the lead coordinator for the service work, and the business community will be supporting an assessment and infrastructure plan to enhance the department's capacity.
 - b. Formalize The Squeegee Collaborative as a subgroup within the governance of the BYMOC initiative. The leadership team will consist of Squeegee Worker Leadership, Government, Non-Profit and Private representatives.
 - c. Develop a public-facing squeegee dashboard to monitor, track and report on the progress of key squeegee collaborative initiatives.
 - d. Through an identified evaluation partner, we will work with the Collaborative and service providers to develop performance metrics, case-management tracking tools and to conduct an evaluation of the impact of the squeegee collaborative's programming and enforcement efforts.

Squeegee Collaborative at a Glance -- FAQ

What are we solving for?

The Squeegee Collaborative was brought together by Mayor Scott in the Summer of 2022 to solve for the systemic failures that have pushed Baltimore's young men and boys of color to squeegeeing cars at high-traffic intersections as a form of supporting themselves and their families.

How are we going to solve it?

We will address these issues at their roots and solve for reasons that youth have resorted to squeegeeing to support their livelihood. We are building a network of coordinated care services that will remedy each of the areas that are currently insufficient for boys and young men of color in Baltimore. By guiding our youth and creating new pathways for them to be successful, we will build a value proposition that is far more beneficial to pursue than squeegeeing. Our care network will include dedicated Navigators that will guide and support our boys and young men of color through the entire process of registering and receiving care and support.

Who is going to facilitate this care?

Our coordinated care network will be led by the Mayor's Office of African American Male Engagement (MOAAME) and supported by Baltimore's vast network of nonprofit agencies, philanthropic businesses, government entities, the community, and a leadership team of youth themselves.

How will we implement accountability?

Our first priority is to solve for the safety and well-being of youth who squeegee. We have created a 5-pronged accountability protocol that includes Self-Regulation, addressing School-Aged Youth, Driver Accountability, Disallowed Zones, and Criminal Activity. Our goal is to hold all parties accountable and prevent youth from being encapsulated in the criminal justice system whenever possible.

How will this initiative be resourced?

The Squeegee Collaborative will include resources from a variety of sources, existing and new. For services, the city is fortunate to have a large number of amazing resource providers that would be able to provide a range of services. Additionally, the city will both realign existing resources while also using new resources for sections of the plan. Finally, local businesses and local and national philanthropy will also be tapped to assist in specific aspects of the plan.

When will this take place?

We are currently in the process of ramping up services, vetting care providers, and installing the infrastructure that will expand upon MOAAME's current capacity. By creating a care network inclusive of all parts of Baltimore's ecosystem, we create accountability to find the best solution in every direction possible. We are immediately taking steps to ensure this plan is sustainable, equitable, and successful for years to come.