

Date: March 17, 2021

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Robert G. Luna, Chief of Police 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Strategies for Addressing Violent Crime**

At its February 2, 2021 meeting, the City Council requested City Manager to report back to the City Council on violent and quality-of-life crime in Long Beach with an overview of incidents and trends, an outline of current efforts and opportunities to address violence in highly-impacted neighborhoods, and a plan of action to meet the need for safety in all of our communities. This memorandum has been prepared in response to this request.

In 2020, most major cities throughout the country experienced increases in murder and gun violence. In Long Beach, overall citywide violent crime decreased by 1.4 percent compared to 2019. Currently, total citywide violent crime is up 32 percent through January 31, 2021. We believe the possible cause for these crime increases are related to the serious impacts on the criminal justice system and our community resulting from the COVID pandemic. Prisons and jails have released large numbers of inmates to reduce the risk of exposure; more repeat offenders are being released on bail; trials and other court proceedings have experienced significant delays; school closures and lack of programming has negatively impacted youth engagement; and, with a record number of gun sales in 2020, there are more guns on the street. The pandemic has also created an inability for the Police Department (Department) to engage our community in person, which has negatively impacted our community policing efforts.

Focus on Neighborhoods and Partnerships

The Department is working with our community and other City partners to provide a safe city for all and reduce violence in our neighborhoods. Through crime trend analysis, proactive community policing, investigative collaboration between detectives and front-line officers, and community engagement, our City team is committed to preventing violence before it starts.

The Department strives to build positive partnerships within our community. This is embodied in the Department's mission of "Public Safety Through Partnerships." In seeking to address issues of equity alongside our City family, the Department is working with numerous community organizations like the Guidance Center, the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, the Long Beach Interfaith Council, our Police Policy Community Advisory Group, and numerous neighborhood and business groups throughout Long Beach. The Department is modifying management practices while analyzing available data in a manner that helps identify the root causes of crime in our impacted neighborhoods, with a focus on providing fair, just, and equitable public safety in Long Beach.

Data Driven Approach

The Department is committed to reducing violent crime by implementing a data driven plan. The plan provides short-term strategies to address immediate crime concerns as well as long-term strategies to ensure sustainable reductions. The plan focuses on key individuals and neighborhoods that are negatively impacted by criminal activity. To ensure continuous progress, the plan will include key performance metrics and accountability measures to gauge our progress.

As an example, we use Neighborhood Safe Streets Initiative (NSS) funding, to deploy additional personnel and increase visibility in those impacted areas. This is done through a data-driven approach that utilizes crime analysts to identify crime trends, which helps develop strategies to mitigate crime in those identified areas. We continue to utilize NSS funding to initiate Event Action Plans (EAP) to address crime. Year to date, we have implemented seven EAPs.

Coordinated Response Team (CRT)

In response to the recent shootings, the Department has also implemented an additional strategy to be incorporated into our long-term violence prevention efforts. In February 2021, we reassigned employees away from their primary assignments to create a Coordinated Response Team (CRT). This temporary team is comprised of detectives, patrol officers, a divisional crime analyst, a public information officer, and a forensic science specialist. The CRT meets daily to discuss strategies for impacting violent crime with a focus on gun violence, prohibited possessors, "ghost guns," and the identification of drivers that are contributing to the increase in violent crime. The CRT is also responsible for assisting division commanders in conducting community engagement and neighborhood awareness related to our public safety efforts. The team has experienced success in arresting violent offenders prohibited from possessing firearms, and the recovery of weapons found in their possession. This strategy includes working with our federal law enforcement partners including the FBI, the ATF, and the U.S. Marshals. From January 1, 2021 to February 19, 2021, the city had 85 shootings citywide. Since implementing the CRT, we have seen an 81 percent decrease in firearm assaults. The proactive efforts of the CRT team have led to the arrest of 9 prohibited firearm possessors and the recovery of 13 firearms, 2 of which were ghost guns.

In addition to responding to the increase in shootings citywide, we are focusing resources in the Washington Middle School Neighborhood. In response to an increase in shootings in the first month of this year in that area, we implemented a Neighborhood Walks Pilot Program. This program, which is supported through NSS funding, allows officers assigned to specific beats to walk those beats allowing them to interact with people who are living and working in the area while additional officers answer calls for service. Since the program's implementation, there have been no reported shooting incidents in the area.

Office of Constitutional Policing (OCP)

Finally, in July 2020, the Office of Constitutional Policing (OCP) was established to ensure the Department's policies and procedures meet best practices, legal mandates, and community expectations. OCP works closely with the Office of Equity, while assisting with the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the City's Framework for Reconciliation and will continue to do so in 2021. They actively participated in the Strategic Plan for Youth and Emerging Adults, specifically focused on community-centered approaches to youth safety. Also, OCP represents the Department in the City's Violence Prevention Collaborative Steering Committee, a citywide initiative tasked with improving the safety and well-being of all citizens.

The Department is committed to partnering in these efforts to create a safe city for all. We will continue to use a data-driven approach to focus our enforcement efforts, partner with stakeholders, and form strong relationships with our community by being transparent, ethical, and equitable in our policies and actions.

If you have any questions, please contact me or my Chief of Staff Pat O'Dowd at (562) 570-7301.

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