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Background

Through the **21st Century Schools Initiative**, Baltimore City Public Schools, in partnership with the Maryland Stadium Authority, Baltimore City, and the State of Maryland, will be investing nearly one billion dollars to renovate or replace schools over the next several years. To leverage this investment in the schools, and to enhance the connection between the schools and the surrounding neighborhoods, the Planning Department launched a new program called **INSPIRE**. INSPIRE stands for *Investing in Neighborhoods and Schools to Promote Improvement, Revitalization, and Excellence*.

Overview

The INSPIRE planning program focuses on the quarter-mile area surrounding each modernized school that is a part of the 21st Century initiative. Focusing on a limited geographic area will allow plans to include detailed recommendations for specific, implementable public improvements in the quality of life for students, their families, and neighborhood residents. The plans will also articulate the community's long-term vision for guiding private investment, and address environmental, social, and economic conditions.

Guiding Principles

Two principles guide the INSPIRE program:

- **Stronger schools lead to stronger neighborhoods**
Millions of dollars of investment in schools can trigger additional investment in the surrounding neighborhood. The INSPIRE plans will build from the community's vision and guide that investment. The plans can serve as marketing tools to attract private investment and work plans for community-led development activities.
- **Stronger neighborhoods lead to stronger schools**
A safe and stable neighborhood is fundamental for providing students and families with a healthy living environment, where children are more likely to attend school and have better outcomes. The plans will include specific implementable recommendations.

Planning Process Kickoff

Board of School Commissioners approval of the feasibility studies depicting preferred school design options for each site will trigger the kick-off of the INSPIRE community engagement and planning process for the surrounding neighborhoods. The Planning Department works with community members – individuals from the schools and the neighborhoods – to guide the INSPIRE process.

- **LISTEN: Gathering Information**

Community stakeholders, Planning department staff, and other city agency staff examine existing conditions around the school and identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Information will be gathered through reviewing existing neighborhood plans and history, and collecting demographic data. The Planning department will conduct walking tours with an INSPIRE Core Team, convene workshops, and conduct surveys.

- **CREATE: Drafting and Reviewing Recommendations**

Based on stakeholder input, Planning Department staff will draft recommendations. Relevant City agency representatives (such as Transportation or Housing) will work with Planning staff to identify where coordinated activity can help address the recommendations. Draft recommendations will be shared with the stakeholders, and will be revised and prioritized according to their feedback.

- **DELIVER: Writing, Reviewing, and Executing the Plan**

Planning Department staff will write the INSPIRE plan – including implementation timelines – and share it with the community. After the plan is reviewed by the community, it will be submitted to the Planning Commission for adoption.

Implementation

The plan will identify specific implementation actions that will fall into four categories:

- **Partner Commitments**

Plans will identify commitments from institutions, businesses, community development corporations, community associations, and other partners to help implement specific plan recommendations.

- **Agency Operations**

Plans will include detailed recommendations for directing and coordinating agency operations, such as re-striping or creating new crosswalks, code enforcement, and tree trimming/planting.

- **Priority Areas for Citywide Initiatives**

Plans will prioritize existing citywide initiatives, such as Safe Routes to School or blight elimination.

- **Capital Projects**

To help ensure the success of INSPIRE, \$5 million of General Obligation Bonds are available in FY16 and FY17 to implement INSPIRE projects and priorities.

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