

ONE SAFE HOUSTON

Mayor Sylvester Turner

February 2022



MAYOR'S PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVE TO COMBAT VIOLENT CRIME

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THE MAYOR'S CALL TO ACTION

The City of Houston, not unlike all major cities in our nation, has experienced an increase in violent crime as the COVID-19 pandemic tightened its grip on our city, state and nation. Other factors contributing to the nationwide spike in violent crime include widespread social anxiety, economic uncertainty, mental health concerns, the increased presence of illegally owned firearms, and a strained court system plagued by criminal case backlogs that impact the pretrial release and prosecution of violent offenders.

In 2021, the city launched a Violent Crime Initiative that resulted in the reduction of crime in many identified hot spots. By the end of the initiative, all violent crime categories were reduced except homicide. Sadly, the increase in homicides during the first months of 2022 and felonious assaults on police officers and our fellow Houstonians is a sobering reminder that we must collaborate, as one community to combat our current crime challenges.

Houstonians, it is time to take our city back! To realize this vision, we are launching the One Safe Houston crime reduction initiative, which focuses on four (4) key areas:

- A. Violence Reduction and Crime Prevention
- B. Crisis Intervention, Response and Recovery
- C. Youth Outreach Opportunities
- D. Key Community Partnerships

Much work is already underway within these primary focus areas, but additional work and commitment is needed to have the greatest impact and measure of success.

One Safe Houston is a comprehensive violence reduction initiative that links research-based strategies to improve public safety and reduce the harms caused by violent crime. With the collaboration of all stakeholders, I am confident that we will reduce violence and emerge as **One Resilient City – One Unified City – One Safe Houston.**

Sincerely,



Sylvester Turner
Mayor

Violence Reduction & Crime Prevention

The City of Houston recognizes that in order to reduce violent crime, our city needs the resources and ability to target repeat offenders to prevent them from committing criminal acts. Accordingly, the Houston Police Department (HPD) collaborates with local, state and federal partners to assist with crime prevention and harm-reduction strategies via the strategic deployment of resources to arrest violent offenders and reduce crime in Houston's most violent neighborhoods. By leveraging technology with existing organizational resources, HPD can be more efficient and effective in lowering violent crime trends. At the forefront of this effort is the utilization of innovative technology and programs to target hotspot locations. The following strategies will contribute significantly to the reduction of violent crime and recidivism, making Houston a safer city for all.

- **Identify Top Hot Spot Crime Neighborhoods and Locations**

The One Safe Houston initiative is an evidence-based policing strategy designed to target violent crime throughout the City of Houston. More specifically, HPD is committed to address violent crime with a particular emphasis on murders, aggravated assaults, aggravated robberies, and dismantling and disrupting violent criminal gangs operating in our city.

By implementing a data driven and intelligence-led approach to reduce violent crime, HPD has and will continue to identify neighborhoods experiencing the highest levels of violent crime and will use deployment strategies accordingly. Crime rates via neighborhood can change over time and enforcement can lead to displacement of crime to other areas. Thus, HPD will continue to use data and evidence based strategies to deploy crime deterrence efforts to the neighborhoods most impacted and adjust as necessary if crime patterns shift over time.

Houston must deploy hot spot strategies that focus on criminal offenses involving:

- Weapons;
- Serious bodily injury;
- Road rage and reckless driving;
- Crimes with a gang, narcotic, or criminal enterprise nexus; and
- Repeat violent offender nexus

Targeting criminal hot spots will allow law enforcement to be laser focused on smaller segments of neighborhoods, which account for the greatest number of violent crimes.

As noted previously, as crime patterns shift, so will our strategies and resources. **In addition, we will enhance our resources to provide added safety to our shopping areas, synagogues, mosques and other faith-based institutions.** As a city, we must collectively condemn antisemitism and islamophobia. We must also collectively condemn violence against Asians, people of color, members of the LGBGQ+ community and other targeted groups. If not, our silence makes us complicit to these acts of violence.

- **Patrol Enhancement**

To provide more visibility toward crime deterrence and rapid response to crimes in progress, **the Administration has authorized HPD to add via overtime an additional 125 officers per day.** These additional officers will be deployed primarily based on data driven, evidence-based analysis of when and where the most violent crimes are occurring. This increase will supplement strained staffing levels and allow for strategic deployment of additional units to allow for adequate coverage to respond to the increase in violent crimes and crimes in progress. The cost of this patrol initiative will be **\$5,739,880.** The City will also explore a Police Officers Reserve Force to augment active officers.

- **Enhance City Park Security**

The City will hire fifteen (15) additional Park Ranger positions to support the efforts of local Law enforcement to help keep our parks safe. **The cost to hire fifteen (15) additional Park Rangers will be \$1,915,200 over three years.**

- **Differential Response Teams (DRT)**

Increase the use of DRT officers to implement problem-solving strategies and community-policing concepts to address the specific community concerns. The primary responsibility of DRT officers is to proactively identify and address crime issues in their assigned areas to increase the quality of life in the communities, thereby reducing the need for police services.

- **Expand the use of Crime Suppression Teams (CST)**

HPD will continue to use crime suppression teams in order to identify neighborhood crime drivers and develop initiatives to combat violent crime.

- **Multi-Agency Taskforce Initiatives**

Coordinated Fugitive Apprehension Initiative. HPD will collaborate with local, state and federal law enforcement partners to include Texas Anti-Gang Task Force (TAG), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), U.S. Marshal's Service, Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), Gulf Coast Violent Offenders Taskforce, and other partner agencies. This targeted collaboration will lead to the identification and apprehension of violent offenders with existing warrants for felony offenses and/or parole violations, as soon as possible after a warrant is issued.

Enhance Traffic Enforcement and Safe Roadways Initiative. Work with regional partners to include Harris County Sherriff's Office (HCSO), all Harris County Constable agencies, Metro Police, and the DPS to proactively intercept drivers exhibiting aggressive driving behaviors that commonly lead to incidents of road rage and when appropriate, file criminal charges.

- **Illegal Firearms**

In 2021, approximately 3,600 guns were stolen in Houston burglary of motor vehicle incidents. Increased police presence and traffic enforcement initiatives will serve to reduce the number of burglary incidents where guns are stolen from vehicles and used in the commission of felonious offenses once stolen. Stowing a weapon in a vehicle without a proper safe or locking mechanism is not a proper method to secure a firearm. Accordingly, HPD will design and launch a public safety campaign reminding motorists on how to properly secure their legally owned firearms.

In a proactive effort to respond to gun violence in our City, HPD will work with ATF and other federal partners to implement a robust crime gun intelligence response to include the use of NIBIN (National Integrated Ballistics Information Network) for investigative leads, seizing ghost guns and fully auto switches, and targeting offenders who repeatedly committed crimes using firearms. HPD investigators will also leverage federal prosecution opportunities where applicable.

There is no question there are too many guns on the streets. To incentivize the removal of stolen guns from Houston streets, **the City will also fund a \$1 million robust gun buyback initiative**, which will reduce the likelihood of illegally obtained firearms being used in the furtherance of violent crime.

- **Identify and address Nuisance Locations**

Investigative Divisions within HPD and other city departments will work together to address night club and convenience stores where repeated crimes of violence have occurred. These specialized units will coordinate with citywide DRT, Vice, Narcotics, and Gang Divisions as well as our partner agencies such as the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC), the Harris County District Attorney’s Office (HCDAO), the Harris County Attorney’s Office (HCAO), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to take legal action necessary to address these locations through nuisance abatement, code enforcement, and patrol efforts.

For example, on January 28, 2022, the City filed a common nuisance lawsuit against the operator of MVP Food Store at 4718 Lockwood, the property owner, and the property itself (“Defendants”) under state law, Chapter 125 of the Texas Civil Practices & Remedies Code (“Chapter 125”). The City’s lawsuit alleges criminal activity at MVP Food Store including rampant drug dealing, aggravated assaults, and shootings over the past year. MVP Food Store is a known drug haven located close to Kashmere Gardens Elementary School and has significantly impacted the health and safety of the community. The City’s lawsuit seeks injunctive relief and asks the court to compel the Defendants to abate the criminal activity at MVP Food Store. Chapter 125 has been an effective tool in helping the City and HPD combat criminal hot spots where property owners and operators fail to take reasonable measures to address the criminal activity on their property. Even with pandemic restrictions, this past year alone, the City successfully closed eight (8) massage parlors with suspected human trafficking activity where 4 lawsuits were filed, and have ongoing lawsuits with Chapter 125 claims against sexually oriented businesses. The City continues to use every available tool to rein in crime with its limited resources.

It is imperative that we continue our efforts to reduce crime at local businesses through increased Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) efforts. We must actively engage our business community to target harden locations through proper crime prevention efforts like lighting, camera surveillance, security personnel, with special attention to public shopping areas and parking lots. **To that end, the Administration has asked the City Attorney to draft an ordinance for council approval requiring security cameras for certain classes of businesses where the increase in crime is concentrated.**

This new ordinance would be similar to the ordinance requirement for convenience stores passed by Council in 2008. We anticipate an ordinance that strategically places cameras to survey the immediate and surrounding public areas, designates the images to be maintained for a reasonable period, and grants law enforcement access to view images in connection with any criminal investigation. The City will connect with industry leaders and owners to solicit their input as the City determines the types of businesses to be included in the ordinance. This expanded security camera program will also incorporate best practices to affirmatively address legal concerns associated with security cameras such as privacy, constitutional search requirements, and racial profiling.

- **Criminal Justice System Improvements**

Top 200 Violent Offenders. HPD will seek assistance from the Harris County District Attorney's Office to prioritize the prosecution of the 200 most violent offenders currently awaiting trial or case disposition. The types of cases to be prioritized include firearms related offenses, habitual domestic violence crimes, crimes against vulnerable populations, and offenses involving gang activity or organized crime. This type of strategic coordination will allow criminal justice stakeholders to improve the pre-trial tracking and monitoring of violent offenders who pose the greatest risk to our safety.

Court Backlog. It is undisputed that several factors have negatively impacted portions of the Harris County Criminal Justice process. In 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused major damage and disruption to the operation of our local court system and thus the ability of our local criminal justice system to adjudicate cases expeditiously. This unfortunate situation coupled with the global pandemic that followed has created a criminal court backlog greater than 100,000 cases. The City of Houston is poised to work collaboratively with the District Attorney's Office to address these challenges; but the fact remains that the criminal court backlog is impacting the County's ability to bring violent offender cases to completion. Accordingly, it is imperative that all criminal justice stakeholders design a plan to clear the criminal case backlog.

To that end, the City will provide \$1.5 million in additional funding to the Houston Forensic Science Center to address backlogs. The simple facts are, we need more criminal courts, judges, and staffing.

Bond Company Protocols and Best Practices. The Criminal Justice System does not operate effectively when any part of the system is not functioning as designed. The ever-growing backlog of criminal cases and the delayed adjudication of violent offenders will only be exacerbated if bail bond amounts continue to be reduced to a nominal level. Today, many bail bond companies are requesting substantially less than the customary 10 percent required to post bond. The City of Houston is asking bail bond companies to cease this particular practice. **It should be noted that City Administration has also asked the City Legal Department to propose an ordinance prohibiting this type of arrangement.**

I have instructed the City Legal Department to draft an ordinance for consideration by Houston City Council, requiring that a bail bond company charge a premium equal to at least ten percent of the amount of the bail bond set by the court. This would require that the cost of a bail bond be equal to what the public generally believes to be the cost of such a bond rather than some lesser amount. I also call upon the Harris County Bail Bond Board to adopt a regulation requiring that all companies issuing bonds within Harris County charge a premium equal to at least ten percent of the amount of the bond. If the Bail Bond Board were to adopt such a standard for the entire county, the City would consider it unnecessary to move forward with the passage of the proposed ordinance. Otherwise, the City must act.

- **Technology Enhancements**

The City of Houston supports the use of data driven, evidence-based law enforcement response strategies. Accordingly, HPD will enhance our crime fighting capabilities by leveraging the following technologies:

1. Expand the deployment of Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs) in high crime areas to identify vehicles associated with criminal acts.
2. Leverage and expand gunshot detection technology for a more rapid response to gun crime related incidents thereby enhancing investigative leads and the possibility of quickly apprehending violent offenders in the commission of crimes involving firearms.
3. Increase community partnerships to leverage available real time video through programs such as Community Connect, Ring, Nest and other video security platforms.
4. Enhance the technology capabilities of the Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) and move it toward a true Strategic Decision Support Center.

Crisis Intervention, Response, & Recovery

- **Domestic Violence**

For the year 2021, the total number of domestic-violence related homicides was eighty-one (81), an increase of 50% from 2020, which reported fifty-four (54) homicides during the same period. To address this epidemic, the City launched a two-pronged Domestic Violence Initiative designed to address the symptoms of domestic violence to prevent future homicides.

Domestic Abuse Response Team (D.A.R.T.). For the year 2021, the total number of DV-related Homicides was 81, an increase of 50% from 2020, which reported 54 DV-related Homicides during the same period. To address this epidemic, the City launched Houston's Domestic Abuse Response Team (D.A.R.T.), which is a coordinated community response designed to prevent domestic violence homicides. D.A.R.T. is a multidisciplinary model that recognizes domestic violence severely impacts an individual's physical and mental health. D.A.R.T. teams are comprised of officers and victim advocates who are trained to provide trauma-informed care within minutes of a victim dialing 911. D.A.R.T. coordinates and/or provides on-scene danger assessments, emergency shelter, food, transportation, and connections to community-based resources so victims can be empowered to live a life free of violence and abuse. D.A.R.T. also offers on-scene medical forensic exams at **NO CHARGE** to the victim. Medical forensic exams not only provide critical history about the survivor but also contribute to the preparation of an evidence-based criminal charge to be presented for criminal prosecution. D.A.R.T. units are also called as support for special threat situations as a resource for HPD's Tactical Operations Division.

The preventive aspect of the Domestic Violence Initiative is the Multicultural Domestic Violence Preventative Outreach Strategy. This initiative will engage culturally diverse survivors who are disproportionately impacted by domestic violence. This targeted strategy will allow interventionists to engage in violence prevention education and provide information and material attuned to the cultural needs and languages of Houston's diverse population. The Mayor's Office previously used CARES Act dollars to stand up these programs. When that funding was exhausted, the City of Houston began using ARPA funding for these services, and they are already making a significant difference in the lives of our most impacted neighbors.

The added cost for this initiative is \$3 million.

- **Mental Health**

Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT). MCOT is a team of mental health professionals who respond to situations involving a person in mental health crisis without the involvement of law enforcement. MCOT has a proven track record of handling situations involving mental health crises with appropriate community resources. Law enforcement is rarely needed. The recent expansion of MCOT by six (6) teams allows the staff to handle increased demands associated with the 40,000+ 911 mental health calls they receive annually.

Crisis Intervention Response Team (CIRT). CIRT teams are comprised of a Crisis Intervention Trained (CIT) peace officer and a licensed professional clinician (LPC) who ride together and respond to mental health disturbances. Using the skills and education of both, the CIRT units safely de-escalate mental health crises and provide the most informed possible disposition to these calls. CIRT units are also called as support for special threat situations as a resource for the SWAT commander. In addition to their knowledge about mental illness and counseling experience, the clinicians have direct access to consumer's medical data in the Harris Center and Harris County Hospital District systems. This information is extremely beneficial when responding to consumers in crisis as they have knowledge of the consumer's diagnoses, mental health history, medications, and hospitalizations. Currently, HPD has twelve (12) CIRT units allocated as part of the Mental Health Division. Recently, five additional teams were added so CIRT teams can respond to more mental health-related calls, placing these specialized teams into situations where they are best suited to de-escalate and provide critical mental health resources.

Clinician-Officer Remote Evaluation Program (CORE). CORE is a telehealth strategy for responding to mental health crisis calls using a tablet and a HIPAA-approved technology platform to connect a law enforcement first responder with a mental health clinician in the community at the time of the 911 dispatch. CORE connects six (6) licensed professional clinicians and a team leader to persons whose mental health crises have brought them in contact with HPD officers. The clinicians can assist the officer in making a quick, accurate mental health assessment. The clinicians can also access the person's hospitalization history and connect the person with needed resources.

- **Crime Victim Recovery & Restoration**

Continued expansion of HPD's Victim Services Division (VSD). The Houston Police Department has one of the largest victim services divisions in the nation. The overall goal of the division is to support crime victims to reduce the likelihood of future victimization so crime victims can be restored and begin to feel safe where they live, work, and play. Designed to provide restorative justice through relational policing, VSD offers traditional crime victims assistance and partners with various social and legal services organizations to provide long term victim restoration.

Community Collaboration & Engagement

- **Proactive Community Initiatives to Curb Gun Violence**

CURE Violence. The Cure Violence model trains and deploys outreach workers and violence interrupters to mitigate conflict on the street before it turns violent. These credible messengers are trusted members of their communities and use their street credibility to model and teach more effective ways to communicate and resolve conflict. CURE Violence is a three-pronged violence prevention strategy designed to 1) detect and interrupt planned violent activity 2) acknowledge behavioral changes of high-risk individuals and 3) acknowledge changing community norms. Credible messengers will be hired and trained on mediation best practices as they work to curb retaliation and de-escalate violence in communities with strong social tensions. **The City proposes to allocate \$2.5 million for the implementation of the CURE Violence program in targeted communities.**

The Credible Messenger Mentoring (CMM) program. This mentoring program was developed to mentor and train individuals who have been touched by the criminal justice system, so they can emerge as leaders and be equipped with the tools and resources to positively influence outcomes related to the safety and wellness of their respective communities. Designed to break generational cycles and alter adversarial life circumstances, CMM aims to serve 150 youth over a two-year period. CMM staff will mentor, guide, and train at-risk youth so they can be productive members of society without further involvement in the criminal justice system. **The City has already allocated \$500,000 for the implementation of the Credible Messengers Mentoring program in targeted Houston communities.**

The Community Re-entry Network Program (CRNP). CRNP is designed to help formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate into the community by providing access to workforce development tools, mental and behavioral health resources, housing, and other basic needs. To date, The Houston Health Department's (HHD) reentry program successfully reduced recidivism to 4.2% as compared to the state recidivism rate of 21.4%. To expand the program's footprint, HHD will collaborate with Harris County to implement these interventions and partner with community-based organizations to support program expansion. **The City will invest \$1 million to increase the number of program participants from 500 to 750.**

- **Crime Prevention & Public Safety Awareness Campaigns**

The Houston Police Department, Office of Community Affairs will partner with City departments and external stakeholders to launch robust media campaigns to educate the community about crime trends and protective measures. Through the utilization of HPD's website, social media platforms, and positive interactions between law enforcement and the community, these campaigns will keep Houstonians informed and facilitate the public's access to key information throughout the year, allowing Houston residents to feel safe where they live work, and play.

- **Crime Stoppers**

Currently, business leaders and Crime Stoppers of Houston created a partnership that offers a cash reward payment up to \$5,000 for anonymous information leading to the charging and/or arrest of any felony suspect. To further incentivize the reporting of violent felony suspects, the City of Houston will partner with local business leaders to increase rewards for gun-related information leading to the charging and/or arrest of any felony suspect for a period of ninety (90) days. The City of Houston will also partner with Crime Stoppers to:

- Design a public safety campaign to educate the community on how to utilize the Crime Stoppers Tip Line and why it keeps communities safe;
- Produce a public service announcement or digital media series with Mayor, Crime Stoppers, and victim families to demonstrate that Houston will not tolerate being a safe-haven for criminals;

- Develop and monthly insert a Crime Stoppers pamphlet in City of Houston water bills. This insert will highlight crime trends and offer prevention tips so people can be safe in their communities;
- Send monthly talking points to city universities, pastors, city council members, and law enforcement agencies regarding crime topics, trends, solutions and key prevention take-aways every month;
- Launch a city-wide billboard campaign with co-branded boards focused on tip line education and/or crime prevention messaging as needed; and
- Bolster the “Help Keep Our City Safe” campaign by encourage residents to anonymously report tips via the Crime Stoppers mobile application.

- **Faith-Based Interactions and Town Hall Discussions**

The City will work with faith-based leaders to help address the symptoms of violence and establish trust between police and the community. Faith-based leaders are instrumental in fostering an environment of peace and understanding. As a City, we must collectively condemn hate and open the lines of communication to facilitate communication and understanding so we can become a stronger and safer Houston.

Youth Outreach Programs

- **Hire Houston Youth (HHY)**

Since 2016, HPD has collaborated with HHY to hire youth between the ages of 16 and 24 to work in various assignments within the many divisions in HPD. Students have the opportunity to explore career options, experience and acquire training and skills needed for a successful path to higher education and future careers. **Added emphasis will be given to this initiative to promote more job opportunities in the range of 12,000 – 15,000 jobs this summer.**

- **Gang Prevention Outreach Program (G.P.O.P.)**

G.P.O.P. provides gang prevention and intervention programs for middle school students and presenting gang education and awareness to communities in the City of Houston. The goal is to prevent youth crime, violence and gang involvement while developing a positive relationship between youth, their families and law enforcement.

- **Greater Houston Police Activities League (GHPAL)**

GHPAL's mission is "to reduce juvenile crime and violence through "Relational Policing" which includes building trusting relationships between youth, law enforcement and the community." GHPAL members are between the ages of 8 and 18. The program includes mentorship (one-to-one or groups), athletic, enrichment, civic/service, recreational and educational opportunities throughout the City of Houston. GHPAL also works with a number of community partners and school districts to achieve its mission.

- **Explorers**

The Explorers Program focuses on educational training for youth on the purposes, mission and objectives of law enforcement. Youth between the ages of 14 and 20 are able to participate. Participants will experience career orientation, leadership, and community service opportunities that challenge them to become good citizens of our city and country.

- **Youth Police Advisory Council (YPAC)**

Established in 1997, the goal is to provide youth a forum to discuss events affecting their lives and community by having conversations with leaders from HPD and within the City of Houston. This level of interactions promotes trust and understanding between HPD and the youth.

- **Boys and Girls Club (BGC)**

Since 2007, in partnership with BGC in their afterschool program, HPD provides social, emotional and academic support through a mentorship program for youth between the ages of 7 and 17. Officers engage in one-to-one and small group mentoring sessions with the youth at the BGC locations throughout the city.

- **Teen and Police Academy Service Academy (TAPS)**

TAPS connects at risk youth and law enforcement officers in order to exchange ideas and learn from each other. This program combines the most valuable tenets of other successful programs such as the Citizens Police Academy, Explorers, and other community based initiatives to promote positive relationships between law enforcement and youth who are the most negatively impacted by violent crime.

Conclusion

We must come together as Houstonians to engage in the fight against violent crime and continue our legacy as one of the safest major cities in America. No one can escape accountability.

This plan represents a holistic approach to combatting violent crime on the streets while being responsive to the needs of victims and building healthier communities in the process. Law enforcement efforts alone will not sufficiently address the symptoms of crime. We are faced with a public health crisis, and it will require all of us, working together to overcome it.

The Turner Administration is committed to collaborating with community stakeholders to implement comprehensive public safety strategies in our fight to reduce violent crime.

This is a CAN DO CITY!

Together, we will emerge as One Safe Houston!

Appendix A - Project Cost Breakdown

One Safe Houston – Project Cost Breakdown	
	Additional City Funding
VIOLENCE REDUCTION & CRIME PREVENTION	
Patrol Enhancement	\$5,739,880.00
Additional Parks Department Rangers	\$1,915,200.00
Illegal Firearms – Gun Buyback Initiative	\$1,000,000.00
Houston Forensic Science Center Backlog Funding	\$1,500,000.00
CRISIS INTERVENTION, RESPONSE & RECOVERY	
CURE Violence Program	\$2,500,000.00
Community Re-Entry Network Program	\$1,000,000.00
Domestic Violence	\$9,608,627.18
Mental Health Crisis Intervention	\$21,384,178.00
Total	\$44,647,885.18