



SQUEEGEEING ALTERNATIVE PLAN

Squeegeeing emerges from the complex problems that have plagued Baltimore for generations: a lack of economic opportunity, unaccountability in our broken public schools, a sweeping opioid epidemic, and rampant crime that disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities. **Getting individuals off the streets and into well-paying, stable jobs, as well as connecting them to the resources they need, will require a multifaceted, comprehensive approach.**

Squeegee boys are not one monolithic group. These individuals have unique motivations and needs that prompt their decision to turn to squeegeeing. **We see three distinct categories of individuals and realize each will require a personalized engagement strategy:**



Those who squeegee to provide for themselves and their families



Victims of addiction, mental illness, or have backgrounds impacted by substance abuse



Those who are committed to squeegeeing regardless of diversion attempts



Open pathways for advancement in education or employment



Provide health, addiction, housing, or job placement services



Take the tools of their trade to raise the cost of doing business



Paid for by Thiru Vignarajah for Baltimore Tunji Williams, Treasurer



FROM SQUEEGEES TO SAFETY AND SUCCESS

Squeegee boys have become, fair or not, a symbol of Baltimore's current plight. To some, they are an unfortunate marker of a city led by complicit politicians and failing schools that do not provide people, youth especially, with meaningful job opportunities and career advancement pathways. For others, they represent a menacing presence that deters them from bringing their families downtown. At a different time in Baltimore's history, these squeegee workers would not pose such a challenge to residents and elected officials. However, with record violence, they are an ever-present reminder that Baltimore's leaders are failing to connect the dots and support the individuals who may need it most.

We know that interactions between drivers and squeegee boys can turn aggressive. In January 2020, we saw the heart-wrenching [video](#) of a man senselessly beaten by squeegee boys on the corner of President and Lombard. Not only do commuters feel threatened, but squeegee boys also put themselves into danger darting in between busy traffic. In October of 2018, a [ten-year-old](#) squeegee boy was injured after being struck by a car; in 1986, a [fourteen-year-old](#) squeegee boy was fatally hit by a vehicle. City Hall has yet to move the needle in a way that instills confidence that we can avoid another tragedy — we don't need another incident to learn from our past.

Squeegeeing emerges from the complex problems that have plagued Baltimore for generations: a lack of economic opportunity, unaccountability in our broken schools, a sweeping opioid epidemic, and rampant crime that disproportionately affects black and brown communities. Getting individuals off the streets and into well-paying jobs, as well as connecting them to the resources they need, will require a comprehensive approach.

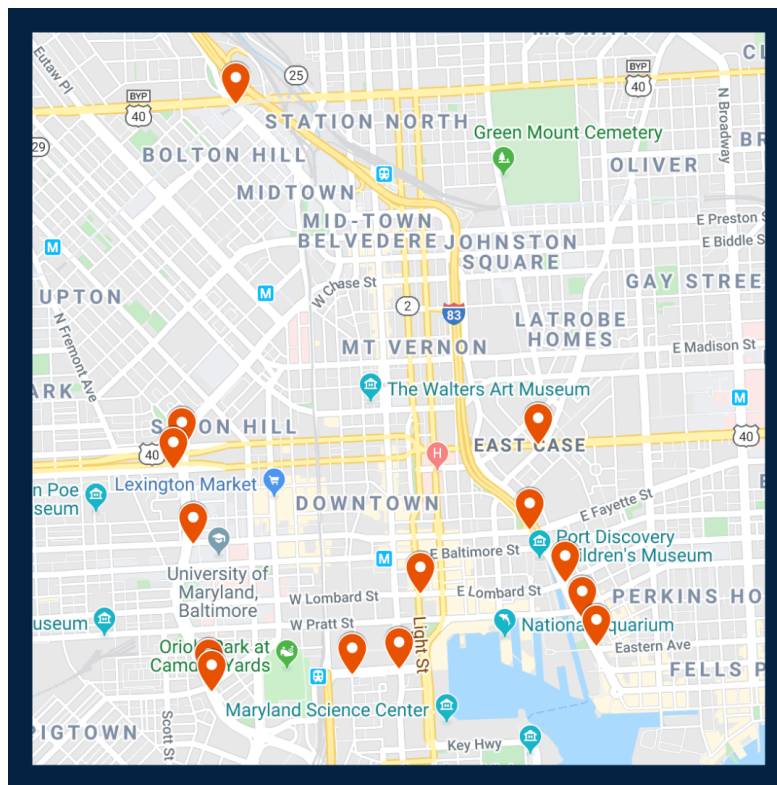
Identify What Drives Individuals to Squeegeeing

Squeegee boys are not one monolithic group. These individuals have unique motivations and needs that prompt their decision to turn to squeegeeing. Thiru and his team see three distinct categories of individuals and realize each will require a personalized engagement strategy:

1. Those who squeegee to provide for themselves and their families
2. Those who squeegee and are themselves struggling with addiction or mental illness or come from backgrounds impacted by substance abuse
3. Those who will attempt to continue squeegeeing regardless of diversion attempts

Baltimore's existing programming and services are disjointed and do not sufficiently provide the wraparound care that will lead to sustainable outcomes. To best engage with squeegee workers, we need to personally meet them where they are. Squeegeeing is limited to the few corners with the highest traffic volume. Our team went to the street corners, collected anecdotal evidence, and spoke with these young people, realizing that squeegeeing primarily occurs on fourteen corners:

Map of Top Squeegee Locations as identified by the Thiru for Baltimore Team



As mayor, Vignarajah pledges to:

1. Ensure squeegee boys are aptly connected to pathways to advance their education or gain secure employment with advancement opportunities
2. Recognize squeegee boys with addiction, mental illness and/or homelessness limitations that require health, addiction, housing, or job placement services and promptly facilitate access to those programs
3. In unique cases, where individuals will continue to turn to squeegeeing regardless of alternative options, take the tools of their trade to raise the cost of doing business

Create Alternative Work Programs that Compete with the Benefits of Squeegeeing

Facilitate Job Interviews Between Squeegee Boys and Local Businesses

City leaders cannot pretend that creating a stable nine-to-five job that pays \$15 an hour, before taxes, can ever compete with the perks of being a squeegee boy. We must acknowledge that they can in some instances make [\\$30 to \\$50 an hour](#), can come and go as they please, and report to no one but themselves. Nevertheless, we must present an alternative employment opportunity that is attractive to these young people.

Thiru has already started [partnering with local businesses](#) to provide squeegee boys with secure employment and in turn, advancement opportunities. Thiru will hire liaisons to assist squeegee boys interested in pursuing a stable, permanent career and connect them with local businesses that are willing to offer employment. While meaningful employment may present new challenges to these individuals, it can teach valuable skills, such as how to build a schedule, how to remain accountable to a team, how to build a relationship with a supervisor, and how to follow codes of conduct. The greatest opportunity provided by employment in local businesses is upward mobility. These opportunities will open an avenue for progression otherwise difficult to obtain for many of these young men, and certainly not available on a street corner.

We have refused to wait for city politicians to take action, or even for the election, to implement a program that can provide immense benefits for our economy and these young men. Squeegee boys and local businesses interested in participating should email opportunity@thiru2020.com.

Station Unarmed, Site-Specific, Deputized Community Liaisons at the Busiest Corners

Bring Resources to Street Corners

Deputized community liaisons will positively interact with squeegee boys in their designated zone, building relationships and trust. Liaisons will not take away resources from our struggling police force -- instead, these liaisons will receive specific training on de-escalation techniques, and curate a specific policy for positive and appropriate engagement with squeegee boys.

Part of this positive engagement will include identifying school-aged individuals, in partnership with the relevant schools and after-school employment or programming, where applicable, who should be required to return to their education. Each deputized liaison will receive access to point contact information for all middle and high schools in Baltimore City. The City can encourage and support heightened collaboration between the liaisons and educators/administrators to redirect these young squeegee boys back to the classroom, while making sure their needs are met and they have the guidance, resources, and support to thrive.

These deputized community liaisons would also be trained on identifying vulnerable individuals in need of social services and City programs. They will receive training on recognizing who is suffering from food insecurity, addiction and mental illness, or housing troubles, so as to connect those individuals to appropriate experts and resources. This will take the form of Seattle's [Law Enforcement Diversion Programs](#) (LEAD) which provides a credible alternative to booking individuals with behavioral health needs for low-level offenses. Instead of creating criminal entanglements, LEAD diverts these individuals to community-based interventions including housing, addiction, mental illness and health services.

Raise the Cost of Doing Business

Baltimore's squeegee boys are making calculations on how to make ends meet. Some will not be receptive to alternative job opportunities because of the lucrative cash flow squeegeeing provides. That being said, we need to change the calculation by not only introducing consistent and favorable options for skill development and upward mobility, but also by increasing the cost of doing business in the streets by confiscating the tools of their trade. In accordance with the Baltimore City Code and working in conjunction with Community Liaisons; site-specific, unarmed private security guards who have been temporarily granted limited policing power will have the ability to confiscate squeegees. They will have no authority beyond their stationed corners, but this narrow power will raise squeegee boys' opportunity costs. [Article 19, Section 47-4](#) of the code grants police the authority to restrict solicitation "from any operator or occupant of a motor vehicle that is in traffic on a public street, whether in exchange for cleaning the vehicle's windows or otherwise."