

PITTSBURGH PLAN FOR PEACE



PITTSBURGH VIOLENCE PREVENTION APPROACH: A COMMITMENT TO PEACE

Contents

Executive Summary – Page 2

Introduction to the Plan and Violence in Pittsburgh – Page 3

Goals and Objectives of the Approach – Page 5

- I. The City's Commitment to a Public Health Model – Page 6
- II. The City's Commitment to Community Partnerships – Page 6
- III. The City's Commitment to Trauma-Informed Community Services – Page 7
- IV. The City's Commitment to Community Policing – Page 8
- V. The City's Commitment to Community Development – Page 8
- VI. The City's Commitment to Creating a Learning Environment and Governing with Data – Page 9

*All text in **Red** are new initiatives in the City of Pittsburgh

Executive Summary

The City of Pittsburgh, like many cities across the country, has struggled to bring peace to its residents. Past public safety measures that rely solely on the "Three Ps" have been unsuccessful in ending violence. As the City emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, crime in general, and particularly violent crime, has risen. This affects not only the direct victims of violence, but also threatens residents and communities who are caught up in its wake. We know that a plan for peace must address not only the perpetrators and victims of crime, but also those put at risk for violence by violent actions.

Much of the violence in our city is the work of a small number of people. In Pittsburgh, we estimate that about 200 people are responsible, working in eight or ten groups across roughly two dozen locations. In broad outline, our approach focuses attention and resources on these areas while, at the same time, offering those in its orbit credible, high quality, trauma-informed alternatives to a violent future.

Our goal is to make Pittsburgh a safe and welcoming environment for anyone who wishes to live here. The City will use a holistic approach to improve the quality of life for all residents and aim to end the current violence. The City's holistic approach to this goal will be guided by six core principles: using a public health model; partnering with communities and increasing community anti-violence capacity; developing robust trauma-informed services; focused deterrence and community policing; economic development; and evaluating our work with evidence and data.

The public health model recognizes that violence creates tremendous harm and that our response must be commensurate with that harm. Our resources should be aimed at caring for victims and survivors, containing violence so that it does not spread further, and seeking out the root causes of that harm so that it can be prevented in future instances. A public health approach to eliminating violence does not replace, nor is it in conflict with, law enforcement. Creating safety for all requires a range of strategies, including the presence of people trained to confront life-threatening violence. But it also means widening our range of response so that we can provide the appropriate emergency response and, just as importantly, be able to provide ongoing options for people who need longer-term supports. We want our police officers to do the work of solving crimes, while others engage farther "upstream" of violence to provide real alternatives to those at risk and to address trauma and other social determinants of health.

A public health approach means organizing supports and investments to create a robust and equitable opportunity structure so that the path to peace and well-being is high-quality, credible, visible and within reach for every resident.

We also know that the City cannot do this work alone. We must partner closely with community members, businesses, and schools as well as with healthcare providers and the County. Critical to our partnerships are Pittsburgh's Group Violence Intervention teams and SaferTogether programs. We plan to expand our partnerships through the Stop the Violence Community Grants program, which supports community-led anti-violence initiatives.

To create safety and security for all, people who have experienced or who are at risk for violence must be centered and receive robust, trauma-informed care and supports. Coordinated largely through the City's Office of Community Health and Safety, we are expanding coordinated and accountable case management and investing further in ROOTS Street Outreach Health Hubs.

Because peace results from a collaboration between the community and law enforcement, our police officers will be focused on community policing to establish and maintain good relationships between residents and police. This allows officers to prevent crime before it happens rather than just reacting after a crime is committed. Our police will also be implementing a strategy of focused deterrence to identify and apprehend violent actors who are responsible for much of the violence in our city.

Communities at risk for violence are also in need of economic development and good jobs. The City will commit to a Minority Business Recovery and Growth Fund and creating equity in City employment, as well as housing development and partnering with PPS to create better youth opportunities.

Finally, we know that continued improvement and wise alignment of resources means evaluating our work, investing in what is effective, and leaving behind what is not. That is why the City is committing resources to gather and analyze data about each element of our approach, ensuring that time, attention, and resources are placed on measures that lead to peace.

The City aims to bring safety to all its residents using a holistic, public health focused approach. By creating quality paths of diversion, treating root causes of harm and violence, reinvesting in impacted communities, prioritizing community policing, and leading with evidence-based practices, Pittsburgh will begin to create a pathway to peace.

PITTSBURGH VIOLENCE PREVENTION APPROACH: A COMMITMENT TO PEACE

Pittsburgh is confronted with multiple public health crises: institutional racism and its intergenerational consequences, the global COVID-19 pandemic and its effects, and the local epidemic of violence and crime. Historically, Pittsburgh has over-relied on the “Three Ps” – policing, prosecutions, and prisons – in an attempt to reduce violence and strengthen community safety. This strategy has not only failed to yield long-term results; it has also come at an extremely high social cost to many of our most vulnerable communities.

As past public safety practices have not succeeded in yielding long-term results for Pittsburgh, the time has come for a comprehensive, coordinated strategy that recognizes the “Three Ps” cannot stem the tide of violence on their own. As a City, we must make a fundamental commitment to peace and strive to eliminate all incidents of violence and crime. Violence is not unsolvable, but is rather a public health crisis that is treatable and preventable through an intentional, coordinated, and sustained effort.

Fortunately, there is some good news. While challenges remain and continue to evolve, there are more resources and coordination in this space than ever before. At the state, regional, city, and neighborhood levels, there are efforts underway that make a difference in real-time and deepen impact, expand services and build on successes.

In the context of widespread exhaustion with reactive and unsuccessful strategies and deep concern within our communities, the City commits to a bold vision of ending violence and making Pittsburgh a place that is safe for everyone. But peace is everyone’s responsibility. Let’s go get it – together.

Violence in Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh is a medium-sized metropolitan City inhabited by more than 300,000 people and policed by approximately 900 police officers. The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police (PBP) is tasked with reducing violent crime while responding to calls for service, investigating property crimes, and providing for the overall safety of its citizens.

In recent years, Pittsburgh had seen an annual decrease in overall crime. In fact, over the last five years, violent crime in Pittsburgh was down 19%. However, as the City has emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic, crime in general, and violent crime in particular, have seen a marked increase. Violent crime rose by 4% in 2021 and continues to trend upward in 2022. More alarming still is that from a historic low in 2019, homicides have increased over the last few years. In Pittsburgh, homicides have risen from 37 in 2019 to 51 in 2020 and 56 last year. Data from the beginning of 2022 suggests that non-fatal shootings and homicides are skyrocketing and the increased incidence of gun violence has left many City residents fearful for their safety and the safety of their families and friends.

In Pittsburgh, as in most cities, violent crime and homicides are committed by a small number of people and are concentrated geographically in a small number of areas. According to one expert, in a city the size of Pittsburgh, we might expect violence to be associated with as few as 200 people in eight or ten groups, concentrated in two dozen locations. Overall, the bulk of these crimes occur within our Central, East End, and Northside communities that are disproportionately segregated and poor, with lower rates of homeownership and more abandoned structures, under-resourced schools, struggling local businesses, and a shortage of other needed neighborhood amenities. Though some forms of violence, such as domestic violence and suicide, are less geographically concentrated, our City nonetheless has clear areas of concern.

Goals and Objectives of the Approach

Our goal is to make Pittsburgh into a safe and welcoming environment for anyone who wishes to live here. To achieve this, we must end violence in our City.

Our approach to this goal is rooted in a safety methodology that teaches us, when confronted with harm, first to care for those who have been harmed, then to work to contain the harm, and finally to seek out the root causes of harm. We know that caring, containing, and seeking out root causes will imply the need to coordinate action and analysis across a wide range of services and organizations. It will require us to be honest about what is working and what is not. Drawing from a substantial body of scientific research, as well as input from the community, Mayor Gainey's Transition Committees, and local subject matter experts, the City has arrived at the following approach for lessening violence and arriving at community health, confidence and participation. As we learn to work in this manner, we commit to six core and mutually supportive operating principles, each discussed in turn below.

- A commitment to a public health model;
- A commitment to community partnerships and to increasing community anti-violence capacity;
- A commitment to developing robust community services for Pittsburgh residents;
- A commitment to community policing;
- A commitment to community development; and
- A commitment to evaluating our practice with data.

These commitments guide our attention and our resources. With hard work, honesty, and constant evaluation, we believe we can achieve greater peace and prosperity in all communities, the peace that is needed to make Pittsburgh truly "A City for All."

I. The City's Commitment to a Public Health Model

The focus of public health is on the health, safety, and well-being of all our residents. Public health draws on experience and analysis from health care professionals, educators, social service providers, law enforcement, criminal justice reform advocates, and leaders in communities experiencing violence. Collective thinking and coordinated action augment our capacity to intervene to prevent violence and harm, to care immediately for those who are harmed, to contain the harm so that it does not spread to others, and to seek out root causes to prevent future harm.

A public health approach to eliminating violence does not replace, nor is it in conflict with, law enforcement. Creating safety for all requires a range of strategies, including the presence of people trained to confront life-threatening violence. But it also means widening our range of response so that we can provide the appropriate emergency response and, just as importantly, be able to provide ongoing options for people who need longer-term supports. We want our police officers to do the work of solving crimes, while others engage farther “upstream” of violence to provide real alternatives to those at risk and to address trauma and other social determinants of health.

Finally, a public health approach means organizing supports and investments to create a robust and equitable opportunity structure, so that the path to peace and well-being is high-quality, credible, visible and within reach for every resident.

II. The City's Commitment to Community Partnerships

No single organization can effectively eliminate violence on its own. Like violence, peace results from the interplay of many forces and many individual choices, grounded in culture, institutions, and human relationships. Our path forward importantly depends on creating trust, which is the basis for information sharing, collaboration, and lasting community infrastructure in places experiencing high levels of crime and violence. The City's community partners include our schools, businesses, houses of worship, faith-based and community-based organizations.

The City's Office of Community Services and Violence Prevention (“OCSVP”) is home to several strategic community-based initiatives, each a part of Pittsburgh's growing peace network. These include:

- a. *Group Violence Intervention (GVI)*. GVI is an approach that facilitates direct, sustained engagement with the small number of group-involved individuals, to prevent one act of violence – often homicide – from leading to others. The GVI team works with community leaders, social service providers, employers, and law enforcement partners to engage directly with those most intimately involved in and affected by gun violence to keep them safe, alive, and free – supporting them in their daily lives, communicating community norms in support of everybody's safety and success, and where necessary, creating swift, certain, and legitimate accountability for violence. Across the U.S., strong GVI teams have been able to reduce homicides by 30 to 60 percent.
- b. *SaferTogether Pittsburgh Coordinated Community Outreach*. SaferTogether focuses on strengthening relationships, partnerships, and communication between the City's public safety bureaus and the local public safety Zone councils which are open to the business community and any residents concerned for the overall safety of their community.

- c. *Stop the Violence Community Grants Program.* The City of Pittsburgh provides grants to community-based organizations to strengthen their capacity to provide violence prevention and intervention programming. Beginning in 2022, grantees will be supported through the establishment of a community of practice and “back-office” management supports so that our investment in community organizations results in greater capacity and visibility to address and prevent violence.

III. The City’s Commitment to Trauma-Informed Community Services

Exposure to abuse, neglect, discrimination, violence and other traumatic experiences increases a person’s lifelong potential for serious health problems and engaging in behaviors that don’t support good health. Trauma-informed care and services acknowledge the need to understand individuals’ life experiences in order to deliver appropriate, effective care and have the potential to improve health outcomes and decrease anti-social behaviors including violence and crime.

Moreover, Pittsburgh police officers should not and do not want to respond to problems that fall outside of their expectations, skill sets, and training and where there is no identified threat to public safety. The City is committed to providing direct health interventions and case management, coordinated largely through our Office of Community Health and Safety. These initiatives include:

- *Expanding Crisis Response Intervention Teams (CRITs):* CRITs help us to deliver the right care at the right time by pairing a police officer with a social worker in an unmarked police vehicle. Social workers, EMTs, and paramedics become the first responder when the situation does not require an armed officer.
- *Creating ROOTS Street Outreach Health Hubs:* In addition to providing emergency care and case management to people in crisis, the City, in partnership with AHN’s Reaching Out on the Streets (ROOTS) team, will establish eight stationary sites across Pittsburgh to give residents 24/7, one-stop access to culturally competent care.
- *Reducing disease and increasing uptake of treatment* by providing safe injection supplies, fentanyl testing kits, and placement in rehabilitation for residents who use drugs and introducing a post-overdose response unit.
- *Expanding Coordinated Case Management:* Trained social workers provide coordinated case management and crisis intervention to families experiencing violent episodes or at high risk for violent encounters. The case workers assist with mental/behavioral health providers, substance use counseling, homelessness, and domestic violence referrals. They also receive referrals from first responders when nonemergency clients have unmet social or emotional needs.
- *The Prehospital Buprenorphine (Suboxone) Program:* This program allows paramedics to administer buprenorphine to patients experiencing withdrawal and make a direct referral to low-threshold recovery medicine services, irrespective of a patient’s decision to accept transport to the hospital.
- *Aftercare and Post-Engagement Services:* The Office of Community Health and Safety partners with community organizations and deploys its social work team to offer support and services to victims of violence well after traditional victim assistance efforts have ceased.
- *Improving and Expanding Law Enforcement-Assisted Diversion (LEAD):* LEAD is part of a strategy to ensure, on the one hand, that the only people who enter the criminal justice system are violent offenders threatening community harm and, that people struggling with addiction or

homelessness, or who have mental and behavioral health challenges, don't have their lives further disrupted by criminal arrest, detention, or incarceration.

- *Partnership with the County* to coordinate, reduce duplication of effort and augment response.

IV. The City's Commitment to Community Policing

Community policing is a law enforcement approach that allows officers to continuously work in and get to know specific neighborhoods, in order to create a stronger bond with the people living and working in that area. This allows officers to engage and partner with local residents to prevent crime from happening rather than simply responding to incidents after they occur. The more involved law enforcement is with the residents they are sworn to protect, the more residents can help law enforcement achieve their goals. Community Policing initiatives include:

- *Building a Caring Culture within the Bureau of Police* that fosters and incentivizes emphasis on community relationships as a way to meet law enforcement goals, with specific training around respect for communities and community concepts of justice and co-producing community health and safety; reducing the impact of implicit bias; fostering reconciliation through frank engagements between minority communities and law enforcement to address historical tensions, grievances, and misconceptions that contribute to mutual mistrust and misunderstanding and prevent police and communities from working together.
- *Creation of policies, standards, and incentives that reward community policing, including equalizing pay between court appearances and participation in case conferences and rewarding community relationships in consideration for assignments and promotion.*
- *Conduct a Staffing and Deployment Study* to ensure that staffing levels, operational assignments, and the placement of civilians and sworn officers are supportive of community policing.
- *Investing in Workforce Equity* to ensure that our police force reflects the diversity of our community, by lowering barriers for recruitment and ensuring equity in advancement.
- *Substituting focused deterrence in areas of concern for general population deterrence.* Focused deterrence is a holistic, resource-intensive process involving multiple law enforcement agencies and community partners to intervene in specific situations of violence and open-air drug trafficking. This entails a short-term focus on substantially increasing police visibility at specific locations where violent crime is concentrated and prioritizing street-level deterrence and arrest of repeat offenders in these areas. The strategy is evidence-based and relies on increased police visibility and intelligence-led offender targeting rather than generalized "stop and frisk" or other dragnet tactics.
- *Creating Safety in the Built Environment.* In this strategy, law enforcement and others who plan or maintain spaces collaborate to create safety in areas of concern. Traditional approaches to solving crime are supplemented by code enforcement, environmental design changes, trash clean-up, abandoned vehicle removal, weed and brush removal, improved lighting, sidewalk repair, and other efforts to make the area safe and attractive for neighborhood-based investment.

V. The City's Commitment to Community Development

Low-income and high-risk communities experience disparate access to employment, housing, health care, quality education, healthy food, and safe public places for outdoor recreation, which hinders families' potential for success in work and school. The lack of access to resources to maintain a high quality of life, coupled with neighborhood disinvestment has led to collective, generational hopelessness. It is important to provide those communities with revitalization including housing development, better educational outcomes, successful businesses, increased health care access, and other needed amenities.

The City commits to:

- *Addressing Disruptive Properties.* Since disruptive properties are a substantial threat and place burdens on the common health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City, the Director of Public Safety is authorized to charge the cost of law enforcement to the property owner(s) in order to deter repeated violations of state and local law. When a property violation remains unabated for an unreasonably long period of time, misdemeanor charges may result.
- *Building Avenues of Hope:* This initiative focuses investment in seven major business corridors to support existing small businesses and residents, with attention to Black-owned centers of arts and culture, mixed-use, transit-oriented, and pedestrian-friendly built environments and healthy communities supported by education, health care, senior care, recreation, and supportive services.
- *Investing in the Housing Opportunity Fund:* The Housing Opportunity Fund (HOF), administered by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, supports the development and preservation of affordable and accessible housing within the City of Pittsburgh. The City of Pittsburgh will allocate \$10 million per year for the next 12 years to help address the affordable housing crisis.
- *Developing a Minority Business Recovery and Growth Fund:* This new initiative, administered by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, specifically supports minority business owners in recovery and growth by providing grants, loans, and technical assistance.
- *Learn and Earn Summer Youth Employment Program:* The Learn and Earn program provides summer employment to youth and young adults in the City of Pittsburgh. The program teaches both the hard and soft skills needed to be successful in a professional workplace.
- *Creating Equity in City Employment to provide access to work that brings benefits and a pension to all City residents. Each City department will be required to identify and work to eliminate barriers to employment and, where possible, to build “pipelines” of recruitment and advancement from Pittsburgh neighborhoods into City government.*
- *Partnering with PPS:* The partnership is needed to coordinate policies and practices that create opportunity-rich places where young people can be successful in and out of school. The goals of the partnership are to increase positive family outcomes including student achievement, increase school and community safety, and create healthier communities where families and students can thrive.

VI. The City's Commitment to Creating a Learning Environment and Governing with Data

Our ability to trace problems to root causes, experiment with innovative solutions, and put attention, time, and resources into things that work depends on collecting, analyzing, and being guided by the right data. In addition to funding anti-violence measures, we commit to fund and be accountable to a robust evaluation of each element of our approach.

These measures include:

- *Increased information sharing within and across emergency Bureaus.*
- *Partnership with Allegheny County* to develop and use its violence and health data and to create a public-facing dashboard.
- *Partnership with hospital systems* to begin to track and intervene in specific clusters of conditions that lead to specific forms of trauma.
- *Creation of a non-disciplinary, all-stakeholders Sentinel Event Review Board* to come together, discuss and learn from instances of violence and, within legal limits, share information with the community.
- *Ensure every City initiative has a plan to evaluate its work* and share its results.
- *Setting aside funding for new stakeholders and strategies.* While most funding should be reserved for strategies with demonstrated track records, the City should have resources available to allow experimentation with plausible innovations.
- *Align Data Collection with Civil Rights* by ensuring the City's data practices, as well as the practices of its vendors, come with robust protection of the civil rights of residents and that data collection does not become general surveillance.