



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

RESOLUTION NO. 240713

Introduced September 5, 2024

Councilmember Young

RESOLUTION

Calling on the City of Philadelphia to explore the funding of a pilot program for free doorbell cameras to enhance public safety in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, In January 2023, the Freeport, Illinois City Council approved a resolution to develop a doorbell camera program for their local police department after a woman donated surveillance cameras to the police department after losing her son to gun violence; and

WHEREAS, The city purchased 35 cameras and handed them out to residents on a first-come, first-serve basis, and the Freeport Council used data from the Freeport Police Department and Shotspotter technology to identify sections of the city where additional surveillance was needed; and

WHEREAS, These cameras have been instrumental in solving crimes in Freeport, providing a unique opportunity to help police reduce crimes in these cities, combatting violence and improving communication between law enforcement and residents; and

WHEREAS, The cameras identify crime hotspots and help the police with identification and apprehension of suspects. Doorbell cameras have been used to not just solve crimes but to deter crime. As crime deterrents these cameras provide residents and law enforcement with increased visibility into neighborhoods most affected by crime; and

WHEREAS, Freeport's efforts mimicked those of several other U.S. cities the year prior, including Portsmouth, Virginia; Kalamazoo, Michigan; and Daytona Beach, Florida to combat car break-ins, package theft and other crimes; and

WHEREAS, In early 2024, Akron, Ohio created a similar doorbell camera pilot program as part of a concerted effort to combat neighborhood crime and package theft. The program was funded with money from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); and

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WHEREAS, Akron provided 460 free Ring doorbell cameras to residents living in high crime neighborhoods, with a total of 724 people signing up to receive them; and

WHEREAS, The success of the Akron program caused the Akron City Council to announce in April 2024 a Phase 2 expansion in the distribution of 300 doorbell cameras to Akron residents, including renters, on a rolling basis. Phase 2 was also funded by ARPA; and

WHEREAS, Akron, the largest U.S. thus far to pilot such a program, has built out many regulatory structures, consent and privacy guidelines, and eligibility requirements that cities such as Philadelphia could seek to emulate in a potential pilot program. These include limiting doorbell cameras to one per household; barring the sale, transfer, alteration or destruction of the doorbell cameras; permitting the access of doorbell camera footage by local law enforcement and prohibiting the obstruction of or objection to said footage being utilized by law enforcement; requiring that titled legal owners must notify the City, in advance, of any planned change in ownership to the property in writing; and the responsibility of the recipient of the doorbell camera to own, install, maintain and operate the cameras, as well as the holding of the City harmless from any damage, loss, injury, or death that results from, or related to, the doorbell program or the installation and use of the Ring doorbell camera product; and

WHEREAS, Were the City of Philadelphia to pilot a ring camera program, the Philadelphia Police Department would be better equipped to better identify hotspots where crime occurs; and

WHEREAS, As demonstrated by the Akron pilot, a ring camera program would have to content with equity in access, as many people living in low-income neighborhoods do not have the internet access needed to use the camera; and

WHEREAS, Implementing a Ring Camera pilot program would provide the City of Philadelphia with a modern and effective avenue to mitigate crime; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on the City of Philadelphia to explore the funding of a pilot program for free doorbell cameras to enhance public safety in the City of Philadelphia.