



Testimony Regarding City Council Resolution # 210693
Public Safety Impacts on Neighborhood Commercial Corridors
Joint Hearing of Law & Government and Commerce & Economic
Development
Andy Toy, Policy Director
October 4th, 2021

Good morning Chairwoman Parker and Chairman Squilla. My name is Andy Toy and I am the Policy Director for the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC). I am here to testify on behalf of PACDC and the many CDCs and organizations we represent who support and manage commercial corridors in diverse neighborhoods across the City.

PACDC regularly convenes Commercial Corridor Working Group meetings and is also facilitating a Problem Solving Learning Lab focused on addressing the impact of nuisance businesses and activities on commercial corridors. As you know, neighborhood businesses have been impacted by the pandemic, by last year's social unrest, and now by the gun violence that has jumped in our City. We agree that there needs to be longer term investments in jobs, education, skills training, and entrepreneurship, but there also have to be shorter term positive signs from the City for many of our neighborhood corridors and businesses who are hanging on right now. We appreciate the additional funds for corridor cleaning and Security Cameras allocated by City Council for FY22, but more needs to be done.

What we hear is that businesses and residents around neighborhood corridors are fearful. As Jabari Jones points out, there are fewer businesses open after dark in neighborhoods and that causes a downward spiral that results in less

foot traffic in the evening, creating an even less safe environment. We know there is no one or easy solution, but the status quo is not the answer.

We have seen when beat cops who have, and are trained in, people skills are given the time to build relationships and trust within the community, especially on commercial corridors, it can make a significant difference. These relationships at the street level are impactful in building a sense of security and discouraging negative behaviors. As an example, along the South 7th Street commercial corridor the Captain has been able to assign a Cambodian officer for times who can better communicate with many of the businesses and residents. Along with additional beat officers, we can use more bike patrols in neighborhoods. Bike officers generally interact better with community than those driving through in patrol cars. And while we all believe mass incarceration is not an answer, there needs to be consequences for violent behavior and for those who threaten the fabric of our society. And the whole criminal justice system, not just the Police, need to solve this working together.

Other improvements that have proven effective are related to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (or CPTED), which includes better lighting, fewer isolated areas, more security cameras, and additional upstairs residential units that provide more eyes and ears on the street. Some of these are relatively inexpensive measures, while some will require greater longer-term investments. Our CDC

members and many others are allied in recognizing the problem and supporting these ideas and other solutions to make our communities safer and better for all who live, work and frequent them.

Given the magnitude of the challenge, we were surprised to see only \$3.8 Million in funding for Neighborhood Small Business Programs allocated in the \$100 Million year one budget for the new Neighborhood Preservation Initiative. We think this should be doubled to \$7.6 Million since it will encompass direct grants and loans to BIPOC and Historically Disadvantaged

businesses, as well as key investments in neighborhood commercial corridors, including Commercial Real Estate Acquisition. Otherwise, the allocation will be depleted very quickly given all of the need across the City to improve the safety and attractiveness of our corridors and assist small businesses.