



URGENT ITEM AGENDA MATERIAL

Government Code Section 54954.2(b)
Rules of Procedure Chapter III.C.5

THIS ITEM IS NOT YET AGENDIZED AND MAY OR MAY NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR THE AGENDA AS A LATE ITEM, SUBJECT TO THE CITY COUNCIL'S DISCRETION ACCORDING TO BROWN ACT RULES

Meeting Date: October 27, 2020

Item Description: Create an Interjurisdictional Group Violence Intervention Program "GVI," or "Operation Ceasefire," to Reduce Gun Violence

This item is submitted pursuant to the provision checked below:

- Emergency Situation (54954.2(b)(1) - majority vote required)
Determination by a majority vote of the legislative body that an emergency situation exists, as defined in Section 54956.5.
- Immediate Action Required (54954.2(b)(2) - two-thirds vote required)
There is a need to take immediate action and the need for action came to the attention of the local agency subsequent to the agenda for this meeting being posted.

Once the item is added to the agenda (Consent or Action) it must be passed by the standard required vote threshold (majority, two-thirds, or 7/9).

This item meets the criteria for "immediate action" as follows:

1. There has been an alarming rise in shootings throughout the City, including a recent drive-by shooting on October 21, 2020, resulting in the death of a 19 year old young pregnant mother, Sereinat'e Henderson.
2. The City needs to protect its residents and address the escalation in gun violence.

In 2018, the City of Berkeley experienced 20 shooting incidents. In 2019, that number grew to 28 shootings. This year has seen the highest number yet with more than 30 shootings. This includes the shocking murder of Sereinat'e Henderson, a 19 year old pregnant mother, on October 21, 2020. Her death marks the fourth homicide by gunfire in Berkeley in 2020. Gun violence is intolerable and is trending upwards in Berkeley and across the Bay Area. The City has invested considerable resources and developed expertise in the investigation and legal enforcement of crimes once committed. However, to truly break the advancing curve of violence, the City will need to also undertake preventive and intervention measures and invest in long-term solutions.

One potential solution is a Group Violence Intervention (GVI), or "Operation Ceasefire." GVI offers a public health approach to the upstream prevention of gun violence. A GVI program would assemble a working group of community members, social service, and

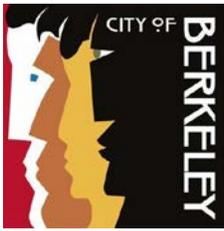
community health workers, and law enforcement personnel to address the cascading cycles of gun violence by:

1. Data-driven identification of the young adults (18-30) who are at greatest risk of being involved in gun violence;
2. Developing an intervention team to communicate directly, and respectfully to at-risk individuals and inform them of their risk. This public health approach is similar to informing persons at higher risk of serious illness if they contract Covid-19.
3. Implementing an intervention plan to provide wrap-around services through Credible Messengers (i.e. people who have similar lived experiences as at-risk individuals, but have successfully transformed their lives). These Credible Messengers can serve as examples, life coaches, and mentors to young people at-risk. Additionally, the plan should provide support services such as education, anger management, child care, employment counseling, drug/alcohol treatment, mental health care, and other services, supports, and opportunities; and
4. Creating a public education campaign to promote and support these efforts.

In cities throughout the country, GVI has proven to be an effective tool for reducing homicides and strengthening trust between community members and law enforcement. The City should develop its own GVI program to address the alarming rise in shootings and homicides plaguing our city.

In recognition of the interlocking geographic nature of those committing gun crimes as well as their victims, the GVI program should be centered on Berkeley but also be connected to, and work in concert with community workers in neighboring jurisdictions including Oakland, Richmond, Antioch, and San Francisco.

GVI aligns with the City's goals of reimagining policing, and is a more robust version of the Specialized Care Unit envisioned in the George Floyd Community Safety Act. GVI also presents a long-term solution to gun violence and enhances community wellness. GVI can also pave the way for greater regional collaboration, protecting communities from gun violence in Berkeley and across the Bay Area.



Councilmember Ben Bartlett
City of Berkeley, District 3

CONSENT CALENDAR

October 27, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Ben Bartlett (Author), Mayor Jesse Arreguin (Co-Sponsor), and Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Co-Sponsor)
Subject: Create an Interjurisdictional Group Violence Intervention Program, or “Operation Ceasefire,” to Reduce Gun Violence

RECOMMENDATION:

Refer to the Community Engagement Process for Reimagining Public Safety creation of a Group Violence Intervention Program (GVI), or “Operation Ceasefire,” that will assemble a Berkeley-centered interjurisdictional working group of community members, law enforcement personnel, and supportive services providers to address gun violence.

CURRENT SITUATION

The City of Berkeley is experiencing an alarming rise in shootings. In 2018, the City had 20 shootings while experiencing 28 last year.¹ This year alone, there have been more than 30 shootings, including the October 21, 2020 drive-by shooting that tragically left Sereinat'e Henderson, a 19 year old pregnant mother dead.² This marks the fourth homicide by gunfire in Berkeley in 2020. Gun violence is intolerable, and the City must take preventative measures to staunch its growth. The City should invest in long-term solutions designed to end this cycle of cascading violence.

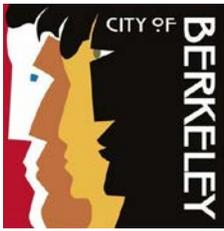
The Berkeley Black Ecumenical Ministerial Alliance (BBEMA)--an alliance of community members and partners--has been working for years to deliver a community driven alternative to traditional gun violence suppression practices.³ The Council is currently working on a Specialized Care Unit pilot, which invests in a network of unarmed crisis workers to respond to non-criminal calls, such as homeless, mental health, addiction, and others in personal distress. However, no action has been taken by elected officials to specifically address the rising number of shootings and homicides in the city.

As a result, the Council should work with BBEMA and other community partners to create and implement a Group Violence Intervention (GVI) program to further transform public safety, reimagine policing, and directly address the issue of gun violence. Known

¹ <https://www.berkeleyside.com/2020/10/03/2020-berkeley-gunfire-map>

² <https://www.berkeleyside.com/2020/10/21/woman-wounded-drive-by-shooting-south-berkeley>

³ <https://www.berkeleyside.com/2020/10/24/opinion-clergy-and-community-leaders-call-for-an-end-to-the-violence-that-killed-serenity-henderson>



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by various names, including Operation Ceasefire, GVI focuses on reducing homicides and elevating clear community standards against violence through a partnership of law enforcement, community members, and supportive services providers that directly communicate with those who commit violent crimes.

Violent victimization and offenders are often concentrated among groups--such as organized gangs and loose neighborhood associations, familial relationships, and other people who commit crimes together.⁴ Cities have traditionally focused on tactics involving the act of policing communities. These tactics are reactive in nature and are limited to the resolution of gun crimes only after they have been committed. Common law enforcement approaches are not fully centered on violence prevention.

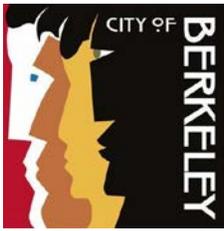
The cohort of individuals willing to engage in gun violence is small in number, and are usually well known. Thus, the City could reach them via a GVI program that provides opportunities for an intervention team to directly communicate with and provide a supported path for those who need to change. Such a program would effectively strengthen police-community relations, promote alternatives to policing, replace enforcement with deterrence and rehabilitation, increase community health outcomes, and reduce gun violence in the City of Berkeley. In fact, a United States Agency for International Development study (2016) reviewing over 30 violence reduction strategies concluded that focused deterrence, such as GVI, "has the largest direct impact on crime and violence, by far, of any intervention."⁵

Below are some examples of individuals, organizations, and agencies that could be involved in the GVI partnership:

- 1) **Law enforcement partners:** police agencies, sheriffs' offices, and probation and parole agencies;
- 2) **Community members:** Family members of murdered people, ex-offenders, faith leaders, survivors of violence, street outreach workers; and
- 3) **Support services:** mentoring programs, trauma care providers, reentry services, mental health and substance abuse programs, employment programs (e.g. African American Holistic Resource Center)

⁴ <https://nnscommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GVI-Issue-Brief-1.pdf>

⁵ Abt, T., & Winship, C. (2016). *What works in reducing community violence*. Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development.



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The City's GVI program should center on Berkeley, but maintain interjurisdictional connectivity to organizations, agencies, and individuals from other municipalities. Those who engage in violent behavior often travel to different cities and/or involve parties from multiple jurisdictions. As a result, it is critical to foster regional collaboration and pave the way for violence interruption both in Berkeley and across the Bay Area. That is why Berkeley's GVI program must be multi-jurisdictional in order to be effective.

BACKGROUND

Group Violence Intervention (GVI) is also known as Operation Ceasefire, which is an initiative that started in Boston, Massachusetts in 1996.⁶ Operation Ceasefire was originally a collaborative effort between Boston police, black ministers, and social scientists who came together to curb rising youth homicides and escalating gang activity. Instead of focusing on the issue of guns, they focused on communicating with those who committed violent crimes and carried firearms. Ceasefire leaders confronted the at-risk individuals in-person by offering immediate assistance to those who were willing to change and threatening those who engaged in violence with severe consequences. This way, the intervention targeted gangs and individuals who engaged in violent behavior rather than expending resources on those who were not.

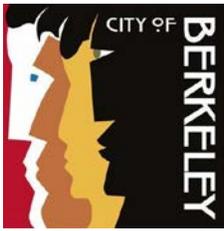
Boston's Ceasefire program used suppression tactics, such as warrants and long sentences for chronic offenders, aggressive enforcement of probation restrictions, and deployment of Federal enforcement powers. The program also used communications campaigns, involving direct in-person meetings with both community groups and gang members. Following its implementation, the program had a huge success rate with a 63 percent reduction in the average monthly number of youth homicide victims.⁷ Subsequently, many cities, such as Oakland, Chicago, Detroit, and New Orleans, developed similar ceasefire programs.

There is also a Richmond, California-based national organization called Advance Peace working to end cyclical and retaliatory gun violence in American urban neighborhoods.⁸ Advance Peace invests in the development, health, and wellbeing of those at the center of this crisis. Specifically, Advance Peace offers a Peacemaker Fellowship to bridge the gap between anti-violence programming and hard-to-reach populations at the center of violence in urban areas. Through its efforts, Richmond, California, experienced a 66% reduction in firearm assaults causing injury or death between 2010 and 2017. The organization helps support other cities with establishing their own Peacemaker

⁶ <https://youth.gov/content/operation-ceasefire-boston-mass> (This resource was used to describe Boston's Ceasefire program throughout this Council item).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <https://www.advancepeace.org>



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Fellowship. However, in cities where the fellowship may not be a good fit, Advance Peace can provide expertise and guidance to local governments and communities to help them create developmental, trauma-responsive and informed, community-driven opportunities for individuals associated with firearm offenses.

Many of the GVI practices amount to poverty management. This is because the link between lack of social mobility and violence is well established.^{9,10} GVI presents a step towards true violence prevention in that it approaches the root cause—poverty.

Given the alarming rise in shootings in the City, the Council must start developing long-term solutions to end gun violence by creating an interjurisdictional GVI program that will foster regional collaboration. The Council could refer to Oakland's Ceasefire strategy and implement a similar model. See section on Review of Existing Plans and Policies for more information on their model.

REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS AND POLICIES

BERKELEY, CA

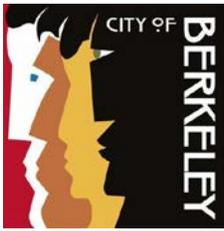
There is currently a similar Group Violence Intervention (GVI) program known as Voices Against Violence--a Black-led violence prevention and intervention program for Berkeley Elementary, Middle and High school youth who are at risk of involvement in gang and gun violence.¹¹ The program models the Ceasefire and Live Free Violence Interruption Strategies while also providing enrichment culturally relevant opportunities in the areas of arts, technology, urban gardening and cooking. Voices Against Violence was created and is led by Pastor Michael Smith and his leadership team at McGee Avenue Baptist Church and the Center for Food, Faith and Justice. The program receives support from the Family Spirit Center, however, it lacks the resources to fully address the increased violence plaguing our city. When developing an interjurisdictional, more comprehensive GVI program, the City should consider collaborating with Voices Against Violence.

Also, the City Council is in the process of developing the African American Holistic Resource Center (AAHRC)--a resource center focused on using community-defined best practices to eliminate disparities, foster unity in the African American community, and address social determinants of overall health, mental wellness and equity across the life span. The AAHRC would serve as a valuable service provider and resource for the City's GVI program as well.

⁹ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/gun-homicide-linked-to-poor-social-mobility>

¹⁰ <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002978>

¹¹ <https://familyspiritberkeley.org/vav/>



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On July 14th, the City Council voted to adopt an omnibus package of council legislation to transform Berkeley's approach to public safety. Item 18d, *Transform Community Safety*, included recommendation 3 (c) to develop a community safety coalition, led by a professional consultant, whose work should include, "Research and engagement to define a holistic, anti-racist approach to community safety, including a review and analysis of emerging models, programs and best practices that could be applied in Berkeley and throughout the region. This research should explore and propose investments in restorative justice models, **gun violence intervention programs**, and substance abuse support, among other things"¹².

OAKLAND, CA

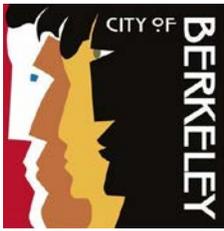
Since 2012, after implementing the [successful gun violence reduction strategy](#), Ceasefire, homicides and shootings in Oakland have fallen by approximately 50% and recorded its lowest number of homicides in almost two decades in 2018. Oakland's Ceasefire strategy has been associated with a noteworthy citywide reduction (31.5%) of gun homicide that seemed distinct from gun homicide trends in other California cities.¹³ Oakland's strategy focuses on three goals: 1) reducing gang/group-related shootings and homicides, 2) decreasing recidivism and incarceration rates of individuals participating in the intervention, and 3) strengthening police-community relations. Oakland's strategy includes direct communication with individuals through large group meetings ("Call-ins") or by meeting with them one-on-one ("custom notifications"). The strategy also includes community outreach, services and support, and when necessary, multi-agency law enforcement action focused specifically on gangs/groups and individuals who continue to engage in violence.

For its support and outreach services, Oakland collaborates with Oakland Unite, the violence prevention division in the Human Services Department, to coordinate a network of citywide community-based direct service organizations that are separate from law enforcement. These organizations offer real alternatives, resources, advocacy and mentoring for those engaged in violent behavior. Oakland also works with community and faith leaders to provide resources from a community perspective. See here, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/oaklands-ceasefire-strategy>, for more information about the city's ceasefire strategy.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

¹²https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2020/07_Jul/Documents/2020-07-14_Item_18d_Transform_Community_Safety_pdf.aspx

¹³ <https://giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Giffords-Law-Center-A-Case-Study-in-Hope.pdf>



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Across different cities throughout the country, Group Violence Intervention (GVI), or Operation Ceasefire, has proven to be an effective tool to reduce homicides and strengthen trust between community members and law enforcement. The City should develop its own GVI program to address the alarming rise in shootings and homicides plaguing our city. The interjurisdictional program will not only work towards the City's goals of reimagining the police, but also it serves as a long-term solution to gun violence that will pave the way for regional collaboration and protect communities from violence both in Berkeley and across the Bay Area.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Staff time and Monetary Amount TBD.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

We do not expect this recommendation to have significant negative impacts on environmental sustainability.

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