



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

GREG FISCHER
MAYOR

October 8, 2021

Metro Council President David James,
Councilman Markus Winkler and
Councilman Anthony Piagentini
601 W Jefferson Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202

Dear President James and Councilmen Winkler and Piagentini,

I appreciate your 9-28-21 letter on gun violence. I obviously share your concern about the impact of gun violence in our community. As you know, this is a sad challenge facing cities across the country, as evidenced by a recent [FBI report](#) showing the U.S. experienced its biggest one-year increase on record in homicides in 2020. This reality does not discount our problems, of course, and it is a challenge around which we must align our efforts and actions.

And it is a challenge, both here and across the U.S., exacerbated by the proliferation of guns on our streets, the impact that COVID-19 has had on already inadequate systems to support our youth, and public safety agency staff shortages.

Each of these issues demand solutions at the local, state and national level. And as you all must know, Louisville Metro Government has a plan – one that Metro Council has debated, approved and funded (see attachment A), *Reimagining Public Safety* with investments in all six pillars of violence prevention: community mobilization, intervention, prevention, organizational change, and re-entry, as well as law enforcement.

Like you, I am sick and tired of Louisville families being devastated by the loss of a loved one to gun violence. Our work – again, shared in many conversations with Council leadership and in committees, includes:

- Working with you to increase resources for public safety, including in the FY22 budget:
 - The budget approved by Council quadrupled the city's investment in violence prevention and capacity-building programs from \$5 million to \$19 million – including critical work overseen by our Office for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods (OSHN). OSHN is actively using these funds to expand its work in violence prevention and intervention, including outreach, peer support and mentorship, job training, conflict mediation and relocation away from dangerous

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situations. OSHN has filled more than two dozen positions and is training staff and creating office protocols and procedures. Already, the outreach team has served 183 community members and made 342 referrals for services with over 50% of the needs/requests related to housing/relocation and counseling/therapy needs. In support of the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) initiative, OSHN has completed 27 Community/Police Response to Victims of Violence (CPRVV) visits, with 80% of clients accepting services and supports, while also participating in 24 custom notifications, with 42% accepting services and support. OSHN has engaged with 4,400 community members through 17 events, along with more than 1,000 direct engagements with individuals who signed up for more information regarding OSHN services.

OSHN also is working on a community health development (CHD) approach to assist violence prevention ambassadors in developing and implementing community-driven frameworks for violence prevention. They're currently doing asset mapping and identifying partners for this work.

- \$550,000 for the GVI initiative, launched to divert people from the path of gun violence, incarceration and tragedy. Dozens of “custom notifications” started in April to people most at risk of being impacted by or committing gun violence, along with the start of the team’s Victims Services Unit. Council has been invited to join in one of the custom notifications, and interested members are still welcome to do so. As has been shared with the Council as recently as a Sept. 23 committee meeting, the team is on pace to begin its larger-scale notifications, or call-ins, to officially put offenders on notice of the criminal consequences if their actions continue. We’ve also shared with Council a status update letter from Erin Bloom, field Advisor for the NNSC (National Network for Safe Communities) that said, *“Given how strong and robust Louisville’s custom notification efforts have become as of late, the NNSC is not concerned about the pace of the implementation in Louisville – in particular since most GVI sites have not held a call-in since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. NNSC and the Louisville partners are moving towards holding a call-in before the end of this year, public health considerations allowing, but for the time being the GVI messaging, interventions, and the provision of resources are comprehensive and effective.”* The GVI team is working to schedule another update for Council this month, with consultants from John Jay College.
- \$500,000 for Reimage, a collaboration with KentuckianaWorks that is helping to break the cycle of incarceration and recidivism. With these funds, Reimage caseworkers are helping Louisville young adults ages 16-24 start a quality career or enroll in school. Participants also have access to mental health support and legal aid. Strategic recruitment is focused on west Louisville neighborhoods where the need is greatest. Since its creation, Reimage has served over 809 participants. During the last program year, ending June 30, 2021, Reimage served 91 new participants, as well as 108 who carried over from the previous program year.

- \$600,000 for a new “reconciliation” program to build on the city’s work to improve relationships between Louisville Metro Police and the larger community they are sworn to serve and protect. Our Office for Equity is working now with NNSC on a contract to help facilitate this work. Our team has reviewed NNSC’s contract proposal and submitted modifications for their final approval. We expect to reach final agreement and sign the contract in the next few weeks, at which point NNSC will begin implementing the program in partnership with our Office of Equity.
- Nearly \$5 million in deflection and diversion programs for situations best served by a social service response, rather than a law enforcement response. LMG contracted with the University of Louisville, Spalding University and Seven Counties to help develop this alternative response model and is now reviewing a draft report, with plans to share publicly soon.
- Working with you to use the first round of funding from the American Rescue Plan to provide \$1 million to create a pilot Community Ambassador program to complement the Louisville Downtown Partnership’s Business Improvement District (BID) Ambassadors program. Sixteen new ambassadors are being hired now for commercial corridors along Bardstown Road, Woodlawn, east Downtown, and west Louisville through next summer.
- Again, as you are aware, public safety is one of five priority areas as we determine how to allocate the remaining \$344 million of ARP funding. The three of you are among the 11 Council members on ARP teams weighing in on plans and tasked with informing the balance of the Council.
- Negotiating new FOP police contracts that create competitive salaries to help us retain and attract the best and brightest officers, while also implementing reforms that help build trust between police and community. The contract for lieutenants has been filed and is before Metro Council for approval now. While our proposal for officers and sergeants was unfortunately defeated, we are working with FOP counsel now on next steps, and it’s my hope that Council will work within the process as we move those negotiations forward.
- Developing [innovative ways](#), in collaboration with the union, to address the challenge of retention and recruitment within the Corrections department – again, a challenge being seen across the state and nation. The pilots, which are under way, provide financial incentives to keep existing employees and have them help find potential candidates, along with hiring incentives for new recruits. We’re using both earned and paid media strategies to enhance these efforts, which may be used later for other public safety agencies.
- Implementing recommendations from Hilliard Heintze’s top-to-bottom review of LMPD by taking a deeper dive into how to create equitable policing, which includes police training and how officers engage with the public. Our progress is reported publicly quarterly and is detailed on [an LMPD dashboard](#), and Council has been briefed several times over the past few months, including, most recently, in a public safety committee meeting on Sept. 15.

- Advocating for a state legislative agenda that includes common sense gun laws, including those that would allow police to confiscate and destroy weapons that are used in criminal acts, and create new statutory provisions that require firearm owners to responsibly store their firearms and impose a liability on them for the damages sustained by others as a result of their failure to safely store their weapons. We welcome Council's support and ideas on this challenge and cannot emphasize enough the difficulties that a seemingly endless supply of illegal and frequently high-powered guns presents to our police officer and public safety.
- Numerous poverty-fighting programs from Affordable Housing to Down Payment assistance to Evolve502 and Future of Work. These are all very good programs but as we have discussed, the scope of programs needed for systemic change require significant new levels of federal support.
- Advocating, through the United States Conference of Mayors, for federal legislation to provide cities the resources they need to tackle the rise in gun violence, as well as to reimagine public safety and create reforms to increase policy community trust.

As for your questions specific to LMPD:

- Staffing issues continue to plague all our public safety agencies. LMPD has nearly 300 sworn and 80 civilian vacancies. Our latest Metro Academy Class (MAC) 48 graduated 15 new officers, and our recruiters are working hard to expand their efforts beyond traditional job fairs through social media, podcasts, and other avenues. But we need everyone's help – including Council's – to encourage prospective candidates to apply. We are exploring ways to exempt retired law enforcement officers from 12-hour workdays, which can be a deterrent to those otherwise interested in returning to service. And we are expanding the use of civilians to ease the burden on sworn officers, as seen recently in the hiring of four additional social workers as victim service specialists (bringing the department's total to twelve). We welcome the opportunity to work with Council on other ways to incentivize recruiting of both sworn and civilian personnel.
- As for tactical plans to address public safety challenges, several efforts are underway. For example, LMPD has redirected the focus of its Criminal Interdiction Division (CID) from narcotics to using intelligence to target specific individuals known to be involved in violent crime. By focusing its investigations on repeat violent offenders who are driving gun violence in the city, we believe this approach will help curb violent crime. Since March, CID has been making a solid impact in disrupting some of the city's established criminal activity. Through September 1st, CID has made 78 arrests, of which 45 are identifiable gang members, and they have all been charged with multiple offenses. Working with our federal partners, one CID case resulted in the federal indictment of 14 known violent offenders with ties to gang activity occurring in the Victory Park/Market Street area. This focus has also resulted in recovery of a number of guns LMPD suspects are being used in criminal activity. From March through September, CID recovered 74 firearms, including a single investigation that resulted in the recovery of 20 firearms and multiple federal indictments.

LMPD also initiated a violent crime detail in July, providing a team platform designed to encourage all officers to be proactive in addressing crime. The detail operates twice a week and is comprised of officers from all over the city, including members of the executive command staff. Officers taking part are encouraged to interact with residents to help build community trust. The crime focus is singular: violent criminals and/or illegal guns. The detail has been focused on the two areas of the city that were experiencing the most violence, the 2nd and 4th Divisions. As an example of their efforts, in a one-week period in September, this detail made 7 felony arrests, served 11 felony warrants, recovered 4 stolen vehicles, seized one weapon, and conducted 13 fields interviews/contacts. Certainly, no one is satisfied with the crime rate, and we continue assessing and measuring the impact of our operations to optimize our talent and will make changes as needed.

- As for federal partnerships, LMPD is a full participant in multiple task forces with the FBI and ATF, working closely with those agencies to leverage resources and, in coordination with the U.S. Attorney's Office, decide whether state or federal charges are most appropriate in each case. FBI's Safe Street Task Force in partnership with LMPD has multiple investigations in motion, including one that concluded this past August with the arrest of three individuals and seizure of 20 weapons. Currently the FBI and ATF have investigators embedded in multiple LMPD investigative units, to ensure full optimization of talent and resources.
- Our newest federal partnership was announced October 6, 2021. We are grateful to be included in the Department of Justice's National Public Safety Partnership program, which will bring additional training, collaboration, data-driven strategies and technical assistance to LMPD. And we appreciate the Department of Justice's recognition of Louisville's commitment to working with all our partners – from community leaders and non-profits to law enforcement – to reduce gun violence.

As for your questions on juvenile justice issues:

- Regarding the juvenile justice photo arrays, this falls under state laws on juvenile confidentiality; we have been assured by the state Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Commissioner that information is being shared with law enforcement in accordance with state law.
- Regarding your Court Designated Worker (CDW) questions, as you know, the process is set out by state law, and the delays you cite are due to wait times for a CDW review, not Metro transportation.
- And finally, you wrote about your surprise about the distance to the nearest DJJ facility, though this challenge was discussed in multiple public safety and budget committee hearings in 2019, before the Council voted to close our local facility. Please be assured we are in conversation with state officials about ways to address difficult pinch points in the process.

Bottom line: We share, we communicate, and we listen, because public safety requires that we are all engaged. Not just each of us as elected officials. Not just each of us as community leaders. But individual Louisvillians working together to tackle this crisis. As Councilman Jecorey Arthur said, all of Louisville is responsible for Louisville. So, we have developed numerous initiatives that not only give the public an *opportunity* to help us, but frankly require their involvement for us to more quickly turn the tide on gun violence. They include:

- Our **One Love Louisville Ambassador Institute** is a free, virtual training offered six times a year to citizens wanting to get involved in violence prevention. Participants hear from experts on a range of topics including Mental Health 101, Suicide Prevention, Community Organizing, Conflict Resolution, and The Public Health Approach to Violence. If you want to plug into this work, the Ambassador Training is a great place to start. Contact Joe Newland at 502.780.1794 or joseph.newland@louisvilleky.gov. Please recruit ambassadors and promote in your newsletters.
- Our **One Love Louisville Youth Implementation Team** is accepting applications for its 2021-22 cohort. Applicants must be 14-23 years old and living in Jefferson County. Selected participants will meet periodically with city and community leaders to learn about important issues in local government and ensure their voice is heard. Participants are pivotal in planning the annual National Youth Violence Prevention Week and conclude each cohort by making three policy recommendations to the mayor. Applications will be open until Oct. 10. Please apply here: <https://louisvilleky.wufoo.com/forms/wnjcogr11e315y/>. Please recruit youth and promote in your newsletters.
- **The Trauma Resilient Communities** project is a federally funded program managed by OSHN. It seeks to promote resilience and equity for youth and families in west and south Louisville – communities disproportionately affected by race-based trauma, systemic inequalities, violence, and civil unrest. They are in the fourth year of the 5-year plan to train 200 clinicians and community service providers in evidence-based trauma interventions, as well as offering 400 children and families free therapeutic services. Learn more by contacting Nannette Dix at 502.612.0450 or Nannette.Dix@louisvilleky.gov
- **OSHN's Outreach Team** is working with residents impacted by violence to ensure resources are available when needed the most, including working with high-risk individuals to prevent violence before it occurs. OSHN also is looking to partner with faith leaders to further coordinate the Safe Haven response – supporting residents struggling with secondary trauma, fear, or frustration as a result of exposure to violence. Interested faith leaders, clinicians, mentors, and violence prevention partners should reach out to Paul Callanan at Paul.Callanan@louisvilleky.gov for more information. Please recruit and promote.
- **SummerWorks** develops Louisville's young talent by helping prepare and connect youth to summer jobs, career opportunities, and supportive networks, along with a year-round technology program. Funding from FY22 will go to sponsor about 300 youth ages 16-21, with a priority on engaging and recruiting youth from high-need ZIP codes and high schools in west and south Louisville. Please recruit employers and promote SummerWorks in all of your newsletters.

I hope the three of you will discuss this information with your colleagues on Council, and that all Council members will share ways the public can be involved, through your newsletters and other constituent communications.

Again, Metro Council is an integral part of our “whole of government” approach to public safety, which is why my team and I have regular conversations with you, the community and our partners on both our challenges and our efforts to tackle them. This includes:

- Use of press conferences, media interviews, social media and other communications tools to keep the Council and the public informed.
- Weekly LMPD newsletter that started Sept. 3 to outline latest challenges and successes.
- Continued communications with state leaders on our state legislative agenda.
- Conversations with the state Juvenile Justice Cabinet and regular meetings with juvenile justice stakeholders.
- Regular and frequent communication between me and my team and Dr. Pollio and his team at JCPS. School safety officer discussions are ongoing.
- Regular meetings with Council leadership, as well as public appearances before Council committees, including LMPD Chief Erika Shields as recently as Sept. 15, the GVI team on Aug. 18, and an already scheduled committee appearance by our OSHN team in October.

See Attachment B for a sampling of our communications for the month of September.

I welcome Council partnership and continued conversation – tackling our challenges, seizing our opportunities, and turning our hope for our children into a bright and safe future. This letter summarizes much of our approach to tackling violent crime, and we would like to discuss it further with all of Metro Council, in person, at 4:30pm on Tuesday, October 12, at Metro Hall. Please RSVP to Wanda Mitchell-Smith at 502-574-2756 or wanda.mitchell-smith@louisvilleky.gov.

Sincerely,



Greg Fischer
Mayor