Speaker 1: Okay Adam, are you rolling? It is rolling? Numbers are moving? Cool, okay. We're ready to go then.

Speaker 2: Do you want me to stand right here?

Speaker 1: Why don't you stand over here? Yeah, cool. I think that's good, yeah.

Speaker 2: Alright.

Speaker 2: Well, thank you for coming out today. Can you start by introducing yourself?

Brooks Long: My name is Brooks Long. I'm a musician currently and a music programmer at Creative Alliance at the Patterson. Future anthro-musicologist.

Speaker 2: Can you tell me about your relationship or your history in southwest Baltimore?

Brooks Long: I grew up here, in this neighborhood, across the street on Fayette Street. Yeah, I was born and raised right here.

Speaker 2: Right here? Do you still live in the area?

Brooks Long: No, I don't. I live in Charles Village, but I'm here all the time. My parents are still there.

Speaker 2: Oh, your parents are still there?

Brooks Long: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: Cool. Can you tell me some of your earliest memories of this part of this city? Or a earliest memory?

Brooks Long: Wow, there's a lot. I'd say on our block, when I was really little, there were a lot ... It wasn't as populated. There are three brownstones over there that have been converted into condos. That happened when I was about nine or 10 or something like that. But for a long time, there wasn't a whole lot of people here. Yeah, it was not as inhabited as it is now. Which is good.

Brooks Long: When I was growing up, it was pretty rough area. Probably about the bottom hopefully of its time as a neighborhood. There was a lot of drug use, a lot of selling. Sometimes in this part. Not as often. About five blocks up is what they call "The Corner." That's this corner that was known as one of the biggest open air drug markets in the country at the time. Fayette and Monroe. So anyway, there was a lot of that activity that was coming around here a lot. And to some extent still is. But it's much less stressful place these days, I'd say.

Speaker 2: Do you have any thoughts about what changed? Or how did it start getting better?

Brooks Long: I don't know if it was any one thing. I don't know. I think there was just a genera rough time that the country was having with the crack epidemic going on. But the war on drugs didn't really help. So David Simon and Ed Burns, they wrote the book "The Corner" about basically showing that the war on drugs wasn't working or was working for the wrong purposes.

Brooks Long: But yeah, what has changed? That church over there wasn't always active. I don't even know the name of the church, unfortunately. But every Sunday, it's hard to find a parking spot these days. Which is good. The condos probably helped as well. I think there are people in the neighborhood who have been steadily working, chipping away, trying to get good things to happen in the community. Enough of those things worked, that things are better than they have been.

Speaker 2: Do you know any interesting facts about this area? Or hidden treasures that you like in this area?

Brooks Long: Oh, wow. Hidden treasures, hidden treasures. Well, I think this park itself, honestly, is just a really nice place. I'd walk my dog in this park all the time. Ride my bike around here. That's always fun. Trying to think of some other things. Hard to talk about this area specifically, because I can think of like surrounding areas. Like it's not from here to Carroll Park, which is a big old park where I went to Little League as a kid. That's a great place to be. Beautiful area.

Brooks Long: Then you can practically walk to downtown, if you can cross Martin Luther King. There's a lot going on downtown.

Brooks Long: I'd say this is just kind of just a ... When unfortunate things are happening, this is just a very chill neighborhood. I don't know. What else can I tell you?

Brooks Long: There's a lot of people in the neighborhood that are renovating houses. My parents are renovating their brownstone. This guy named John, who passed away unfortunately, he owns a couple of the houses. He's renovating those. There's people here who believe in the neighborhood, and they're nice, chill people.

Speaker 2: Do the parks get pretty busy in the summer?

Brooks Long: Sometimes. There is a annual festival called the Ruth Kirk ... She was a delegate here. The Ruth Kirk Family Fun Day Festival I think is what they call it? That happens near the end of the summer. It's like a two day thing, Saturday and Sunday. Yeah, the park will be full and there'll be park rangers with animals, and there'll be lots of food. There'll be musical performances. I actually have this project called Baltimore Music Map, and I highlighted this group who's mostly from the neighborhood over, Frankie and the Spindles. They perform here every year. Yeah, so that happens.

Brooks Long: Then I don't know if this has actually happened in a while, but there's a church down the street. I'm forgetting the name of it, but I think it's in the 10 or 1100 block of Fayette Street. Actually, my preschool. I think they sometimes would set up and have church out here on a non-Sunday. Sometimes if you're riding your bike around here, they'll just be having church. Couple of steel chairs out and just doing it.

Brooks Long: Then there's also some musician events that happen here independent of anything else, that the Franklin Square Community Association has gotten going. I've played that, a friend of mine Carter James has played that, some other people have played that. It's been really cool. I hope that continues.

Speaker 2: Can you talk a little bit about your music?

Brooks Long: Sure. I've been playing about 20 years now. I play guitar and I sing, write songs, I [inaudible 00:10:12] songs. I'd say about 10 years now, since 2010 at least, I've had a solo career playing around, writing, and doing that. I have a band called Brooks Long and the Mad Dog No Good. We still play occasionally, but we were out there a lot for a good while. I've had some good success, and people had a lot of cool things to say about it.

Speaker 2: Does growing up in Baltimore ... Has it influenced your music directly?

Brooks Long: I hate to be dark.

Speaker 2: It's okay, you can be dark.

Brooks Long: But it has. One thing that I think I have to credit my parents for is not sugarcoating anything when I was growing up as a kid and telling it like it is. I don't know. Growing up in the neighborhood the way it was, they said this is what it is when somebody's strung out. Sometimes there'd be break-ins. They'd be like, this is what happens when people are desperate.

Brooks Long: I guess I kind of just naturally in my music sometimes talk about things that I guess for some people are uncomfortable to talk about. But I don't mind talking about it because I think the best thing that you can do is look at it straight on. Be honest.

Speaker 2: What do you think are kind of the greatest assets of the neighborhood or the great challenges, presently?

Brooks Long: The greatest aspects of the neighborhood.

Speaker 1: Just wait for those guys. Brooks, would you step maybe six inches this way?

Brooks Long: Six inches this way?

Speaker 1: Yeah, that's good. Right there. Too much. Okay, that's good. Yeah.

Brooks Long: All right.

Speaker 1: Sorry, thanks.

Brooks Long: The greatest aspects, I would say ... In any neighborhood, the greatest aspects are always the people. The people here are hardworking and want to have a great environment. They care about what's going on, how you're doing in school, and all that kind of thing.

Brooks Long: Then obviously, not to brag, but it's beautiful. It's beautiful here. The homes here are really nice, and they're really old. This is a really old neighborhood. Definitely pre-Civil War. Everything mostly still holds up.

Brooks Long: Yeah, its proximity to lots of different areas. That definitely is a big benefit. Its proximity to Sowebo is great, and to Union Square and other cool neighborhoods. This is a neighborhood that I think everybody that's here, knows its potential. If they've stayed for a little while, it's because of that potential. There have been lots of things that have come along that tried to make that potential kinetic. Some things have worked, and a lot of things really haven't. For lots of different reasons.

Brooks Long: When I was a little kid, Mount Clare Junction was a small mini mall. It was really an interesting place. They had just finished it when I was probably about four or five years old. At that time, people were saying, "This is the place. They're gonna be building Camden Yards, the baseball stadium over there. Things are gonna happen." Mount Clare Junction is not what it was meant to be. I think sometimes that's just an illustration of how initiatives can kind of erode over time. I don't really know the intimate details of how it eroded, but being somebody who lived here, I can tell you that it did.

Brooks Long: There's lots of other things. This is Vivian Thomas Medical Arts Academy school. To be honest, I have to take it at its name. I guess it's for kids that are interested in getting into medicine of some kind. But for a long time, and I guess this speaks to how the public system has shifted ... For a long time, this was Francis M. Wood High School, and it was considered "Last Chance High." If you couldn't make it anywhere else, you better make it here kind of place. They struggled a lot, but even then, there's teachers that were really dedicated, fighting a lot of battles just to keep them in school. I guess that school over there changes things in the neighborhood, even though there were occasional issues over there but not as much as you might think.

Brooks Long: Another person that I know has had an investment in the area for a long time; she's not here anymore. She's not dead, but she's in Atlanta. She retired. But Reverend Wise, who is a friend of my family. Reverend Virginia Wise. She had a church down the street on the corner of the 1300 block of Baltimore Street. She had that for a long time. Her mission was to help out women in the community that really needed it. She bought a building maybe a little bit behind the church along Kerry Street, renovated that, and brought in women who were going through tough times in there. That's been a place where people can kind of get on their feet.

Brooks Long: Yeah, sorry I'm-

Speaker 2: Is that still open, even though she's retired and moved?

Brooks Long: Yeah, I think so. I think it is. I can't tell you who's running it or what's going on. Probably her sons.

Speaker 2: We're also studying West Baltimore Street specifically, and I was wondering if you have any memories about the street? Or, to add to that, what would you like to see for that street?

Brooks Long: Well, I guess when I was growing up, I guess you don't know when things are in the process of fading away. You don't really know that they are, 'cause you don't know the height of what it used to be. But I remember there being a hat place diagonally from Rose of Sharon on Baltimore and Kerry that had been there for a long time. They sold everything from fedoras to kangols. Which, when I was growing up, what was the style.

Brooks Long: My dad would go to Oriel Hardware. That was a place, a hardware store. I think it's either in the 10 or 1100 block of West Baltimore Street. Been there for forever. It was really convenient for my dad to go down there and get whatever he needed to help renovate the house. But eventually, Hechingers came in, and then Hechingers begat Home Depot, and Home Depot begat Lowe's. They struggled, and they especially struggled as the neighborhood declined probably. I think they might have moved to Federal Hill, but I don't think they're even there anymore.

Brooks Long: Let's see. What else? There's Littlepage's, which is a furniture store that's right in the middle of the 1300 block. I never actually went in there. I guess I never needed to get furniture from there. But I remember they came back after this MTA bus crashed into it. I remember that. Yeah, I came home from school and you hear this big explosion. You don't know what that is. There was a big MTA bus, probably the number 20, crashed through there somehow.

Brooks Long: I think from time to time on the 1400 block of West Baltimore, there's a diner that's open sometimes. But at least when I was around, it wasn't consistently open.

Brooks Long: Honestly, there's New York Fried Chicken, which has been there for probably about 15, 16 years or so, that is directly across the street from Rose of Sharon. These business there, they're there, they're making money. One night a 13 year old kid was unfortunately shot and killed there. I remember that.

Brooks Long: What else about Baltimore Street? I guess that's ... I just probably exhausted everything on Baltimore Street. There's a driving school that I don't think is there anymore. That is where I learned how to drive. That was right up the street from Hollins Market. But I can't remember what the cross street is.

Brooks Long: Yeah, that kind of empties out that range of Baltimore Street. My dad's side of the family has had Central Baptist Church as their home church since my dad was a kid. That's further up on Baltimore Street. Probably about eight blocks, nine blocks up. Right across the street from Bon Secours Hospital. Yeah.

Speaker 2: What would you like people who don't live in Baltimore, what would you like people to know about this area?

Brooks Long: What would I like people to know about this area? That it's a neighborhood with beautiful people in it, and that there's certainly a lot of history here.

Brooks Long: Oh, now this is something that ... I was just talking about the musician Carter James. Names is James Carter. He performed here one time. He told me that back in like the 50s, 60s, 70s, this particular park here was where everybody, all the best checkers and chess players came out to play here. I'd love to see that again. But this was the spot. If you thought you were really good, you found out how good you really were here. I'm sorry, I can't even remember if that's relevant to your question.

Speaker 2: It's all relevant. It's okay.

Brooks Long: Sorry, I'm-

Speaker 2: No, it's okay. I was asking ... I like that story, though. I was asking what you want people to know about this area.

Brooks Long: Yeah, I guess that sort of is relevant. That this area has a history, and it has a future. There are a lot of people here that believe in it and see the long game of it. Which is that this is a place that has been in worse situations and will definitely be in better ones. There are things that happen here that are unfortunate that happen in other places in the city, that happen in other places in the country, and other places in the world. That's unfortunate, but it doesn't take away from the beauty of the place and its people.

Speaker 2: What kind of businesses would you like to see in this area? What kind of things would you like to see come to this area?

Brooks Long: Well. I guess there are all kinds of businesses that could be here. Lot of liquor stores around here, and that's okay. It'd be more okay if there were other things around, too. The kind of businesses that bring people together would be good. So, cafes where you can get a cheap cup of coffee, maybe. Or where people can gather around, sit, talk, and be engaged with their community and with each other. Those always help.

Brooks Long: Other businesses. If some of those liquor stores could be bars, where people can, again, gather around and drink and watch the Oriels and have a good time. I'm for whatever can contribute to people enjoying each other.

Speaker 2: Could you talk a little bit about as an artist, were there moments you were supported in music or in art? If there were arts organizations in the area when you were growing up?

Brooks Long: I'm not gonna say that there weren't, but I don't know that there were. Not when I was growing up, no. I'd say that the Franklin Square Community Association, they've been doing their concert series here, and they've been really supportive. That's been great to see. I don't know that that wasn't happening before, but I don't know that it was.

Brooks Long: When I was a kid, my first experience gigging was really with a police officer. My mom was a 911 operator for the police department, and she heard about this officer who was getting together a PAL choir. The police athletic league choir. There was PAL centers all over the place where police interacted with kids and did fun things with them. I don't think that exists anymore. It'd be cool. Anyway, office Dotson had a choir of kids, and he took us all around. We opened ... We didn't open, we backed up Shania Twain at the area. I think there was like a other kids that was from around here that was in that choir.