

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Law & Government and the Committee on Commerce & Economic Development to hold joint hearings to examine the relationship between public safety and the economic vitality of neighborhood commercial corridors, and further to explore any and all broad-based, neighborhood-focused, and inter-governmental public safety initiatives that have worked in the City in the past, and have worked or are working in other cities.

WHEREAS, Neighborhood commercial corridors are the economic arteries of our City. The businesses located on commercial corridors offer needed goods and services, and contribute to the neighborhood identities that make our City an attractive place to live, work, and shop; and

WHEREAS, The businesses located on Philadelphia's neighborhood commercial corridors, many of which are small businesses, also provide opportunities for Black entrepreneurs, other entrepreneurs of color, and immigrant entrepreneurs, and help build household wealth; and

WHEREAS, Safe, clean, and vibrant commercial corridors are necessary to establish and maintain the overall safety, health, and wellbeing of the surrounding neighborhood and its residents; and

WHEREAS, While commercial corridors in our City have benefited from external assistance via the City, Community Development Corporations (CDCs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and/or Chambers of Commerce, there can still be great disparity between the type of assistance a commercial corridor receives depending on its neighborhood, history, and surrounding anchor institutions; and

WHEREAS, Since the first COVID shutdown occurred in March 2020, followed by the civil unrest later in 2020, and now with the COVID-19 Delta variant, businesses along commercial corridors experienced, and continue to experience, an economic blow that they never expected. All of them are doing their best to survive, but unfortunately, many have closed; and

WHEREAS, As we look forward and try to envision our "new normal" in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that the future success of the businesses on all neighborhood commercial corridors will be critical in charting a path toward equitable neighborhood economic recovery in 2021 and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Unfortunately, due to the rise in gun violence, as well as several high-profile stories of business owners and employees being shot and killed while on the job, many business owners, particularly those located on neighborhood commercial corridors outside of Center City, have lost faith in the City to keep them safe, resulting in them choosing to close at nightfall rather than risk staying open; and

WHEREAS, According to an op-ed published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* by Jabari Jones, the President of the West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative, "Visit one of our historic commercial corridors in West Philadelphia or any predominantly diverse community after sundown and the sight is the same: silver shutter gates, dark storefronts, and empty businesses that have closed for the day. Now, on that same day, visit Center City after dark. Bars and restaurants are thriving, people of all ages stroll by storefronts, and everyone is open for

business. The reason for the difference? Public safety”; and

WHEREAS, As explained by Jones, these public safety concerns have very real consequences on the economic vitality of neighborhood commercial corridors: “Businesses in Center City enjoy three to five more hours of revenue every day than those businesses in neighborhoods that close early for safety concerns. That can equal out to 25 extra hours per week. If you use a conservative estimate of \$200 per hour that these businesses make in profit, it’s an extra \$5,000 per week that businesses in Center City make over those in neighborhoods. BIPOC-owned businesses setting up shop in communities are almost immediately at a competitive disadvantage as of the day they open”; and

WHEREAS, Unless and until business owners, employees, and potential patrons feel safe while managing, working at, and shopping at their local businesses on neighborhood commercial corridors, businesses outside of Center City will continue to be at a severe economic disadvantage when compared to their Center City counterparts; and

WHEREAS, As Jones so eloquently states, “The reality is, you can’t invest in a community where business owners are afraid to set up shop or stay open, where people are afraid to go to work because they hear stories about employees becoming victims on the job, where residents are afraid to leave their homes because of violence. Before any investment is going to make a difference in the lives of residents, our city leaders need to solve our public safety crisis”; and

WHEREAS, While gun violence has unfortunately increased around the country over the past year and a half, there are places that are addressing the issue more effectively than Philadelphia. We know there are broad-based, neighborhood-focused, and inter-governmental public safety initiatives - like bike patrols and beat officers - that have improved public safety for neighborhood commercial corridors. If we are going to address our ongoing public safety crisis, we must fully explore these initiatives, and be prepared to adopt what works; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes the Committee on Law & Government and the Committee on Commerce & Economic Development to hold joint hearings to examine the relationship between public safety and the economic vitality of neighborhood commercial corridors, and further to explore any and all broad-based, neighborhood-focused, and inter-governmental public safety initiatives that have worked in the City in the past, and have worked or are working in other cities.