



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

IMPROVING COMMUNITY SAFETY

Through Public Health Strategies

LESSONS FROM ATLANTA AND MILWAUKEE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation's children and youth by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow.

For more information, visit the Foundation's website at www.aecf.org.

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introduction

AMERICA IS A TAPESTRY of storied communities, where children dream of the best the nation has to offer and take pride in the outstanding leaders who have come before them. Violence, however, hinders the ability of young people growing up in these places — especially youth of color — to take advantage of educational and economic opportunities, and leads to trauma that can have lifelong consequences. Many communities of color continue to bear the brunt of long-standing discriminatory policies and disinvestment, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and crime that is hard to escape.

As the nation reckons with these and other deeply rooted inequities, calls are growing louder for new violence prevention and safety approaches.¹ Communities across the country are rethinking their investments in neighborhood services and support, implementing innovative programs focused on healing and working to reduce the roles that law enforcement and the justice system play in addressing violence. At the federal level, President Biden has also urged Congress to commit \$5 billion over eight years to support “evidence-based

community violence prevention programs” as part of the proposed American Jobs Plan.²

This report offers early lessons and recommendations from work the Annie E. Casey Foundation is supporting in Atlanta and Milwaukee to prevent gun violence. These communities are part of a national movement to increase safety and heal trauma by examining root causes and addressing these issues from a public health and racial justice perspective. Residents in both cities are shaping and leading

safety strategies with the support of local nonprofits and other public and private partners. Their stories highlight the many ways that philanthropic and system leaders can help catalyze alternative public safety models and support their development and implementation — including helping to establish a new narrative about what it takes to keep communities safe and building and sharing evidence on effective public health interventions.

A NEW APPROACH

to Community Safety and Healing

As community leaders across the nation work to improve health, education and housing conditions in their neighborhoods, the damaging effects that gun violence has on these efforts — and the young people and families who experience it — cannot be overstated.

Gun violence stifles economic growth, lowers home values and damages social networks and norms. People who are exposed to shootings and other violent incidents often suffer emotional and psychological damage and can experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.³ For children, that resulting emotional trauma makes it difficult to learn in school and increases the likelihood that they will abuse substances and engage in criminal behavior as adults.⁴ As these effects accumulate, neighborhoods become trapped in a cycle where violence begets more violence and crime.

These consequences are not felt evenly. Black Americans experience shootings and other violent deaths at 10 times the rate of white Americans — a larger gap than that created by other health issues such as diabetes, heart disease and asthma.⁵ Gun violence is also the leading cause of death for Black males ages 15 to 24, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.⁶

The roots of these disparities are complex. They stem from decades of disinvestment, oppression and discriminatory policies,⁷ as well as fraught community-police relationships.⁸ Despite well-documented inequities, including the many killings of unarmed Black men and women at the hands of police that our nation has witnessed in recent years, traditional approaches to

safety still heavily rely on policing and punitive measures, with investments primarily made in law enforcement and justice systems. These approaches not only have failed to curb violence but also have created additional problems, including mass incarceration and the subsequent ripple effects on children, families and communities.⁹



Seeds of Hope garden mural on Milwaukee's Southside.

KEY PRINCIPLES

In response, the Casey Foundation has invested in a multipronged approach to safety that is rooted in research and driven by community members. It is grounded in five key principles:



Gun violence is preventable.



Healing and restorative practices are crucial to fostering safety.



Communities are safer when children and families have access to educational and economic opportunities.



The people and communities most affected by violence and trauma should lead the development and implementation of solutions.



We must openly acknowledge and address the historic policies and practices that have led to disproportionate rates of violence in communities of color, and the lasting damage they cause.

The Foundation's investments are built on the belief that gun violence is a public health epidemic that must be addressed with preventive measures. Casey is supporting approaches that incorporate an assessment of both risk and resilience factors at the community level and that tackle underlying causes, interrupt situations likely to result in violence and promote community-wide healing and support.

To date, the Foundation's investments have focused on:

- supporting efforts, such as the Cure Violence model (see more on page 6), that rely on citizens with life experience and strong community ties, known as “credible messengers,” who can intervene when violence or retaliation is likely to occur;

- implementing prevention strategies at hospitals, through trained staff and community partners who counsel patients with injuries from violence and aim to steer them away from retaliation;
- creating opportunities for community members to address trauma and atone for wrongdoing through “healing circles,” with their peers providing emotional support during facilitated meetings;
- advocating for public support of violence intervention and redirecting funds from criminalization and detention to prevention; and
- researching community violence and developing a base of evidence that shows what works in promoting safety.

As the work featured in this report shows, both public and private entities have roles to play in supporting a public health approach to safety. Residents in Atlanta, with funding and support from Casey and other investors, established a neighborhood-based advisory group and began implementing the Cure Violence model. In Milwaukee, another place where the Foundation is supporting Cure Violence, the movement to reimagine public safety is being driven by the city's Office of Violence Prevention.

Each community developed strategies and programs based on local goals, needs and circumstances. One common thread underpinning their efforts has been the purposeful engagement and inclusion of people living in the areas directly affected by violence.

AS THE WORK FEATURED in this report shows, both public and private entities have roles to play in supporting a public health approach to safety. Residents in Atlanta, with funding and support from Casey and other investors, established a neighborhood-based advisory group and began implementing the Cure Violence model. In Milwaukee, another place where the Foundation is supporting Cure Violence, the movement to reimagine public safety is being driven by the city's Office of Violence Prevention.

“Having community members take the lead in identifying problems, devising solutions and launching interventions is absolutely critical to be effective,” says Amoretta Morris, former director of National Community Strategies for the Casey Foundation.

Morris, who helped spearhead these efforts before leaving the Foundation to lead Borealis Philanthropy, was adamant that residents be supported to take the lead: “We must have all interested stakeholders represented at the table and involved in decision making from the start so that strategies can address local needs, gain acceptance and effectively drive change.”

Physician and epidemiologist Gary Slutkin dedicated years of his career battling disease outbreaks such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS overseas. Upon returning to the United States, he began to see gun violence in a similar light as the epidemics he had been treating.

Drawing on his public health background, Slutkin established the Cure Violence model, which employs disease control and behavior change methods to prevent and reduce gun violence and help neighborhoods heal.



CURE VIOLENCE

has three core components:

- 1 Interrupting the transmission of violence.** Workers identify and mediate street-level conflicts to ensure that individuals wounded by gun violence do not retaliate.
- 2 Mitigating risks.** Community members are trained to identify and counsel the individuals in their neighborhoods who are most likely to commit violence.
- 3 Establishing new norms.** Through events, group counseling and public education, community outreach workers also help establish new norms that deem violence as an unacceptable response to conflicts.

The model has worked internationally and in major U.S. cities such as Chicago, where it led to a significant reduction in shootings — up to 73% — within the neighborhoods where it was implemented.¹⁰

For more information about Cure Violence, including its inception and founding principles; how the model works and is adapted to meet a community’s needs; and where Cure Violence intersects with community policing, visit www.aecf.org/blog/meet-the-disease-control-expert-who-is-curing-an-epidemic-of-gun-violence.

CURBING VIOLENCE

in Atlanta With Community Engagement

Atlanta's Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V) — which includes the Adair Park, Capitol Gateway, Mechanicsville, Peoplestown, Pittsburgh and Summerhill neighborhoods — was once a thriving epicenter for African Americans. Pittsburgh, for example, was established in 1883 by formerly enslaved people, many of whom sought stable housing and jobs with the nearby railroad companies. By the turn of the century, the neighborhood was home to a drugstore, barber shops, restaurants and a funeral parlor — as well as the city's first African American orphanage and several educational institutions."

NPU-V began to change, however, in the 1950s and '60s as residents moved to surrounding suburbs and home values declined. Decades of disinvestment and displacement followed — much of which can be traced to discriminatory policies and practices, including the construction of interstates 20, 75 and 85.¹²

Growing up in a nearby neighborhood, Alfred Garner often visited Mechanicsville as a child to see a family friend. "Going outside was not necessarily safe," he says. "I couldn't go far, or leave the street, because of the drugs and violence."

Many of the families who did choose to stay in NPU-V were eventually pushed out by large development projects, including the installation of a major league baseball stadium in 1997. Outside entities often came in to launch new programs and promote revitalization, then failed to effect

tangible change on the ground as organizational and political leaders changed and priorities shifted. These realities have caused mistrust between residents, the city and other organizations coming into the community, Garner says.

And though he acknowledges that NPU-V has long struggled

with high levels of gun violence, Garner still sees the strengths in his community. "Folks [here] care about their neighborhoods and want to see things happen now and want services and support now, but they're very wary of outsiders and programs coming through for just a season."



Healing circles, similar to this one from 2019, enable NPU-V residents to address trauma, atone for wrongdoing and receive emotional support.



DeMicha Luster, an NPU-V resident and advocate, conducts door-to-door visits to check on community members after incidents of violence.

Building trust, gaining community buy-in and elevating local leadership have been a core part of the community safety investments Casey has been making in Atlanta since 2016. The process began with a scan of existing violence prevention programs and a listening tour to determine the scope of problems, priorities and solutions. An advisory group, called the NPU-V Community Safety Committee, was then formed with residents, local faith and nonprofit leaders, health care providers, law enforcement agencies, Casey staff and other stakeholders to develop a plan.

“We had to center the folks who are most directly affected and co-design the investment strategy with them,” Morris says. “Instead of doing this planning work ourselves, we did it on the ground, with the community.”

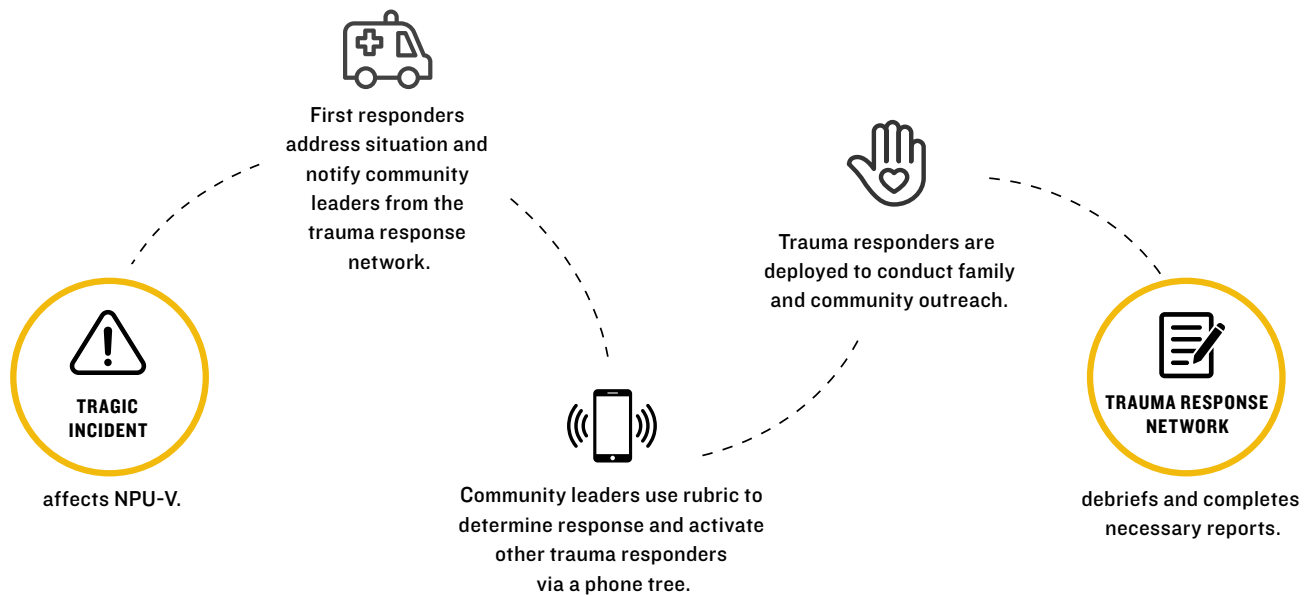
After conducting this research and hearing from national experts, the committee chose to prioritize the following activities.

Garner has met that desire for services and support head-on. For the past three years, he has been leading community safety work at the nonprofit CHRIS 180,¹³ which provides behavioral health, housing and youth services in the Atlanta area and coordinates Casey’s community safety work in NPU-V. Following a career as a graduation coach working with students in the alternative education program of the local public school system, Garner has deep experience and

empathy in connecting with community members facing violence as well as financial, mental health and education struggles.

“When I first started in this role, I had to go through a process of building trust,” Garner says. “I showed up consistently. I was at all the meetings. I was in constant communication with stakeholders, doing small things like helping to set up before meetings and break things down afterward.”

THE TRAUMA RESPONSE NETWORK PROCESS



- Launching regularly scheduled meetings called healing circles, where trained residents facilitate a safe space for reflecting, sharing feelings and providing emotional support.
- Educating and deploying volunteers and staff as part of a trauma response network to immediately follow up with neighbors and family members after incidents of violence. These individuals, called trauma responders, participate in an eight-hour training on topics including the effects of trauma, safety protocols for responding to violent incidents and strategies to foster and protect their own mental well-being. Following a shooting, trauma responders knock on doors, check in with community members who

witnessed the violence and provide connections to local resources for further help.

- Adopting the evidence-based Cure Violence model, which has successfully lowered the shooting rate by over 60% in other communities.

“The Casey Foundation didn’t come in with a plan and say, ‘This is what we’re going to do in your community,’” says Garner. “Instead, they asked, ‘What do you want to see happen in terms of safety in this community? How can we address gun violence? How can we help address trauma?’ All these questions and answers came out of a group of elders, community leaders and other stakeholders.”

Since January 2019, healing circles have been held twice a month,

engaging over 400 NPU-V residents. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the gatherings went virtual, enabling attendees to still find support and discuss topics such as stress and anxiety. CHRIS 180 also began delivering food and supplies to residents who were struggling to run errands or pay bills, as well as sharing instructions on requesting groceries or accessing health services — including mental health counseling.

Trauma responders also have been deployed over 20 times to follow up with families and neighbors within 48 hours of violent incidents in NPU-V. While law enforcement officials typically focus their efforts on victims and perpetrators of crime, the trauma response network focuses attention

on those who may not be directly involved in an incident but are affected nonetheless, whether as a neighbor, a family member or a bystander.

“A lot of times, the neighbors experience an extreme amount of trauma and are terrified,” says DeMicha Luster, a resident leader who has been working in Mechanicsville for six years and frequently participates in trauma response network visits. “Families often want to transfer to another community or send their kid to live with another relative because their house has been shot up too

“Sometimes they’ve seen me walking around the neighborhood, handing out flyers for Halloween events and things like that, so it’s nice to see a familiar face,” she says. “They appreciate someone coming around to check on them.”

According to Luster, loyalty and togetherness are two of the neighborhood’s strongest assets. “Our community is very resilient, and we are willing to fight and stand for what we believe is right. Even when we disagree, we still can focus on the overall well-being of the community.”

for peace, interact with community members and help interrupt some of the violence.”

These outreach workers helped defuse conflicts and connect neighbors to resources, while also supporting other community organizations and leaders to channel energy into a peace march, town hall discussion and the creation of an advocacy agenda. The team recognizes that responding with care helps to reduce retaliation and a continuing cycle of harm, according to Garner. Their efforts, however, are not always enough to prevent further

OUR COMMUNITY is very resilient, and we are willing to fight and stand for what we believe is right.

many times, and you can see the bullet holes across the home.”

Luster, who also founded the grassroots organization The Urban Advocate, believes engaging with residents directly affected by violence is critically important in promoting behavior change and preventing retaliation. When she knocks on doors and checks in on residents, the reaction usually is positive.

That commitment to justice was on display following the shooting death of Rayshard Brooks by an Atlanta police officer outside a fast-food restaurant in Peopletown in summer 2020. CHRIS 180 staff deployed to the parking lot, where large numbers of residents had gathered. “Emotions were high, and guns were out there,” says Garner. “But due to the relationship that we have in the community, our Cure Violence program staff were able to go down there and help create some space

violence — but they believe in the power of them and continue to press forward.

When 8-year-old Secorica Turner was fatally shot in NPU-V soon after Brooks, outreach workers sprang into action once more, providing support to her family and the community. It was a devastating blow to residents and underscored the dire need for the people-focused Cure Violence outreach.



Alfred Garner hugs a fellow community member at a resource fair in 2019.

With their firsthand **KNOWLEDGE** of what it takes to make peace, credible messengers are crucial in helping residents understand the role they can play to prevent violence from the start.

A core element of this on-the-ground outreach is the hiring and training of community residents — both men and women of various ages — as credible messengers to work directly with people in the midst of street-level conflicts, providing mediation and counseling individuals most likely to commit violence. These full-time staff members often have backgrounds similar to those of the people they serve — in some cases previously instigating violence and in others having survived the consequences of violence. Their experience creates a deep understanding about the dynamics of conflict and retaliation and

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When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, CHRIS 180 began delivering food and supplies to residents who were struggling to run errands or pay bills.

the needs of those at high risk of engaging in violence. With their firsthand knowledge of what it takes to make peace, credible messengers are crucial in helping residents understand the role they can play to prevent violence.

“They can go out and identify where the trouble is and literally try to stop it from happening, getting ahead of a shooting before it takes place,” Garner says. Often, this means finding out who has which problem with whom, then confronting both parties separately and talking them down from violence. “It’s not an easy job. We have people trained to go in, ready to stick their neck in, talk to all the people involved when tensions are high and make sure residents remain safe and don’t have a situation with guns shooting back and forth.”

Along with CHRIS 180, the NPU-V advisory group is partnering with nearby Grady Memorial Hospital, which serves the greatest share of gun violence victims in Atlanta. Doctors and social workers there are exploring various violence intervention approaches, including best practices from the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention,¹⁴ to help gunshot victims process the violence they experienced, connect them to resources and try to stem retaliation. Grady staff are seeking resources to deepen, expand and sustain this work, and formally coordinate with the Atlanta Cure Violence team.

Early data on these interventions show that they are making a difference, despite the historically violent year Atlanta has had.



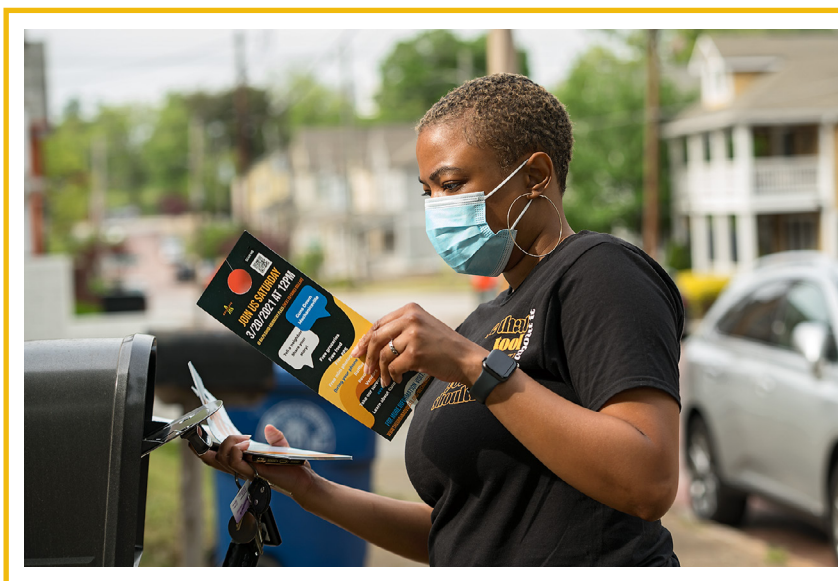
While the city saw a 58% increase in homicides during the first half of 2021, rates in NPU-V stayed relatively flat compared to previous years.¹⁵ “We believe the Cure Violence Atlanta team’s work with residents and partners is beginning to have an impact and is preventing violence in a community that has historically suffered from too much of it,” says Natallie Keiser, a senior associate who oversees neighborhood transformation strategies for the Casey Foundation’s Atlanta Civic Site.

The Foundation and its partners are advocating for sustained private investment in approaches like these and seeking public resources to expand this type of work in other neighborhoods with high rates of gun violence. Casey is also investing in evaluation and research efforts to build further evidence of best practices to share with other communities and funders.

“We cannot take our foot off the pedal,” says Ade Oguntoye, who oversees Casey’s safety investments in Atlanta alongside Keiser. “Shootings are still taking place in NPU-V, and community members are losing loved ones in nearby neighborhoods. Residents need continued support from the safety committee and our Cure Violence partners to heal and head off future violence.”

Oguntoye and Keiser believe funders have a unique role to play in creating those opportunities and

THIS WORK has helped residents reimagine what safety means. They knew that something different needed to be done, but they just didn’t know what their options were.



helping residents develop and lead safety plans. “This work has helped residents reimagine what safety means,” Keiser says. “They knew that something different needed to be done, but they just didn’t know what their options were. The work with CHRIS 180, and the exposure to other approaches from across the country, has allowed residents to innovate and adapt effective models to meet the specific needs of their neighborhoods.”

Safety, she underscores, is a fundamental requisite for any other effort — whether focused

DeMicha Luster distributes fliers for a community safety event.

on education, employment, health or otherwise — to gain traction. “When communities are safe, we are better able to make progress in the other aspects of family well-being.”

These efforts are catching the eye of local policymakers. In March 2021, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms pledged \$5 million to help expand Cure Violence throughout the city, citing the success of the NPU-V pilot.¹⁶

A CITY-LED PLAN

to Reimagine Community Safety in Milwaukee

Casey is supporting efforts in Milwaukee to expand a violence prevention initiative similar to Atlanta's that grew out of a reassessment of community safety that has been underway for several years. A key moment came in 2014, when a Milwaukee police officer shot and killed Dontre Hamilton, an unarmed 31-year-old man who had been sleeping in a park. The officer was fired from the force but was not charged with a crime. The killing led to widespread protests, and the fallout highlighted long-standing tensions between the community and the police department.

The following year, violence in the city soared. Homicides increased from 88 to 146,¹⁷ and by 2016, Milwaukee was listed as the fifth most dangerous city in the country.¹⁸ The fractured relationship with the community and the spiking crime rate led the city government to expand its Office of Violence Prevention, which is housed within the health department, and launch an ambitious community safety planning process in fall 2016.

Over 10 months, more than 1,500 people — including residents, youth organizers, elected officials, nonprofit leaders, criminal justice experts and health officials — came together to discuss how to make the community safer. Mayor Tom Barrett appointed a steering committee to lead the effort, and the Office of Violence Prevention facilitated the planning process with support from the Prevention Institute, a national nonprofit focused on

creating more equitable health and safety outcomes. The city was committed to ensuring that the resulting plan was developed and owned by the entire community.¹⁹

This process resulted in the launch of Milwaukee's first comprehensive violence prevention plan, known as the Blueprint for Peace,²⁰ in 2017. It focused on public health instead of policing, as well as

strategies to advance public safety and well-being.

"We believe that violence is more than a problem for police, courts and politicians," the report states in an opening section.

"Preventing violence requires each and every one of us — parents, young people, schools, businesses, hospitals, faith-based institutions, cultural groups



Reggie Moore, former director of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention, speaks at the 414LIFE campaign launch in 2018.

and more — working together to promote the preservation of life. We must be willing to do everything possible to reduce and ultimately eliminate the likelihood of violence occurring in our homes, schools and neighborhoods.”

The Blueprint for Peace was built on four key principles:

- **COMMUNITY:** Youth and families hurt most by violence should drive the plan and share in the responsibility of making Milwaukee safer.
- **RESILIENCE:** Despite the widespread effects of violence, Milwaukee’s people have assets that can foster change, including strong community organizations and resident-led redevelopment initiatives.
- **EQUITY:** Because of institutional racism, violence falls hardest on specific neighborhoods and populations, including youth, women and people of color.
- **ACTION:** Practical, measurable strategies are needed.

The document aims to stem violence and addresses the underlying factors that contribute to it, with strategies focused on promoting restorative justice, supporting children and youth, generating economic opportunity, building safe and thriving neighborhoods and better coordinating violence prevention efforts. It makes clear that

Milwaukee’s residents must be at the forefront of change. “When violence spiked in 2015, the community rightfully demanded something different,” says Reggie Moore, who served as director of the Office of Violence Prevention from 2016 to 2021.

In December 2018, after the Blueprint’s release, Milwaukee launched the 414LIFE violence prevention initiative — a partnership between the city, a local hospital, philanthropic groups and other stakeholders. Similar to the work in Atlanta’s NPU-V, Milwaukee uses the Cure Violence model to train people from the community to work hand-in-hand with residents on violence interruption. 414LIFE also assigns a worker to visit shooting victims in nearby Froedtert Hospital to try to stem the cycle of retaliatory violence and connect them with support services in the community. The program has received more than 500 referrals to contact shooting victims in the hospital, mostly men ages 18 to 35.

Following the launch of the Blueprint and 414LIFE, homicides in Milwaukee declined markedly. From 2017 to 2019, for instance, the number dropped from 119 to 98.²¹

Similar to other cities across the nation, though, Milwaukee has seen a recent spike in murders, which experts link to pressures

stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic²² — and, in part, challenges faced by violence interveners who have had to adjust their outreach to conform to social-distancing requirements. Still, Moore sees power in the Blueprint in driving lasting change.

“Milwaukee built a movement and raised the profile of violence as a public health issue across the city,” Moore says. “Instead of people seeing violence as an unsolvable issue we could do nothing about, it became understood that it is a systemic, learned behavior, for which new approaches can have an impact. It has inspired hope.”

Moore says that having a process that allowed for true community engagement on safety issues was vital. In some ways, he says, the process was more important than the final product.

While the city of Milwaukee drove the initial process of reimagining public safety, community activists have continued to press for additional change. For example, they have been holding community meetings over the past three years to help residents understand how the city’s budget is allocated. Markasa Tucker, a community organizer who helped lead this work, would often display a large chart contrasting the enormous police budget with the smaller sums allocated to



PREVENTING VIOLENCE requires each and every one of us — parents, young people, schools, businesses, hospitals, faith-based institutions, cultural groups and more — working together to promote the preservation of life. We must be willing to do everything possible to reduce and ultimately eliminate the likelihood of violence occurring in our homes, schools and neighborhoods.

LiberateMKE advocates for greater investment in jobs, public health, housing and other community services.



Markasa Tucker has been a crucial advocate for a new approach to community safety and investment in Milwaukee.

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health, housing and other public services.

“I found it to be very disturbing,” says Tucker, who also serves as executive director of Milwaukee’s African-American Roundtable. “This is the taxpayers’ money, and it looks like one department is hoarding the money, but they’re unable to solve the problems.”

Tucker and her team invited the city’s budget director to attend

these meetings early on. “He said this is the first time in 30 years that he’d been invited to come and talk to the community,” Tucker says.

Tucker and her team developed a survey to identify budget priorities, to which more than 1,000 Milwaukee residents responded. Three priorities rose to the top: housing, employment for young people and violence prevention. “That organizing affirmed what we heard in the development of the Blueprint for Peace,” says Reggie Moore. “It was good to see there was growing

support for a different approach to violence in the city.” In June 2019, about 40 organizations came together to create LiberateMKE, a partnership that has sustained the effort to invest more in community services. Later that year, more than 200 Milwaukee residents testified at the city’s annual budget hearings — compared to a handful who had testified the previous year. The organization set a goal of increasing resources for housing, public health and other efforts that create safety by reducing police spending by 25%.

LiberateMKE and its partners, including a local grassroots organization named Metcalfe Park Community Bridges, have stayed active during the pandemic — for example, meeting residents one-on-one on their porches and holding a community block party — with a goal of educating community members and fostering their involvement in city budget decisions.

The group has made some progress in convincing the city's elected leaders to embrace their vision for a new community

safety approach. In fall 2020, the city increased funding for community programs sought by the organization by approving a small cut in the police budget.

Engaging the community through meetings, surveys and brainstorming sessions remains a key part of LiberateMKE's work. "We try to create and cultivate spaces for people to imagine how to do things differently," Tucker says. "We had people draw pictures of what a healthy community looks like. Nobody included police."

LiberateMKE says it will continue its fight for additional funding for public health and housing programs. It is asking for a \$5 million reduction from the police budget to support such efforts. The group is also advocating for a new model to deal with behavioral health emergencies that relies on health professionals rather than police officers, and for more accountability for police.

LIBERATEMKE SAYS IT WILL CONTINUE ITS FIGHT

for additional funding for public health and housing programs. It is asking for a \$5 million reduction from the police budget to support such efforts. The group is also advocating for a new model to deal with behavioral health emergencies that relies on health professionals rather than police officers, and for more accountability for police.

EARLY LESSONS

and Considerations

The work in Atlanta and Milwaukee has already surfaced important lessons for the Casey Foundation and other partners interested in supporting community-led safety efforts.

- Engaging local community leaders and residents early and often is key to ensuring local buy-in and community ownership of chosen solutions.
- Building trust and relationships with community members takes time. Patience with the process and relationship building helps ensure solutions have roots that will grow.
- Providing for adaptability and evaluation of what does and does not work will allow for greater effectiveness and sustainability of strategies. This is especially important in areas where many pilot projects and innovative ideas have arisen and then died down quickly when immediate results were not achieved.
- Shifting to community-driven and prevention-focused approaches is not always easy. Because traditional law-enforcement and punitive approaches are deeply ingrained and heavily resourced, partners must be willing to go against the tide at times.
- Providing residents with opportunities to learn from peers in other locations who have successfully implemented prevention solutions is key.



We Got This, a program for young men founded by Milwaukee resident Andre Lee Ellis, promotes self-efficacy by pairing youth with community-based role models, offering opportunities to earn money and teaching gardening skills.

conclusion

Any effort to improve youth and family well-being cannot fully succeed if people are unable to go about their daily activities free of violence and harm. When individuals do feel safe in their neighborhoods, they are more likely to trust public systems and access needed services, engage and advocate on behalf of their communities and pursue life and career goals. Community safety increases overall economic activity and school attendance and reduces involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

The Casey Foundation hopes the early lessons and successes highlighted in this report can help public and private entities, including government officials,

service providers, business leaders and law-enforcement agencies, to reimagine their approaches to safety and violence prevention.

The Foundation also hopes to inspire other philanthropies to support this work in ways that align with their missions and goals. This can take many forms, including developing and strengthening community-based interventions; supporting the efforts of public and private partners to develop a shared safety agenda; funding models that have successfully redirected resources from punishment and confinement to prevention; helping to establish a new narrative about what it takes to keep communities safe; and helping to build and share

evidence on effective public health interventions.

The need for this work has never been clearer. As communities continue to grapple with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic — including spikes in homicides and other violent crime — as well as racial injustices and the resulting unrest, public and private entities have an important role to play in supporting residents to reimagine restorative approaches to safety. The Foundation is continuing its investments in Atlanta and Milwaukee and has begun supporting similar work in Jackson, Mississippi, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to address gun violence and create safer neighborhoods.

ENDNOTES

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