



Legislation Text

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Recommendation to direct City Manager to provide a progress update on the Long Beach violence prevention and intervention strategies, and, further, engage with the County of Los Angeles to explore funding opportunities to accelerate the implementation of the SAFE Long Beach Violence Prevention Plan and intervention strategies through the recently adopted Measure J and other potential funding opportunities.

In July 2020, City Council unanimously approved a Long Beach Violence Interruption Strategy in response to an uptick in the number of reported shootings and instances of violent crime across the city. City Council requested the City Manager explore the creation of this strategy with the following inclusions:

- A full analysis of community based best practice violence interruption strategies nationwide
- Direct outreach to neighborhood leaders in the most impacted communities
- Direct funding for community-based organizations with expertise in violence prevention and community engagement
- Coordination of a violence prevention strategy through existing engagement efforts including COVID-19 contact tracing and Census 2020 outreach
- Coordination and expansion of existing youth engagement strategies in the short, medium, and long-terms
- The Deployment of a Summer Youth Employment Program

In October 2020, the Health and Human Services Department responded to this request and provided Council with a memo outlining their recent acquisition of the California Violence Prevention and Intervention grant. The memo noted that the focus of this funding is to establish a collaboration across departments and community institutions to reduce gun violence in Long Beach. The Department announced its intentions of launching the Long Beach Activating Safe Communities (LBASC) Program to address gun violence through a three-year \$1.1 million Board of State Corrections and Community, California Violence Prevention (CalVIP) grant award. The LBASC Program was set to begin as a pilot effort focused in the Washington Neighborhood due to its identification as having among the highest concentration of firearm assaults. The outlined LBASC goals include:

1. Creating a comprehensive, coordinated, and equitable City of Long Beach Gun Violence Response System (CLB-GVRS)
2. Reducing gun-related violence through an effective street outreach and intervention program as well as activating safe community spaces to provide programs, resources, and services in the Washington Neighborhood

The LBASC projects seek to reduce gun violence by 20 percent in the Washington Neighborhood by June 2023. The LBASC Program is a project of the City's Safe Long Beach violence prevention plan, which leverages existing resources and community relationships to improve the quality of life of Long Beach residents.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has very likely exacerbated gun violence: 2020 showed a significant uptick in shootings compared to years past, according to a Long Beach Post analysis of shooting data. The year ended with 381 total shootings, compared to the 222 reported shootings in 2019. According to the data over the past five years, the number of shootings tend to fluctuate slightly, but 2020 was by far the most violent, with shootings increasing each month toward the end of the year. Earlier this month, City Council approved an item brought forward by Councilmember Mary Zendejas that tasks staff to report back in the next 30 days on efforts and opportunities to address violence in highly-impacted neighborhoods, and a plan to meet the needs for safety in all of our communities.

These crime fluctuations are not unique to Long Beach, and have been reported throughout the country. A report from the National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice, a nonpartisan criminal justice think tank, found that residential burglaries and larcenies fell while vehicle thefts and violent crimes increased. The authors of the report pointed to pandemic measures as a potential hindrance to crime prevention, such as social distancing requirements preventing outreach workers from engaging with those at risk of violent crimes on the streets. In a statement, the LBPD stated that COVID-19 likely played a significant role in the shifts in crime, particularly in late spring when more people were home during lockdowns. The intersection between the pandemic and economic crisis-particularly its disproportionate impact on working class families-coupled with the limitations of crime prevention due to social distancing mandates, created a "perfect storm" leading to an overall rise in crime in Long Beach.

The City has appropriated funding for violence prevention in the FY 21 budget, but additional resources are needed to address the escalation in gun violence in all part of the city. The LBASC Program is, due to a lack of funding, focused on central Long Beach, while gun violence is impacting communities across the City. The City of Long Beach should fully engage with the County of Los Angeles to identify funding opportunities to expand and accelerate violence prevention and intervention efforts to include North and West Long Beach through the recently adopted Measure J or other funding sources.

Due to time constraints no fiscal analysis was conducted.

Approve recommendation.

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