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RIDGE ENSLEY ENSLEY HIGHLANDS EVERGREEN FAIRMONT FAIRVIEW FIVE  
POINTS SOUTH FOREST PARK-SOUTH FOUNTAIN HEIGHTS GARDEN HIGHLANDS  
GATE CITY GERMANIA PARK GLEN IRIS GRASSELLI HEIGHTS GRAYMONT GREEN  
ACRES HARRIMAN PARK HIGHLAND PARK HILLMAN HILLMAN PARK HOOPER CITY  
HUFFMAN INDUSTRIAL CENTER INGLENOOK JONES VALLEY KILLOUGH SPRINGS  
KINGSTON LIBERTY HIGHLANDS MAPLE GROVE MASON CITY NORTH AVONDALE  
NORTH BIRMINGHAM NORTH EAST LAKE NORTH PRATT NORTH TITUSVILLE  
NORWOOD OAK RIDGE PARK OAK RIDGE PARK OVERTON OXMOOR  
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WAHOUMA WEST BROWNVILLE WEST END MANOR WEST GOLDWIRE WOODLAND  
PARK WOODLAWN WYLAM ZION CITY ACIPCO-FINLEY AIRPORT HIGHLANDS  
BELVIEW HEIGHTS BRIDLEWOOD BROWN SPRINGS BROWNSVILLE HEIGHT  
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COLLEGE HILLS COLLEGEVILLE CRESTLINE CRESTWOOD NORTH CRESTWOOD  
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BROWNVILLE EAST LAKE EAST THOMAS EASTWOOD ECHO HIGHLANDS ENO

# PEACE

a strategy for peace: 2019-2023



PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

MAR2019



The Twi language of the Akan people from Ghana have a proverb which states, “Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi.”

Literally translated it means, “It is not wrong to go back to fetch that which you forgot or what is at risk for what is being lost.” From the proverb comes the word Sankofa, which means ‘Go back and get it.’

The symbol of Sankofa is a bird moving forward with its head turned backwards to intelligently assess and access its past to also enhance and secure its future - the egg.

It is the mission of the Office of Peace and Policy to use the power of community knowledge, social science, and applied research to implement, develop and create strategies, policies and programs that:

1. Promote and sustain a peaceful Birmingham through equitable and humane means;
2. Promote and sustain improved public health for the residents of Birmingham by addressing risk and protective factors;
3. Establish an entity to critically analyze, preserve, and apply data, knowledge, and research pertaining to and including the City of Birmingham and its residents.

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# CITY OF BIRMINGHAM

MAYOR RANDALL L. WOODFIN

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Dear residents, city employees and partners,

Violence in our communities must end.

There's a very good chance that the scourge of gun violence has directly affected the families, beloved friends or neighbors of everyone reading this letter.

That even includes me.

Gun violence has infiltrated our families, robbing our loved ones of their futures and leaving a void of grief, frustration and hopelessness. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. warned us about the cyclical nature of violence, where retaliation adds "deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars."

But he also spoke of solutions: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that."

That light is peace, and it can only be attained if we all aspire to walk a brighter path.

The City of Birmingham's Office of Peace and Policy – in partnership with the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Alabama and the Jefferson County Health Department – is working to carry out the Birmingham PEACE Strategy, a framework that uses a public-health lens to target violence prevention and re-entry from incarceration.

Peace cannot be achieved by simply increasing policing. Peace is the result of establishing trust between residents and the systems and partners who serve them, empathy for both victims and perpetrators and capital investments in prevention and re-entry strategies.

The goal of the Birmingham PEACE Strategy is to create systemic change – it is the only solution for a problem with roots that run generations deep. Our communities will be at the forefront of that change with introduction of a series of pilot programs.

I've often called gun violence a public health crisis. If we were addressing a food shortage or viral outbreak, we would swiftly activate resources and attack the problem on different fronts. That's the same mindset we employ with our PEACE Strategy. We must be dynamic, targeted and bold in our approach without losing our compassion.

The health, well-being and future of our community is at stake.

Fifty years ago, Birmingham's bold leadership and an empowered community united to suppress the flames of hatred. We taught the world the power of peace. That's our legacy.

Our challenge today is to uphold that promise. And we all have a role to play.

Through unity, we will find peace.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Woodfin".

Randall L. Woodfin  
Mayor of the City of Birmingham



# CITY OF BIRMINGHAM

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

## OFFICE OF PEACE AND POLICY

Randall L. Woodfin  
Mayor

Brandon F. Johnson, J.D.  
Director

Violence in Birmingham, Alabama is a twofold crisis: public health and humanitarian.

A public health crisis driven by structural violence that drives individual risk factors for violence. A humanitarian crisis driven by a historical and institutional failure to govern in a manner that honors the human rights of individuals and their right to be served by a government that prioritizes such.

Issues of violence have deep roots in the ethos of the United States of America. An ethos that has led to a foundational national belief in the right to own guns for purposes of committing interpersonal violence against another human being. An ethos that has led to an ongoing and costly struggle to employ the courts and police in a manner that protects and respects bodies of persons regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, race or other distinguishing identity.

The violence visited on individuals in Birmingham by their society and circumstances is the root cause of the violence individuals perpetrate against one another. Let us not forget the Birmingham in which we live is not just a product of the civil rights movement, but the balkanization of the Birmingham metropolitan area, COINTELPRO, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the crack epidemic, the war on drugs, welfare reform, 9/11, the dot.com bubble, the Great Recession, and all the varied effects that those policy regimes have had on the governance of Birmingham and Alabama.

Our fight is not with each other, neither as individuals nor organizations. Our crisis of violence is driven at the institutional level by a lack of empathy, compassion, and a common sense of humanity shared across the diverse interests of the Birmingham metropolitan area. Birmingham will always be the frontline of equity and justice. Peace is achieved through better governance and collaboration across sectors. Please help me better serve by aiding me in coordinating resources that increase peace in Birmingham. Birmingham is well-suited for this task.

Peace is the cure to violence. Peace must be our charge in this moment. Peace is my prayer and call to our ancestors. There is no greater power than peace. Peaceful residents equate to a prosperous and powerful Birmingham.

The Office of PEACE and Policy is the mayor's instrument to implement and advocate for effective change and reform to Birmingham's approach to public safety. The office's efforts are deliberately and initially targeted at systems change and not programming. Though there will be programming out of the Birmingham Office of PEACE and Policy, its focus is on systemic changes and not programmatic interventions. There is no program on earth that can effect change if implemented through a dysfunctional and toxic system. Programs developed by this office are developed as tools to help implement institutional change.

Public safety is best achieved through peace. Peace is the power in our community. Let us get to work together and in unity to bring peace to Birmingham.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Fontenot Johnson".

B. Fontenot Johnson  
Director, Office of PEACE and Policy



**U.S. Department of Justice**

*Jay E. Town  
United States Attorney  
Northern District of Alabama*

1801 Fourth Avenue North  
Birmingham, AL 35203-2101

(205) 244-2001

February 25, 2019

Mayor Randall Woodfin  
710 20<sup>th</sup> Street North  
Birmingham, AL 35203

Mayor Woodfin:

As you know, the law-abiding citizens of Birmingham and the communities where they live have been terrorized by violence and crime for too long. Crime and the fear of violence stunt the potential of Birmingham and the lives of all who live in its 99 neighborhoods and 23 communities. Shootings, assaults, and drug overdoses are all too common in the city where citizens deserve to safely raise their families, protect their children, and build a brighter future for all. While law enforcement and prosecutors will continue to vigorously hold criminals accountable for their actions, it is just as virtuous to constructively strive toward more peace. Toward more opportunity. Toward less crime. I join with you in your goal to reduce the threat of violence within our city, and to create hope and pathways of opportunity for Birmingham's law-abiding citizens.

Birmingham statistics for homicide, violent crime, gun trafficking, and unlawful possession of firearms have been troubling for too long. While there were 100 homicides in Birmingham in 2018, there were even more overdose deaths, more than three times as many non-fatal shootings, and twenty-five times more aggravated assaults. Brazen crime in this great city only works to corrode our community and tear at its social fabric. The threat of violence must become uncommon everywhere. It is my judgment that Birmingham's socio-economic future will not consistently thrive so long as these conditions persist. Police and prosecutors would rather positively engage citizens in the community rather than face a seemingly endless demand for bed space in our jails and prisons.

The City of Birmingham and your administration have shown a profound commitment to work with federal, state, and local partners to combat crime wherever it is found within Birmingham. Through these partnerships between the Department of Justice and the City of Birmingham, we will do our utmost with every tool we possess to improve the lives of law-abiding citizens in Birmingham and to bring safety and opportunity for our children, families, and community. The Department of Justice's commitment to make Birmingham safer is unwavering, and I fully support your efforts to bring more peace and less violence to the lives of all in Birmingham. As our handshake in the beginning of your administration continues to promise, I remain standing shoulder to shoulder with you in this effort.

Respectfully yours,

  
Jay E. Town



# JEFFERSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1400 6th Avenue South | Birmingham, AL 35233 (205) 933-9110 | [www.jcdh.org](http://www.jcdh.org)

*Serving Jefferson County Since 1917*

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February, 2019

Dear Birmingham Residents and Partners,

At the end of 2017, the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) added the following objective to its Strategic Plan: “Establish a strategy for JCDH to address the problem of violence in Jefferson County.” This is completely new for our Department.

Prior to the 1980s, few people would have thought of “public health” and the issue of violence as having anything to do with each other. Then in 1983, the Centers for Disease Control created the Violence Epidemiology Branch of its Division of Injury Epidemiology. In 1985, the Surgeon General of the United States held a Workshop on Violence and Public Health, further bringing violence into focus as a public health issue.

If we simply ask ourselves, “What’s causing premature death?” and, “Is it something that’s potentially preventable?” then the answer is simple: Violence in our community is a public health crisis, and we should be doing something about it. All we have to do is look at the numbers. Our violent crime rates rank among the highest in the country. Violence is driving a glaring health disparity; tragically, homicide is the leading cause of death for young black men. And the effects on our neighborhoods, families and children go way beyond the simple crime statistics. As with the opioid crisis, violence reduction has not been a traditional part of the JCDH wheelhouse; as with the opioid crisis, we can no longer ignore what the data are showing us. It is not yet clear what specific interventions we will endorse, but we do endorse a “public health approach” to violence reduction. I applaud Mayor Woodfin and his team for recognizing the need to approach this problem using a public health lens.

When I was first invited to be part of the “Birmingham Safe Neighborhoods Task Force” in the spring of 2018, I saw an opportunity for JCDH to be helpful. When I heard that the Task Force wanted to develop a strategy, JCDH offered its assistance by employing a consulting group to facilitate the development of a framework to guide that strategy. This included input from a broad array of community stakeholders. While I sincerely hope this assistance has been useful to the Task Force and the City of Birmingham, I recognize that this is only a start. Much work is ahead of us. We at the Jefferson County Department of Health are committed to being a partner with the City of Birmingham and others in the community to foster Peace in Birmingham.

Sincerely,

Mark E. Wilson, MD  
Jefferson County Health Officer

# PEACE

a strategy for peace: 2019-2023

## The PEACE Strategy: Partnership

The Woodfin administration is committed to continuous engagement and work with the Birmingham City Council to serve the people of the 99 neighborhoods in the City of Birmingham.

In that spirit, the Woodfin administration is thankful for the opportunity to work closely with the City Council to advance a public safety strategy that emphasizes an equal focus on prevention, enforcement, and re-entry.

**Clinton P. Woods, Councilor, District 1**

**Hunter Williams, Councilor, District 2**

**Valerie A. Abbott, Council President, District 3**

**William Parker, President Pro Tempore, District 4**

**Darrell O'Quinn, Councilor, District 5**

**Crystal Smitherman, Councilor, District 6**

**Wardine Alexander, Councilor, District 7**

**Steven W. Hoyt, Councilor, District 8**

**John R. Hilliard, Councilor, District 9**



# CITY OF BIRMINGHAM STRATEGIC GOALS

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- 1. Safe, Secure and Sustainable Communities**
- 2. Healthy, Thriving and Diverse Neighborhoods**
- 3. High-Performing, 21st Century Education and Workforce Development Systems**
- 4. Innovative and Inclusive Economy Supported, Shared and Served by All**
- 5. Highly Effective, People-First, Smart Government**
- 6. Global, Legacy Leadership Partner for Equity and Social Justice**



**PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST**

# PEACE

a strategy for peace: 2019-2023

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Safe Communities Strategy created through the Birmingham Safe Neighborhoods Task Force creates an opportunity to promote positive peace to overcome the effects of violent crime in the city through an emphasis on prevention and re-entry.

The Birmingham PEACE Strategy is the City of Birmingham's effort to implement this strategic framework through 2023.

It is important to note, the strategy focuses on community-led, customized efforts to achieve the overall Safe Communities Strategy.

The mission of the Birmingham PEACE Strategy is threefold:

- 1** Promote and sustain a peaceful Birmingham through equitable and humane means
- 2** Promote and sustain improved public health for Birmingham residents by addressing risk and protective factors
- 3** Establish an entity to critically analyze, preserve and apply data, knowledge and research pertaining to and including the city of Birmingham and its residents

The Birmingham PEACE Plan emphasizes coordination between City of Birmingham departments and divisions, agencies and other government entities in order to leverage resources. PEACE is defined as:

- P** Policy informed by rigorous research
- E** Empathy for victims and perpetrators
- A** Alignment of government resources
- C** Capital investment of new dollars into prevention and re-entry
- E** Evaluation of and evolving programming and strategies

# INTRODUCTION

While the City of Birmingham has a duty to bring justice to those that would harm their neighbors, the city also has a duty to do what it can to mitigate the harm and trauma suffered by families, residents and communities affected by violence. It is a recognition that parents, children, partners, and friends of the victims of violence and the justice-involved often suffer as a result of their loved ones circumstances. The City of Birmingham cannot govern well without healthy, peaceful, and happy people.

The work of the PEACE Strategy is connected to multi-jurisdictional entities and organizations who have partnered to enhance public safety and address violent crime through an emphasis on prevention and re-entry.

As the city partnered with the United States Attorney’s Office of the Northern District of Alabama to create the Birmingham Public Safety Task Force with an emphasis on enforcement, the Birmingham Safe Neighborhoods Task Force focuses on community based efforts with an emphasis on violent crime prevention and enhanced programs to support re-entry after incarceration. The Jefferson County Department of Health partnered with the task force to create a strategy.

“The overarching goal of the Birmingham Safe Communities Strategy is to promote positive peace. It aims to do this through a community-driven and community-responsive approach, meaning community members’ input, ideas and feedback are the primary drivers of the strategy and anything implemented in the strategy should be adapted to best fit individual communities. This community customization is central to the success and authenticity of the strategy. Communities should be active players and take ownership of their strategies and plans for positive peace. Finally, the strategy uses a public health and human rights lens to approach prevention and re-entry issues, which includes consideration of the concepts of social justice, health equity and social and ecological determinants of health.

Risk and protective factors for violence reduction also heavily influenced this strategy and should be considered in crafting and implementing action plans.” (*Clarus, Birmingham Safe Neighborhoods Strategy, January 2019*).

**“...who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace, which is the absence of tension to a positive peace, which is the presence of justice...”**

*(King, Martin L., PhD, Letter From a Birmingham Jail, August 1963)*



# PEACE PRINCIPLES

## **Commitment to a human rights and public health framework**

that looks to foster positive peace through prevention, enforcement and re-entry.

## **Strengthening institutional integrity and community trust**

through a commitment to procedural justice and standard programs to inform, engage, educate, and empower residents to impact their own public safety in partnership with city government.

## **Using trauma-informed strategies**

to rethink how the city uses its social service dollars.

## **Supporting organic connections to community-based organizations**

that improves their access to funding; ability to provide technical assistance in their communities; and building ultra-local capacity that is sustainable, organic and well-connected to community.

# THE PROBLEM: A DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE

Birmingham has seen a rise in certain aspects of violent crime, particularly homicides, over the last five years. In 2014, the city approached a near historic low of 59 deaths. Within a year, the homicide number had jumped dramatically. In the last three years, the number of homicides totaled 322.

Year	Homicides
2014	59
2015	92
2016	104
2017	111
2018	107

*Birmingham Police Department*

Gun violence in particular, has created great concern among residents. Gun violence creates trauma for the victim, and their family, the perpetrator and their family, and spreads throughout the affected communities. In 2018, the Birmingham Police Department reported 2,391 guns were removed from city streets through traffic stops, traffic safety checkpoints, service calls, follow up investigations, warrant related cases and arrests on non-violent cases.

Preliminary numbers for gun-related crimes in 2018 showcase the impact of firearms on violent crime in the city.

- Felony Assault: 360**
- Attempt to Commit Murder: 142**
- Domestic Assault: 32**
- Homicide: 88**
- Discharging into Occupied Building: 538**
- Discharging into Unoccupied Building: 91**
- Throwing/Shooting into Occupied Vehicle: 278**

The problem of homicide in Birmingham overwhelmingly affects the black community. The Jefferson County Coroner and Medical Examiner Report for 2017 states “the most common race was black, representing 85.5% of the homicides, while males were the most common gender, representing 82.6% of homicide deaths.”

The Office of PEACE and Policy finds the city must identify solutions and systems that address core risks and protective factors that lead individuals to engage in interpersonal violence and recidivate. Additionally, these systems and solutions must be impactful on the individual, relationship and community level as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In order to develop solutions and systems, it is important to identify the forms of violence faced within our community.

## DIRECT/PHYSICAL VIOLENCE:

**Self-directed violence:** violence in which the perpetrator and the victim are the same individual and is subdivided into self-abuse and suicide.

**Interpersonal violence:** violence between individuals, and is subdivided into family and intimate partner violence and community violence. The former category includes child maltreatment; intimate partner violence; and elder abuse, while the latter is broken down into acquaintance and stranger violence and includes youth violence; assault by strangers; violence related to property crimes; and violence in workplaces and other institutions.

(Definition and typology of violence. (November 21, 2011). Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/> . Structural Violence. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.structuralviolence.org/structural-violence/>)

BIRMINGHAM HOMICIDE BY ZIP CODE: 2013-2018								
	Homicides	Percent	Percent Black	Black MHI US Dollars	Ratio of Black Income to White	Single-Mother Household	Black Male Labor Force Participation	Unemployment
35211	85	17.8	89.10	26,595	0.65	69	64	18.4
35218	46	9.6	90.20	22,777	0.87	65	58	18.9
35208	45	9.4	94.40	32,829	0.67	63	59	16.2
35204	43	9.0	94.90	19,924	0.82	56	61	18.0
35212	35	7.3	67.80	21,548	0.35	71	62	18.9
35206	34	7.1	72.40	28,608	0.63	67	64	8.1
35215	28	5.9	67.10	38,734	0.93	58	75	13.6
35207	24	5.0	94.00	22,404	1.37	79	60	17.5
35205	17	3.6	29.50	21,390	0.51	57	59	14.6
35224	16	3.4	62.90	30,606	0.93	57	68	17.3
Jeff. County Average			43	33,666	0.51	15	64	8.2

*Credit Lonnie Hannon III, PhD, Tuskegee University*

## INDIRECT VIOLENCE:

**Collective violence:** violence committed by larger groups of individuals and can be subdivided into social, political, and economic violence.

**Structural violence:** this is systemic ways in which social structures harm or otherwise disadvantage individuals. Structural violence is subtle, often invisible, and often has no one specific person who can (or will) be held responsible.

(Definition and typology of violence. (November 21, 2011). Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/>. Structural Violence. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.structuralviolence.org/structural-violence/>)

## SEXUAL ASSAULT:

Sexual Violence and sexual assault are broadly defined as attempts to obtain a sexual act from a person without that individual freely providing consent. Sexual violence and sexual assault involves violence and coercion. It may also include acts directed toward an individuals sexuality.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical or sexual assault, abusive behavior, threats, and emotional abuse by one intimate partner against another. While the frequency and severity of domestic violence can vary, domestic violence is demonstrated through a consistent pattern of power and control. CITE: (<https://ncadv.org/>)

**2018 Sexual Assaults: 196**

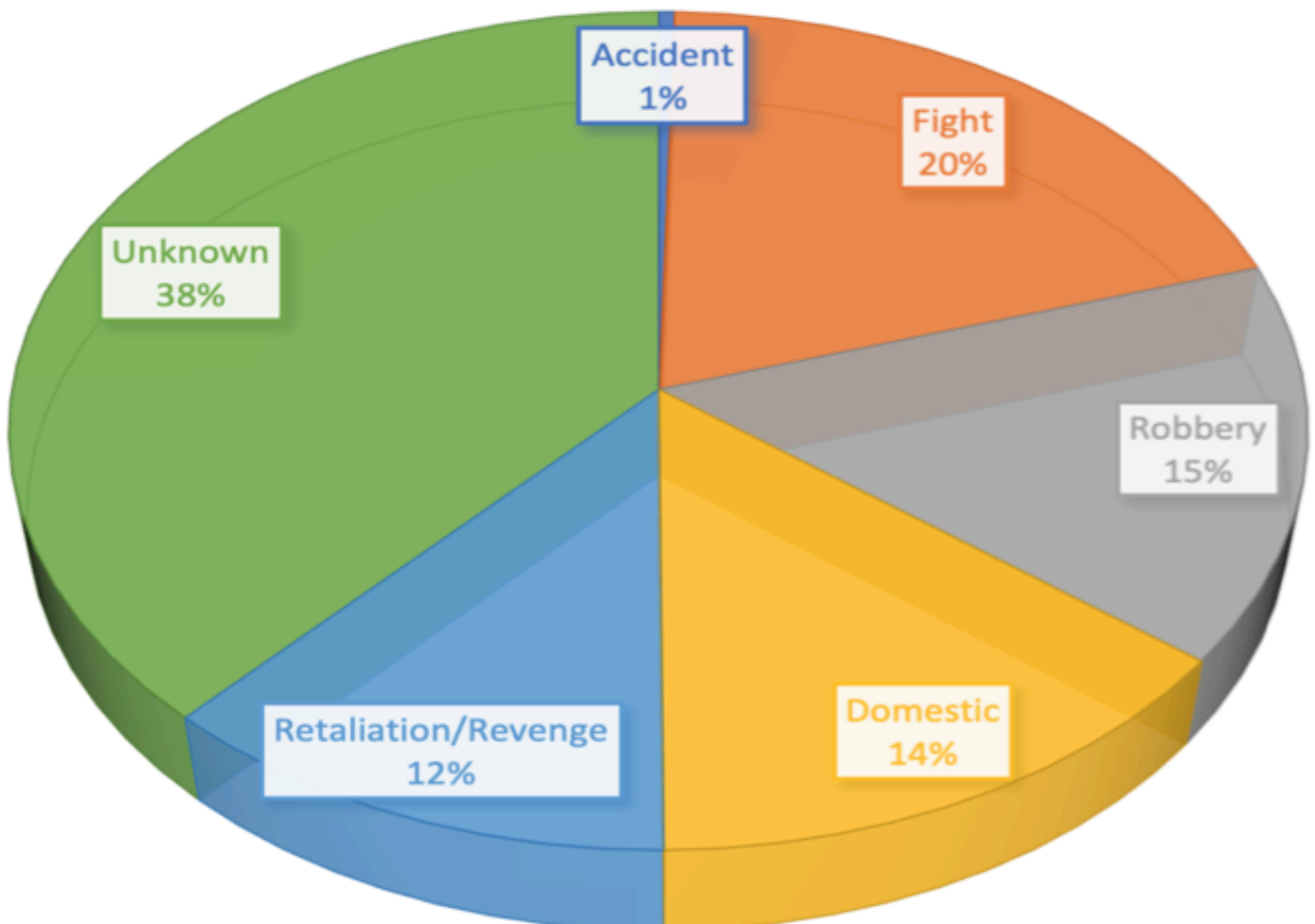
**2018 Felony Domestic Violence: 672**

**2018 Suicide: 24**

**2018 Drug Overdoses: 114**

*According to the Jefferson County Coroner's Office, 87 overdose deaths involved opioid-based substances*

## BIRMINGHAM HOMICIDE BY TYPE: 2013-2018



*Credit Lonnie Hannon III, PhD*

# SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on evidence that no single factor can explain why some people or groups are at higher risk of interpersonal violence, while others are more protected from it. This framework views violence as the outcome of interaction among many factors at four levels. The overlapping rings in the model illustrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level.

## INDIVIDUAL

Personal history and biological factors influence how individuals behave and increase their likelihood of becoming a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Risk factors might include age, education, income, substance use, being a victim of child maltreatment, psychological or personality disorders, and a history of behaving aggressively or having experienced abuse.

Prevention strategies at this level promote attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that prevent violence. Specific approaches may include education and life skills training.

## RELATIONSHIPS

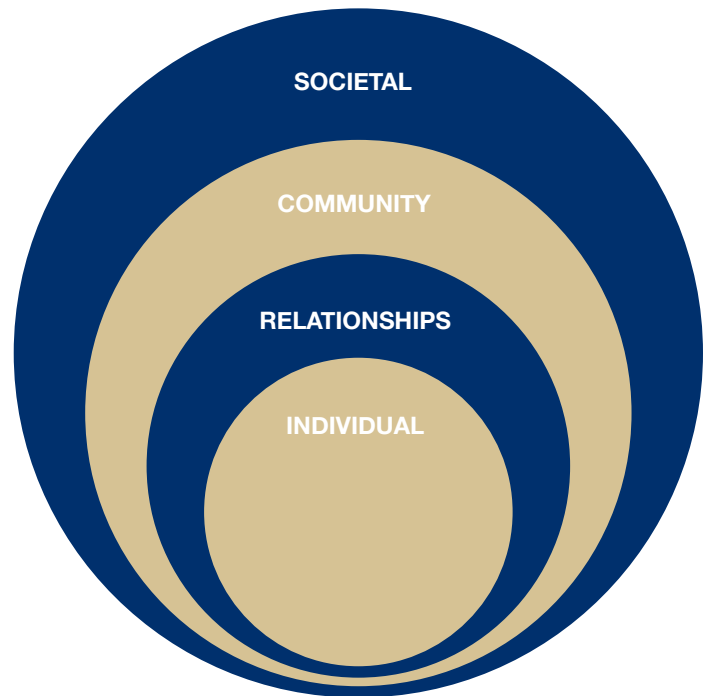
Personal relationships such as family, friends, intimate partners and peers may influence the risks of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. Risk factors might include marital discord, poor parenting practices, violent parental conflict, low socioeconomic household status, and friends that engage in violence.

Prevention strategies at this level may include parenting or family-focused prevention programs, and mentoring and peer programs designed to reduce conflict, foster problem solving skills, and promote healthy relationships.

## COMMUNITY

The community level explores the settings, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, in which social relationships occur and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that are associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. Risk factors here may include the level of unemployment, poverty, population density, mobility and the existence of a local drug or gun trade.

Prevention strategies at this level impact the social and physical environment – for example, by reducing social isolation, improving economic and housing opportunities in neighborhoods, as well as the climate, processes, and policies within school and workplace settings.



## SOCIETAL

Societal factors include social and cultural norms that influence whether violence is encouraged as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts or inhibited.

Risk factors might include economic, health, educational, and social policies that help to maintain socioeconomic inequalities between people, the availability of weapons, and social and cultural norms such as those around male dominance over women, rapid social change, poverty, weak economic safety nets, poor rule of law, and parental dominance over children.

The ultimate goal is to stop violence before it begins. Prevention requires understanding the factors that influence violence. Besides helping to clarify these factors, the model also suggests that in order to prevent violence, it is necessary to act across multiple levels of the model at the same time. This framework is useful to identify and cluster intervention strategies based on the ecological level in which they act. This approach is more likely to sustain prevention efforts over time than any single intervention.

Dahlberg LL, Krug EG. Violence-a global public health problem. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi AB, Lozano R, eds. World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2002:1–56. The Ecological Framework. (2011, November 21). Retrieved from [https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/ecology/en/Violence Prevention](https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/ecology/en/Violence%20Prevention). (2018, February 20). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html>

# A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

The public health perspective asks the foundational questions: Where does the problem begin? How could we prevent it from occurring in the first place? To answer these questions, public health uses a systematic, scientific approach for understanding and preventing violence. While violence prevention practitioners may not be involved in all steps, understanding each step and why they are necessary to assure the desired impact on community health is helpful in selecting and developing prevention strategies.

## The Public Health Approach

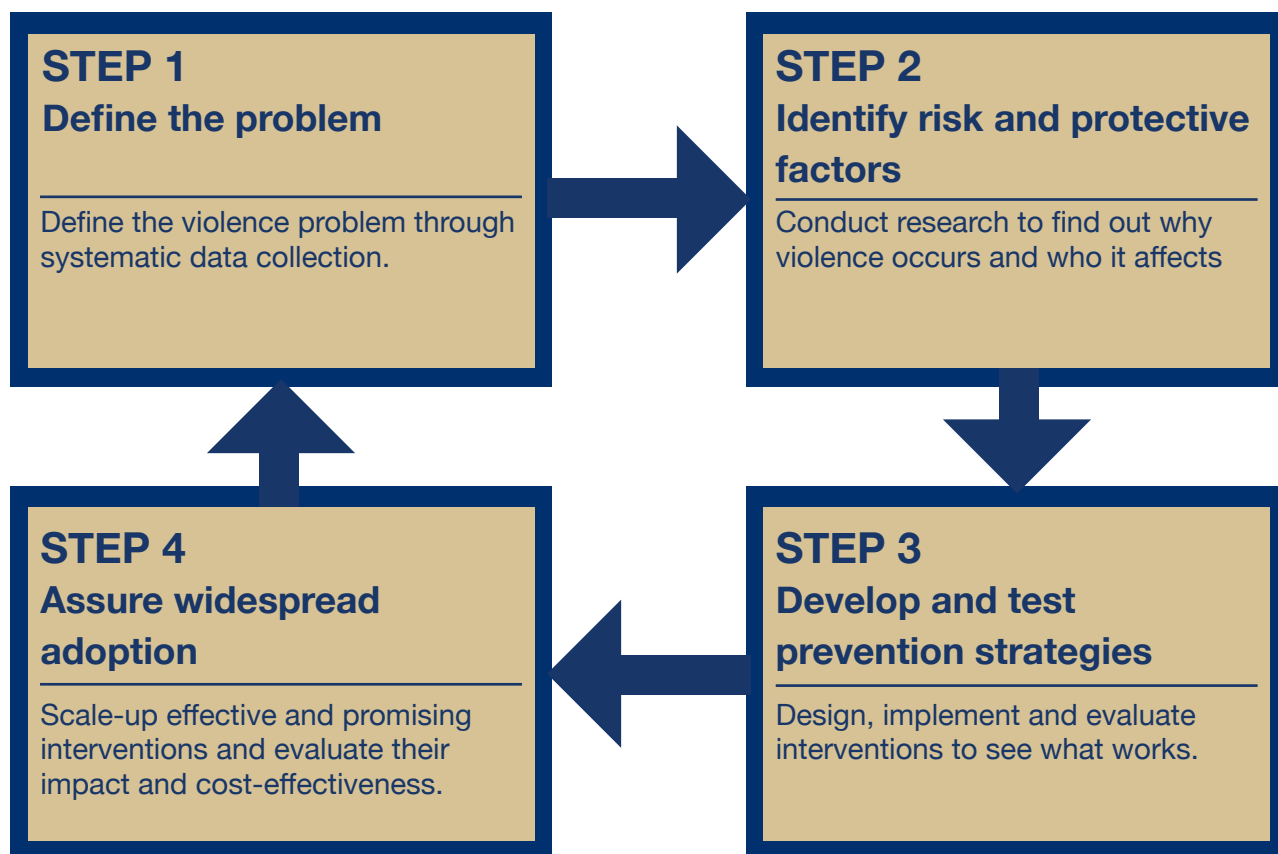
There are multiple steps in the public health approach, with each step informing the next. Many people, organizations, and systems are involved at each step along the way. Think of it as a relay team for prevention. The prevention practitioner usually takes up the baton in the fourth step, but overall success depends upon all of the other teammates and how they run their legs of the race.

In **step one**, the problem is defined. This involves systematically collecting data to determine the “who”, “what”, “where,” “when,” and “how.” Data are typically gathered from a variety of sources such as death certificates, medical or coroner reports, hospital records, child welfare records, law enforcement or other records. Data can also be collected using population-based surveys or other methods.

In **step two**, the reasons why one person or community experiences violence while another does not are explored. Scientific research methods are used to identify the factors that increase the risk for violence (risk factors). Factors that may buffer against these risk factors are also identified; these protective factors decrease the likelihood of violence in the face of risk. The goal of violence prevention is to decrease risk factors and increase protective factors.

In **step three**, prevention strategies are developed and rigorously tested to see if they prevent violence. This information is shared with others, usually through activities related to step four.

In **step four**, the strategies shown to be effective in step three are disseminated and implemented broadly. While many prevention practitioners may not have the skills or resources necessary to conduct steps one, two, and three, knowing where to look for the findings of others, such as registries for evidence based practice in the field, will satisfy similar goals for implementation. Training and technical assistance often is offered to practitioners when implementing effective strategies or programs to ensure that the strategies are implemented as they were intended. Though this is considered the final step of the public health model, it doesn't mean that the process is complete. Additional assessments and evaluation are done to assure that all components of the strategy fit within the particular community context and have the desired effect of preventing violence.



# PREVENTION ENFORCEMENT RE-ENTRY

The City of Birmingham's PEACE Strategy seeks to reduce violence by addressing three key areas.

## PREVENTION

Engaging residents before the commission of a legally criminal act.

- The health and socio-economic disparities that exist in Birmingham are structural violence that traumatize individuals into the disease of violence. The more structural violence is reduced in Birmingham the more interpersonal violence will be reduced.
- Much like a doctor can treat a cancer after it has developed or prevent it by addressing factors that lead to the cancer, Birmingham must spend equal or even greater energy addressing the factors that create violent people in Birmingham.
- Violent persons are more commonly made than born. People that are justice-involved also are people that by-and-large experience traumas or circumstances that increase risk factors and decrease protective factors for violence. That is the heart of the public health approach to violence.

## ENFORCEMENT

Engaging residents in fostering police-community trust, including the intentional monitoring of institutional integrity during the enforcement of statutes and the adjudication of charges.

- In a recent national summit of law enforcement and academics in Hoover, AL, it was noted that, "The police can only influence that part of the crime rate produced by conditions over which they have some control," (Rosenfeld, Richard, PhD, "Setting Realistic Crime Reduction Target", September 2018, Public Safety Partnership Symposium,).
- At the core of the civil rights movement was the fair and equitable enforcement of the law as defined by the United States Constitution. In fact, the culminating moment of the civil rights movement in Birmingham was a confrontation between the black residents of Birmingham and the Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety and the instruments under his control, the police and fire departments. This breach of public trust has never been reconciled or healed.
- Human rights and constitutional rights must be protected during enforcement actions.
- The City of Birmingham must build trust with the residents of Birmingham so that they are proactive in addressing crime in their communities.

## RE-ENTRY

Engaging justice-involved persons, their families, and the families of victims after the issuing of a criminal penalty.

- Neighborhoods and communities are not built by brick and mortar but by people. In a 74% black city, in a nation that sees one in three black men and a similarly disproportionate amount of women and children justice-involved, how do you rebuild communities with so many disenfranchised and traumatized persons?
- Disenfranchisement is a cancer on community that tears apart families and neighborhoods. A system that routinely maintains high recidivism rates harms society and must be supplemented until it can be reformed.
- Justice-involved and justice-affected youth have an increased likelihood of being justice-involved adults. The city must find ways to support these young persons.
- The generational effects of incarceration are well-documented. The Equal Justice Institute has both litigated and documented the pressing injustices of the United States criminal justice system. (<https://eji.org/>).



# ROAD TO THE STRATEGY FOR PREVENTION AND RE-ENTRY: 2019-2023

One of Mayor Woodfin's first acts as mayor was to identify and remove silos to harness the necessary resources to improve public safety in the City of Birmingham.

The Birmingham Safe Neighborhoods Task Force was created in April 2018 as joint effort between the Mayor's Office, City of Birmingham and the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Alabama, with support from the Jefferson County Health Department to help reduce violence in the City of Birmingham. Its mission is to engage government, nonprofit and corporate citizens in a coordinated and collaborative process to:

1. Ensure parity between violence prevention, law enforcement, and re-entry from involvement in the criminal justice system
2. Strengthen protective factors that prevent criminal behavior and reduce recidivism
3. Create a coordinated action plan around prevention and re-entry

In July 2018, recognizing an opportunity to increase capacity and reach across the community by utilizing an outside partner, leadership from the task force engaged Clarus Consulting Group to assist with creating a strategy informed by the community to guide its mission. The result was the Birmingham Safe Communities Strategy, a framework for the creation of a coordinated action plan around prevention and re-entry. (See Appendix at [www.birminghamal.gov/peace](http://www.birminghamal.gov/peace))

The Birmingham PEACE Strategy is the City of Birmingham's effort to implement this strategic framework. The framework on which the Birmingham PEACE Strategy is based consists of the following:

## Strategy

The overarching goal of the Birmingham Safe Communities Strategy is to promote positive peace. It aims to do this through a community-driven and community-responsive approach, meaning community members' input, ideas and feedback are the primary drivers of the strategy and anything implemented in the strategy should be adapted to best fit individual communities. This community customization is central to the success and authenticity of the strategy. Communities should be active players and take ownership of their strategies and plans for positive peace. Finally, the strategy uses a public health lens to approach prevention and re-entry issues, which includes consideration of the concepts of social justice, health equity and social and ecological determinants of health. Risk and protective factors for

## OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

### 1. Engage the community voice.

Community voice is vital to the development and implementation of a successful plan for safe communities. A variety of vehicles should be developed to ensure ongoing dialogue and feedback with the community regarding the development of policies and programs.

**2. Build trust.** As with community voice, trust is a foundational principle of the strategy. No progress can be made until and unless trust is restored. It takes time to rebuild and re-earn trust, therefore consistency and authenticity in word and action will be the linchpins to the overall success of the strategy.

**3. Consider the sphere of influence.** While there is much the city can do to promote positive peace and reduce violence, the city has limited capacity to influence risk factors such as poverty, literacy, mental illness, and abuse / neglect. Exerting the discipline needed to focus on ideas and initiatives that can be influenced or implemented by the city is difficult but necessary for success.

**4. Develop a communications strategy.** The strategy development process engaged 100+ stakeholders in dialogue about safe communities in the City of Birmingham. The city should develop a communication strategy with key messages to communicate strategy outcomes and continue creating alignment with stakeholders.

**5. Create a coordinated action plan.** The City of Birmingham and Birmingham Safe Neighborhoods Task Force should build on the momentum and energy created through this process to swiftly move forward with the creation of a coordinated action plan. Utilizing the Birmingham Safe Communities Strategy as a framework and gaining input from the community are the tools necessary to create the coordinated action plan. (Clarus, Report)

## DISTRUST AND DISTANCE



**42%** of community members support how the police act in the community



**29%** of community members trust the police



**26%** feel that police are part of their neighborhood



**29%** believe police officers are held accountable for wrong or inappropriate conduct



**43%** feel that officers will treat you differently because of their race/ethnicity



**38%** believe that police officers almost always behave according to the law when dealing with people

## COMMON GROUND AND POTENTIAL FOR PARTNERSHIP



**70%** believe all laws should be strictly followed



**68%** think that obeying the law ultimately benefits **everyone** in the community



**67%** would call the police to report a crime



**65%** would provide information to the police to help find a suspect



**47%** would volunteer time to help the police solve a crime or find a suspect



**56%** would attend a community meeting with the police to discuss crime in the neighborhood

Survey items were based on a 5-point scale, and the percentages shown are of residents who answered 4 or 5, with 5 being either Strongly Agree (Distrust and Distance, But Common Ground) or Very Likely (And Potential for Partnership).

[trustandjustice.org](http://trustandjustice.org)

violence reduction also heavily influence this strategy and should be considered in crafting and implementing action plans. The full strategy statement is included below:

Trust is the largest and most important piece of the Birmingham Safe Communities framework and the foundation needed to advance the strategy. Numerous stakeholders pointed to the lack of trust between residents of the Birmingham community and the systems and partners who serve them, and identified the need to rebuild trust before any further progress can be made. Trust between systems is often not a destination, but a journey and relationship that continually needs to be tended and maintained over time once a baseline trust has been established.

First and foremost, leadership at all levels should demonstrate commitment to the Safe Communities Strategy. As trust is earned over time, it is vitally important for leadership to show immediate, continuous support and commitment to the Safe Communities Strategy. As the vision for the city regarding safe, secure and sustainable communities, the Safe Communities Strategy will be the guide and north star by which the community measures progress and holds leadership accountable. It is critical to success for the community to see leadership collectively embracing and following the strategy. It is important to note that it may be necessary to first acknowledge harm and

mistakes made by systems in the past for the community to trust and embrace the new Safe Communities Strategy.

Efforts toward reconciliation could go a long way in creating buy-in and engagement in the strategy. In order to bring two groups together and move forward with a shared vision, often damage to relationships and barriers from the past first need to be recognized and validated. Systems and institutions, like people, are not perfect, and mistakes, however small, can make a big impact on individuals interacting with these systems and institutions. Acknowledging past harm does not mean to re-live old hurt, as some parties may not have even been the individuals or systems directly involved in past ills. However, recognizing the power and magnitude these harms had on community members can be healing and can promote reconciliation in relationships, thereby creating alignment and forward progress.

Additionally, strategies should be developed to strengthen the relationship between the community and law enforcement specifically. The lack of trust between the community and law enforcement in the City of Birmingham was repeatedly cited throughout the stakeholder engagement process and has been well documented through other studies and informational interviews. With new leadership in place, now is the time for law enforcement to demonstrate their trustworthiness and for

officers to build relationships with individual members of the communities they serve. The Birmingham Police Department has identified strategies to engage and communicate more with the communities around prevention and re-entry in an effort to build trust and relationships. These strategies should be supported, and other strategies should be considered and developed to target increasing trust between these groups.

Another step toward building trust between systems and the community will be for systems to include consumers in the design, decision-making and delivery of services. Knowing and seeing “someone like me” who has participated in a service or who helps guide consumers into service interactions from beginning to end goes a long way toward creating trust in the systems serving these individuals. Similarly, investing time in creating real relationships with individuals shows sincerity and demonstrates that members of the system value and appreciate the unique members of the community. Both groups should assume the other is coming from a place of good intentions and be willing to show vulnerability to create genuine relationships.

## Strategy Components

The Safe Communities Strategy has five core components:

### 1. Trauma-Informed

Understanding the high prevalence of trauma in the community, it is essential that the overarching framework be trauma-informed. All system partners should be encouraged to recognize and respond to the impact of trauma on the individuals they serve. Programs, agencies and service providers should infuse trauma awareness knowledge and skills into their organizational culture, policies and practice and should address the intersections of trauma with culture, history, race, gender, location, and language. System partners should also acknowledge the impact of structural inequity and be responsive to the unique needs of diverse communities.

### 2. Navigation

The current system of resources and supports is cumbersome and difficult to navigate. Improving system design with navigation is a key component of the Safe Communities Strategy. Barriers to system navigation, as well as strategies for overcoming identified barriers, should be informed by the community.

A core strategy is improving system navigation by providing more services directly in the communities, rather than expecting community members to travel to access services. Developing policies and programs that support and incorporate local and grassroots entities is critical to providing more place-based services. The city should help articulate the unique value of grassroots organizations in the successful implementation of a community-driven strategy, and advocate for fair allocation of resources across small and large organizations. It is also of significant importance to help build the capacity of grassroots organizations through technical assistance and support.

Generating awareness of supports and services is another important aspect of improved navigation. A first step in increasing awareness is to identify all the organizations doing good work in the community and create a registry of their efforts. Key communication messages and identification of the most effective messengers and modes of communication should then be developed in conjunction with the community. Finally, greater awareness is needed regarding the role of system partners, including improved civic literacy around the role of law enforcement, the court system, and victims’ rights.

### 3. Coordination

Improved coordination and collaboration among non-profits, faith-based organizations, the school system and other system partners is another key component of the Safe Communities Strategy. While there are many individuals, organizations, and governmental entities working to prevent violence and support successful reentry in the community, efforts are typically siloed, often leading to duplication of efforts and/or service gaps. Infrastructure is needed to regularly convene organizations and system partners to improve communication and coordination. Convenings can be used to develop and share ideas and best practices, brainstorm solutions, and develop effective referrals between organizations. The City and key funders can lead the way by nurturing and incentivizing coalition building among organizations.

### 4. Resources

The city’s prevention strategy should help ensure adequate and effective allocation of resources for prevention efforts. Efforts should be made to fully understand community needs and target resources to meet those needs. Funding opportunities should be identified and clearly articulated through multiple channels to the community, and funders should be encouraged to look beyond typical awardees to identify organizations and grassroots groups that can be impactful in the community.

### 5. Data-Informed

The best decisions are most often made using clear, reliable data and evidence. As noted, using a public health lens will include considering data on factors such as health equity, social determinants of health and risk and protective factors. Data should be used to identify need (generally and by community / neighborhood), to map current resources and to guide the development of an action plan. Along with other important factors, data should help drive programming and funding decisions, as resources are limited. Data should also be collected and measured to evaluate impact such as baselines and benchmarks, etc.

This is a summary of the Birmingham Safe Communities Strategy. [Read the full Clarus Consulting Group report at www.birminghamal.gov/peace](http://www.birminghamal.gov/peace)

# PEACE

## Policy informed by rigorous research

The City of Birmingham has to create well-informed strategies that set a common direction to efficiently use limited resources. Policy is the tool afforded the City of Birmingham to coordinate the talent, time and treasures of Birmingham's stakeholders. Policy has to be based on critically considering the best information available. Birmingham should not adopt a strategy that is not reasonably informed by experiences, facts and data.

Despite the profound effect of violence on our society and our city, government efforts to date in the City of Birmingham have been anecdotally informed and misaligned across the city's various operational units and funding streams. While this inefficiency has now become institutionalized it is rooted in the failure of the City of Birmingham to use research, data, and public input in making governance decisions. No matter how great our resources in talent and time if they are not coordinated toward a common end they will be ineffective in helping establish the quality-of-life desired by residents of Birmingham.

Every year extensive and quality research is done in and about the City of Birmingham, from environment to public health. The City of Birmingham has never aggregated this research, evaluated it, or looked to see how it might inform the decisions it makes.

<b>P</b>	Policy informed by rigorous research
<b>E</b>	Empathy for victims and perpetrators
<b>A</b>	Alignment of government resources
<b>C</b>	Capital investment of new dollars into prevention and re-entry
<b>E</b>	Evaluation of and evolving programming and strategies

For example, the City of Birmingham has recently engaged in an intensive review of the Birmingham Violence Reduction Initiative (BVRI). (see Appendices B(BVRI)). How will the City of Birmingham rethink group violence interventions based on what was learned from BVRI? How we assess future efforts and resources?

## Empathy for victims and perpetrators

"The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State," (United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16:3, 1948).

Moralistic governance blinds the governing body to the lived realities of the people who live, work and play in the communities they serve. It is far more important to understand why people engage in anti-social behavior than to make moral judgments about their anti-social behavior. Behind every person that

The Birmingham PEACE Strategy is being developed to achieve the following mission:

**1** Promote and sustain a peaceful Birmingham through equitable and humane means

**2** Promote and sustain improved public health for the residents of Birmingham by addressing risk and protective factors

**3** Establish an entity to critically analyze, preserve, and apply data, knowledge, and research pertaining to and including the city of Birmingham and its residents

commits a criminal act is history that led them to that act. The City of Birmingham owes it to the residents it serves to acknowledge and correct any actions it's taken that have contributed to its residents criminal behavior. Governing with empathy requires that the situation of both victims and perpetrators of criminal behavior is taken into account. Empathy allows us to understand and meet the true needs of victims, while also considering contributing social circumstances of perpetrators actions as a means of infusing mercy into an often merciless criminal justice system.

Research shows that both victims and perpetrators have distinct psychological needs that must be met after a conflict. When needs are met, there is a potential catalyst for peace. When unmet, the cycle of violence continues or may even escalate. Survivors of violence may feel a lack of control or vulnerability. To meet this need, survivors need an empowering restored sense of agency. Perpetrators of crimes often feel guilt, exclusion, shame, and moral inferiority- to which the antidote is a restored sense of morality and acceptance by society. Violence is a learned behavior, meaning that those who perpetuate violence were often first victims themselves.

The justice system plays its part in reducing and containing violence by punishment, but it's not in the rehabilitation business. Incarceration is a negative peace solution to the problem of violence, and treats only the symptoms of violence, but not the underlying causes. Practicing proactive rehabilitation that addresses the underlying trauma in both the victim and perpetrator is where peace-building begins.

Practicing empathy allows us to remove stigmatization of individuals, which can contribute to increased anti-social behavior and survivalistic violent aggression. Inclusion and empathy allow us to see both sides of violence and creates opportunities for restoring agency and healing in both survivors and perpetrators. We owe it both to survivors and those who have lost their lives to violence, to reconsider the way that we address this problem in a way that heals the deep wounds of trauma, stops the cycle of violence, and creates a safer community from the inside out.

Empathy is a key element of peace because it changes our perception of the community. Empathy allows one to see that the world is not made up of good people versus bad people, but rather humans with good and bad actions that are capable of dynamic change. Empathy is hope and respect in practice.

## **Alignment of government resources**

Alignment should begin with the City of Birmingham and its 29 departments. But alignment must expand to the resources expended by the county, state, federal government, and philanthropy in and for the residents of Birmingham.

**“Peace is never achieved, but rather is a process that is fostered by a variety of cognitive, affective, behavioral, structural, institutional, spiritual, and cultural components.”**

(Deutsch, M., and P. T. Coleman. Psychological Components of Sustainable Peace. New York: Springer, 2012.)

## **Capital investment of new dollars into prevention and re-entry**

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:21 The Holy Bible, King James Version).

The City of Birmingham and the State of Alabama have long neglected capital investment in social service infrastructure and networks. Stakeholders with the resources to make capital investment coordinate around residents' needs. The city should have sufficient resources to appropriately serve the residents of Birmingham. The bottom line of government is service and the City of Birmingham can deliver better service. The city also needs more resources to provide better service.

Developing policies and programs that support and incorporate local and grassroots entities is critical to providing more place-based services. The city should help articulate the unique value of grassroots organizations in the successful implementation of a community-driven strategy, and advocate for fair allocation of resources across small and large organizations. It is also of significant importance to help build the capacity of grassroots organizations through technical assistance and support.

## **Evaluation of and evolving programming and strategies**

Measured by outcomes and indicators measured by data that informs indicators of quality of life via ShapeBham (<https://www.shapebham.com/>). Efficacy & Evaluation...have the needle moved towards the good? Scaling through the Public Health cycle. Do not make the perfect the enemy of the good, but constantly work to improve.

# NEXT STEPS

Following the above strategy, the City of Birmingham has identified 10 pilot projects to foster positive P.E.A.C.E...in Birmingham:

- 1. Community Policing:** In order to strengthen ties with the community and members of the Birmingham Police Department, community policing will allow both groups to work together to achieve their shared public safety goals. It will facilitate a transparent process to empower both residents and officers.
- 2. Complete Communities Initiative:** Mayor Woodfin’s revitalization pilot program aims to create functional sustainable partnerships between residents and city government; establish a grassroots citizen-directed planning process built around environment, law enforcement and social services; stabilize and secure our 23 communities starting with those plagued by crime and lack of investment; and strengthen interdepartmental collaboration as standard operating procedure at city of Birmingham.
- 3. Office of Re-entry and Restorative Justice:** The Re-entry Task Force’s mission is to assemble a team of stakeholders with firsthand experience with incarceration, pre- and post-relief services, housing and employment services, mental health and family reunification. The task force will determine the scale, nature and key causes of recidivism in Birmingham, establish interventions to reduce recidivism and support families and communities affected by recidivism.
- 4. Civic Literacy Programming and Public Education Series:** This educational effort will help inform citizens about city operations, policies and critical issues facing the city, along with ways for residents to get involved.
- 5. RFP’s for Public Safety and Youth:** Community-based organizations, social service providers and nonprofits will be allowed the opportunity to submit RFPs to access city resources.
- 6. Young Citizen’s Academy:** Curriculum and spaces will be created with the goal of fostering a spirit of civic involvement and activism among Birmingham’s youth.
- 7. Tuska Lusa Institute:** A community-based research and educational facility located at 1200 Tuscaloosa Avenue will serve as a space for local stakeholders and community groups to develop solutions to the most pressing social issues facing their neighborhood, community and city.
- 8. Justice Involved Youth Services Pilot:** An upcoming program will serve as a support group for residents under age 18 who have been justice-involved or have an increased likelihood of justice-involved activities
- 9. “A People’s History of Birmingham”:** This unique narrative project will preserve the histories of Birmingham residents and retell the city’s history through the stories of those who lived them.





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**PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST**