

ONE ATLANTA

STRENGTH IN UNITY



Anti-Violence Advisory Council Recommendations Report

JULY 2021



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Executive Summary



Keisha Lance Bottoms

Mayor of Atlanta

In May 2021, Mayor Bottoms convened an Advisory Council on the topic of violent crime in Atlanta. The Advisory Council, consisting of 14 members of diverse backgrounds and listed in Appendix I, is united by a deep commitment to the city. Given 45 days to deliberate, the Advisory Council was tasked with recommending immediate actions to address violent crime within the city. In particular, the Advisory Council was asked to:

- **Assess existing anti-violence efforts in Atlanta**
- **Recommend additional initiatives to complement existing efforts**

The Advisory Council began by analyzing the current violent crime situation in the city, including data highlighting that homicides and aggravated assaults stemming from gun violence are the primary challenges. In addition, the data highlighted that the violence primarily stems from arguments, often among acquaintances. By their nature these are fundamentally interpersonal conflicts and other random acts that highlight the difficulty faced by law enforcement and other institutions as they attempt to design preventive interventions.

The Advisory Council then reviewed a variety of additional quantitative data and qualitative perspectives to further understand the situation, including working sessions with Atlanta youth and a subject matter expert in evidence-based practices to reduce violent crime.

Informed by this understanding of the situation, the Advisory Council reviewed existing and potential strategies to curb violent crime. **Overall, the Advisory Council believes the City must further focus on imminent violent crime reduction initiatives based on an overarching strategic framework that targets the specific locations and individuals most afflicted by violence.** An example of this framework is in Appendix V. While anti-crime and community related measures must complement anti-violence initiatives, the Advisory Council believes enforcement and non-enforcement anti-violence initiatives in focused locations merit distinct oversight and additional funding by the City.

Recommendations

The Advisory Council evaluated the seven key initiatives led or coordinated by the Mayor's Office and thirty-four actions led or coordinated by the Atlanta Police Department (APD) to reduce crime. Based on this review, the Advisory Council agrees upon the three recommendations listed below:



1

Create a dedicated **Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction** to lead the overall, focused violent crime reduction strategy and support continued coordination and oversight of the violent crime reduction initiatives. This office should support both enforcement and non-enforcement programs.



2

Implement, expand, or continue the following nine critical initiatives with a clear focus on the specific locations and individuals most afflicted by violence:

a. Implement new initiatives on

- 1) **public awareness**
- 2) **community capacity and infrastructure building**

b. Expand and further focus initiatives on

- 3) **violence prevention**
- 4) **local security planning and supplementation**
- 5) **violent repeat offenders**
- 6) **enforcement of nuisance properties**

c. Continue key initiatives on

- 7) **hiring 250 additional police officers in FY22**
- 8) **expanding the Operational Shield camera network by 250 cameras by December 2021**
- 9) **adding 10,000 additional streetlights, prioritizing the areas afflicted by violence**



3

Invest **\$70 million** in the nine critical initiatives identified, with **\$50 million** in public funding and **\$20 million** from philanthropic and private funding.



Additional long-term anti-crime and community support solutions reviewed by the Advisory Council as important complimentary measures are listed in Appendix III. While these initiatives and actions should continue, they will likely not impact violent crime immediately due to the unique nature of homicides and aggravated assaults, which were the focus of this Advisory Council.

Other initiatives proposed or identified by Advisory Council members were considered but have not been recommended by the Advisory Council based upon the current evidence. These ideas warrant further review and have been listed in Appendix IV.

Addressing the many complex factors that lead to violence is very difficult and will require support from governments (local, state, and federal), businesses, and communities. The Advisory Council is encouraged by the Mayor's leadership on violent crime reduction, existing initiatives and actions, and openness to embracing innovative and targeted interventions. The eligibility of violence prevention programs in the American Rescue Plan and Atlanta's selection to participate in the White House's Community Violence Intervention Collaborative are examples of how the Mayor's leadership and advocacy are bringing additional resources to the City. With the additional focus, funding, and oversight specific to violent crime reduction, our communities will be safer.

Introduction

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, cities across the country have experienced an alarming increase in violent crime, especially homicides. Nationally, homicides have risen nearly 60% in large cities from the first quarter of 2019 to the first quarter of 2021. Unfortunately, Atlanta has not escaped this crime wave. Homicides have increased 54% and aggravated assaults have increased 23% YTD as of June 26, 2021 compared to 2019.

In response to these trends, Mayor Bottoms convened an Advisory Council to recommend ideas that could immediately begin to curb violence in the city. The Advisory Council was given the following problem statement:

The increase in violent crime in Atlanta poses a threat to the public safety of its citizens and economic growth and development. In addition to existing public safety initiatives already underway, the City is seeking feedback and additional strategies to reduce violent crime.



Homicides have risen nearly 60% in large cities from the first quarter of 2019 to the first quarter of 2021.



Homicides in Atlanta have increased 54% and aggravated assaults have increased 23% YTD as of June 26, 2021 compared to 2019.



Success was defined as providing actionable recommendations to the Mayor and her staff regarding solutions to violent crime. Specifically, the Advisory Council was asked to:

- **Assess existing anti-violence efforts in Atlanta**
- **Recommend additional initiatives to complement existing efforts**

Non-violent crime, police reforms, and justice reforms were considered out of scope for the Advisory Council's purposes.

The 14 Advisory Council members included representatives from law enforcement, the courts, the business community, community and faith organizations, the Atlanta City Council, and more. Mayor Bottoms kicked off the work, and relevant staff and advisors were attendees but not members of the Advisory Council. Please reference Appendix I for a full list of members.

The Advisory Council held six meetings to inform this report. The first four meetings were scheduled at the start of the process and covered the following topics in this order:

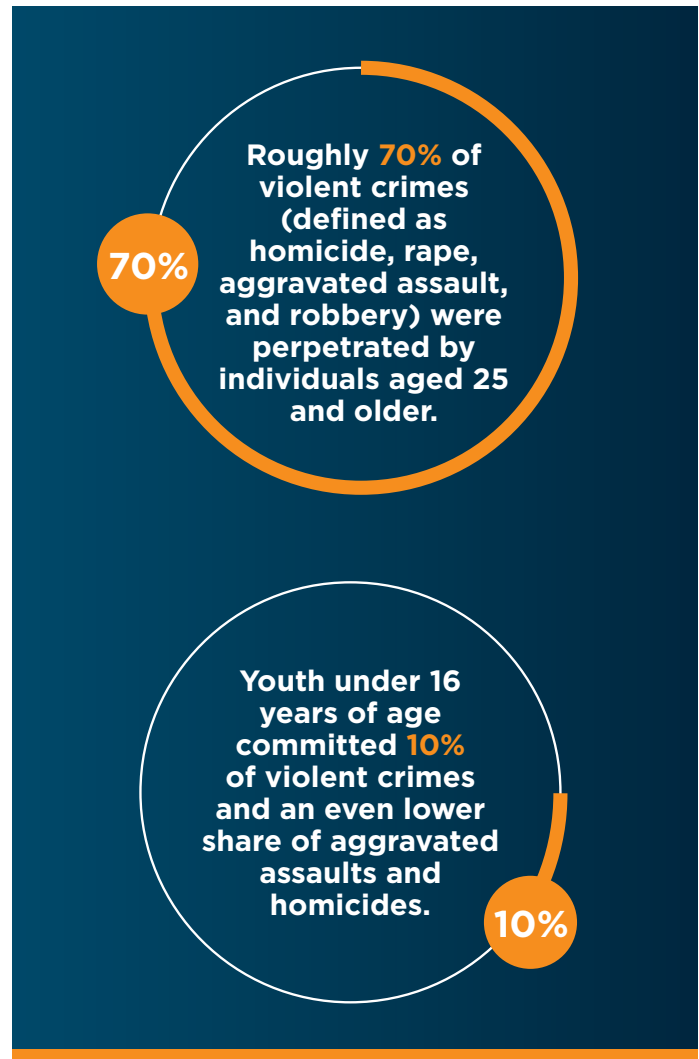
- (1) overview of current crime data and key challenge areas;**
- (2) guns, repeat offenders, and nuisance properties;**
- (3) youth engagement;**
- (4) violence interruption and community policing.**

Meetings five and six were developed in response to Advisory Council member feedback. The fifth meeting was a moderated Q&A session with a panel of Atlanta youth while the sixth meeting was a discussion with an expert on evidence-based violent crime prevention, Thomas Abt of the Council on Criminal Justice.

Understanding Violent Crime in Atlanta

While not all violent crime is spiking in Atlanta, homicides and aggravated assaults have risen disturbingly when compared to 2019. Before developing solutions, the Advisory Council sought to understand the key trends for violent crime and reviewed Command Operating Briefing to Revitalize Atlanta (COBRA) data and other information from the Atlanta Police Department (APD).

Several data points stood out to the Advisory Council. Roughly 70% of violent crimes (defined as homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery) were perpetrated by individuals aged 25 and older; youth under 16 years of age committed 10% of violent crimes and an even lower share of aggravated assaults and homicides. Victims were similarly concentrated, with the plurality aged 20 to 29. The Advisory Council believes youth interventions have merit for long-term violence prevention, although data presented to the Advisory Council does not suggest a broad youth focus will yield immediate reductions in violent crime.





Violent crime was not distributed evenly across the City, but all zones experienced high rates of at least one form of violent crime; APD Zones 2 and 5 experienced significantly fewer homicides than Zones 1, 3, 4, and 6. Zones 3, 4, and 5 were particularly susceptible to aggravated assault by gun. COBRA data can identify particular neighborhoods and city blocks with the highest rates of violent crime which can be used to focus anti-violence initiatives and actions (please reference Appendix II for a map of APD Zones).

Motives for homicides and aggravated assaults were typically related to disputes. Consistent with these motives, the perpetrator knew the victim in 70% of homicides where the victim-perpetrator relationship could be determined (46% of total homicides had determined relationships). This data suggests limited dispute resolution mechanisms among members of the community may be contributing to violent crime.





90% of homicides were caused by gunshots.

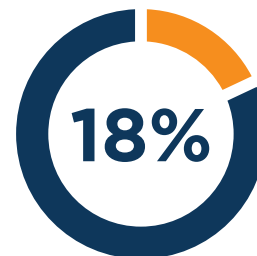
APD has worked to address guns, seizing 939 weapons to date and devoting specific resources to gun crimes. The City should seek to understand the effectiveness of gun-related initiatives.

More than 100 aggravated assaults and 9 homicides in 2021 were committed at alcohol licensed establishments, continuing a concerning trend of violence in bars and nightclubs.

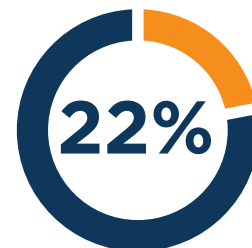


The City has increased restrictions on “nuisance properties**”, but concerns by Advisory Council members remain for their role in violent crime.**

Repeat violent offenders, persons with three or more prior felony convictions, are particularly likely to commit additional violent crimes.



In 2017 and 2018, repeat offenders committed 18% of all felony cases adjudicated in Fulton County Superior Court.



22% of repeat offenders were carrying firearms in their most recent convicted crime.

Evidence-Based Recommendations for Violent Crime Reduction

The Advisory Council complemented its analysis of crime data with perspectives from Advisory Council members, a youth panel, and a subject matter expert in evidence-based anti-violent crime. This well-rounded understanding allowed the Advisory Council to pursue an evidence-based review of current and potential approaches to violent crime reduction without losing sight of the complexities and nuances of Atlanta.

The Advisory Council would like to highlight the Youth Panel in particular. The Council greatly appreciated the time and engagement from youth within the city to offer their perspectives on how and why violent crime is afflicting their communities and peers. The Department of Parks and Recreation and the Police Athletic League identified a cross section of youth from various communities experiencing violent crime to participate on the panel.



The youth expressed the need for various programs and opportunities to help heal relationships between communities, youth, and police officers. The panel was facilitated by Poet Laureate Hank Stewart of the Stewart Foundation.





Informed by this well-rounded understanding, the Advisory Council found that the City has already begun implementing many valuable anti-violence programs. However, overall, the Advisory Council believes the City must further focus on imminent violent crime reduction initiatives. These initiatives should align with an overarching strategic framework that focuses on the specific locations and individuals most afflicted by violence; an example of this framework is in Appendix V. Initiatives should balance enforcement and non-enforcement approaches and be continually monitored for effectiveness by publishing specific goals and metrics, including community surveys.

This focus on imminent violent crime should not detract from broader anti-crime, community development, youth engagement, and other initiatives as they are laudable on their own merits and may reduce violence in the long term. Rather, the Advisory Council believes such a deliberate, targeted approach to violent crime reduction would ensure it receives the attention and resources it deserves. A list of longer-term preventative initiatives broadly supported by the Advisory Council can be found in Appendix III.

To identify and continuously review the specific locations and individuals most afflicted by violence, the City should coordinate a full review of violent crime data supplemented by audits of case files and hospital data. For example, Grady Memorial Hospital has piloted use of the Cardiff Model for Violence Prevention to improve reporting of data by trauma centers. This model can be utilized while ensuring the proper protections are in place to protect patients and prevent use for enforcement activities by leveraging existing MOUs with public health entities. In addition, APD should maintain their recently refreshed weekly Command Operating Briefing to Revitalize Atlanta (COBRA) meetings. The refresh was informed by best practices identified by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). These meetings review crime mapping data and share intelligence so anti-violent crime strategies can target the right areas.

Recommendation #1

Create the Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction



To ensure clear oversight and accountability, the City should establish a new office devoted to violent crime reduction. The office would oversee the City's anti-violence initiatives and convene law enforcement, community organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to improve coordination. The office would also serve as a central body to gather and analyze violent crime data. The office should be a small but highly skilled team within the Mayor's Office, ensure a clear balance of enforcement and non-enforcement initiatives, and include citizen engagement, oversight, and input to support execution, accountability, and performance.



It is important that the office focus exclusively on **violent crime reduction. The office should be authorized via the city code and receive an allocation of general funds for staffing and programs to ensure the office is institutionalized and able to move forward swiftly on important initiatives.**

Recommendation #2

Continue, Expand, or Begin Nine Critical Initiatives Focused on Locations Afflicted by Violence



In addition to the assessment of the City's overall strategic focus, the Advisory Council evaluated existing initiatives and actions underway to reduce crime. These included the seven key initiatives led or coordinated by the Mayor's Office and thirty-four actions led or coordinated by APD. Please note that these initiatives and actions were not all intended to address violent crime, so many are not listed in this report. Based on this review, the Advisory Council recommends continuing, expanding, or beginning the following nine critical initiatives and ensuring a clear focus on the specific locations and individuals most afflicted by violence:



New Initiatives to Implement

1) Public Awareness Campaign: Conduct targeted campaigns on social media, traditional media, town halls, and other channels related to behaviors likely to result in violence (e.g., drug dealing, gun carrying, gang affiliation). Campaigns should educate on relevant ongoing initiatives, warn individuals of the dangers of violent behaviors, inform them of strategies to combat these behaviors, and direct them to enforcement and non-enforcement resources if they notice these behaviors. For example, the City could launch a campaign encouraging individuals to proactively call 911 if they witness situations that could escalate into violence.

2) Community Capacity and Infrastructure Building: Work with community stakeholders in locations and neighborhoods experiencing violence by investing in programs, infrastructure, and civic institutions to support violent crime reduction efforts. Provide channels to divert known high-risk actors from committing violent crimes. Stakeholders should include youth, business owners, parents, faith leaders, and non-profit organizations. Specific actions in these communities include:

- **Establish Youth Councils** and **convene other youth stakeholders**, such as teachers, principals, and parents
- **Convene faith leaders** to seek their support in providing services and connecting with parishioners
- **Invest in cognitive behavioral therapy** and **other mental health services** to address the trauma of violence on individuals and communities
- **Coordinate with and expand upon reentry services** for those rejoining their communities and victim services for those impacted by violence
- **Invest in blight remediation** and **property development**.



Existing Initiatives and Actions to Expand

3) Violence Prevention Program: Expand community violence intervention programs within the locations most afflicted by violence in partnership with key institutions such as Grady Memorial Hospital. These programs aim to teach conflict mediation and resolution techniques and change violent social norms to reduce retaliatory violence. The program is primarily carried out by a community-based “credible messenger” who has reformed from a violent past. Messengers intervene to aid high-risk individuals and help the community develop the skills and norms for sustainable change. Similar programs have been successfully implemented in other cities with up to 75% reduction in gun violence.

4) Security Planning and Supplementation: APD should continue working with communities to conduct security assessments and develop plans with a focus on locations most afflicted by violence. Security measures identified and embraced by local residents, including local security officers, should be funded through public and private funds with coordination and oversight from the new Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction.

5) Violent Repeat Offender Coordination: Expand APD's Repeat Offender Unit to include and coordinate with assigned members from the County District Attorney Offices, County Sheriff's Offices, and Georgia Department of Community Supervision. This Unit should be tasked with tracking violent repeat offenders to ensure cases are properly adjudicated. The Unit should also assist the Repeat Offender Commission in advocating for additional parole officers, coordinating between parole departments, and reporting on sentencing and other data to support accountability and policy recommendations. Data and resources, such as the Fulton County Justice Dashboard, provide a helpful reference and tool that can be expanded upon.

6) Nuisance Property Enforcement: Continue increasing the resources of the APD Licenses and Permits team while coordinating cross-departmental enforcement with additional support and oversight from the new Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction. Continue pursuing audits of restaurants and support legislation to strengthen enforcement options within the city code. Commit to continue addressing all the License and Permit audit findings to ensure the necessary staffing and procedures for effective APD enforcement. Implement additional functionality in the licensing software platform to improve cross-departmental access and reporting. Pursue additional restrictions, in coordination with the City of Atlanta Technical Advisory Group III, such as consent agreements, changes to last call hours, elimination of loopholes related to temporary license extensions, and expansion of the percentage of restaurant financial audits associated with liquor license renewal from 1% to 5% annually.





Existing Initiatives and Actions to Continue

7) Hiring Police Officers: Continue the focus on hiring 250 additional police officers in FY22. The FY22 budget, adopted on June 7th, 2021, includes funding for this initiative. Changes to staffing, processes, and systems have been implemented or are underway to meet this target. Officers should support focused enforcement and non-enforcement initiatives in locations most afflicted by violence.

8) Operation Shield: Expand the Operation Shield camera network by 250 cameras and increase the use of license plate reader technology. This initiative is on track for completion by December 2021, with 278 additional cameras and license plate readers funded and 170 already installed or scheduled for installation. Cameras should be prioritized for the identified locations most afflicted by violence.

9) Light up the Night: Continue implementing the initiative to add 10,000 new streetlights by December 31, 2022 with emphasis on the targeted locations. An assessment by the Atlanta Department of Transportation and Georgia Tech has been completed, funding has been identified to begin implementation, and installation of streetlights has begun.

Advisory Council members also discussed ideas not included in this list of recommendations based on the current evidence presented to the Council. These ideas warrant further review and have been listed in Appendix IV.



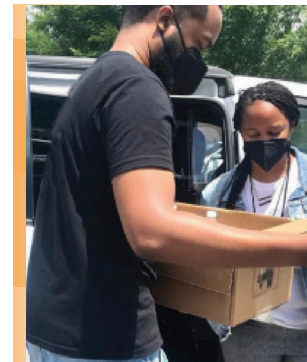
Expand the Operation Shield camera network by 250 cameras and increase the use of license plate reader technology.

Recommendation #3

Invest \$70 Million in the Nine Critical Initiatives Identified

The Advisory Council understands that the City's resources are limited but is encouraged by the Mayor's efforts to gain federal support for community violence intervention, receive resources from the American Rescue Plan, and establish public-private partnerships.

The Advisory Council believes the City has the capabilities to secure funds from a variety of sources. The City should continue to work with the federal government and increase cooperation with state and local governments. In addition, the City should expand outreach to the business community for partnership opportunities.



The Advisory Council recommends investing **\$70 million** in the nine critical initiatives identified. This funding amount, which is approximately 10% of the annual general fund for the City, provides a significant and feasible near-term investment to launch, expand, and continue critical initiatives. The public sector should invest **\$50 million** and seek **\$20 million** in additional philanthropic and private funding. Public sector funding, including budgeted FY22 general funds, state and federal grants, and American Rescue Plan funds, should be prioritized for these initiatives. At least 50% of the combined public, philanthropic, and private funding should be focused on the violence prevention and community capacity and infrastructure building initiatives (initiatives 2 and 3).

Conclusion

With the concerning spike in homicides and aggravated assaults in the city, predominately in specific areas, targeted initiatives and investments are the most meaningful and urgent way to address the immediate challenge our city faces. Fortunately, the City has already quickly launched initiatives and actions supported by evidence to target violent crime. A stronger strategic focus on violent crime reduction backed by additional resources and improved coordination would contribute to the success of these programs and create capacity for new initiatives. The Advisory Council believes a new office focused solely on imminent violent crime in locations most afflicted by violence would be an impactful step toward this goal.

The City should lead the way, but it cannot solve violent crime alone. The Advisory Council calls on governmental organizations, community groups, faith leaders, businesses, universities, hospitals, neighborhoods, and other organizations to do their part to support the City.

The Advisory Council believes that with focus and collaboration, Atlanta can become a national leader in violent crime reduction. The Mayor is already setting an example through her work to secure funding for violence prevention programs in the American Rescue Plan. Atlanta has been recognized nationally for this work through its selection as one of fifteen jurisdictions to join the White House's Community Violence Intervention Collaborative. The Advisory Council looks forward to the Mayor's continued leadership on this topic and hopes future administrations continue to give violent crime reduction, through enforcement and non-enforcement initiatives, the attention it deserves.



Appendix I:

Advisory Council Members

Andrea Boone: Atlanta City Councilmember, District 10

Dorthey Hurst: Atlanta Citizen Review Board (ACRB); representing NPUs M-R.

Michael Langford: Regional Vice President, Atlanta Community Involvement Center, WestCare Foundation

JP Matzigkeit: Atlanta City Councilmember, District 8

Brenda Muhammad: Executive Director, Atlanta Victim Assistance, Inc.

Deborah Scott: CEO, Georgia Stand Up

Randall Slaughter: (Retired) Fire Chief, Atlanta Fire Rescue Department

Courtney Smith: President & LPC, Midtown Neighbors Association

Carol Tomé: Chief Executive Officer, UPS

George Turner: Atlanta Hawks, (Retired) Police Chief, Atlanta Police Department

Renata Turner: Presiding Judge, Fulton County Juvenile Court

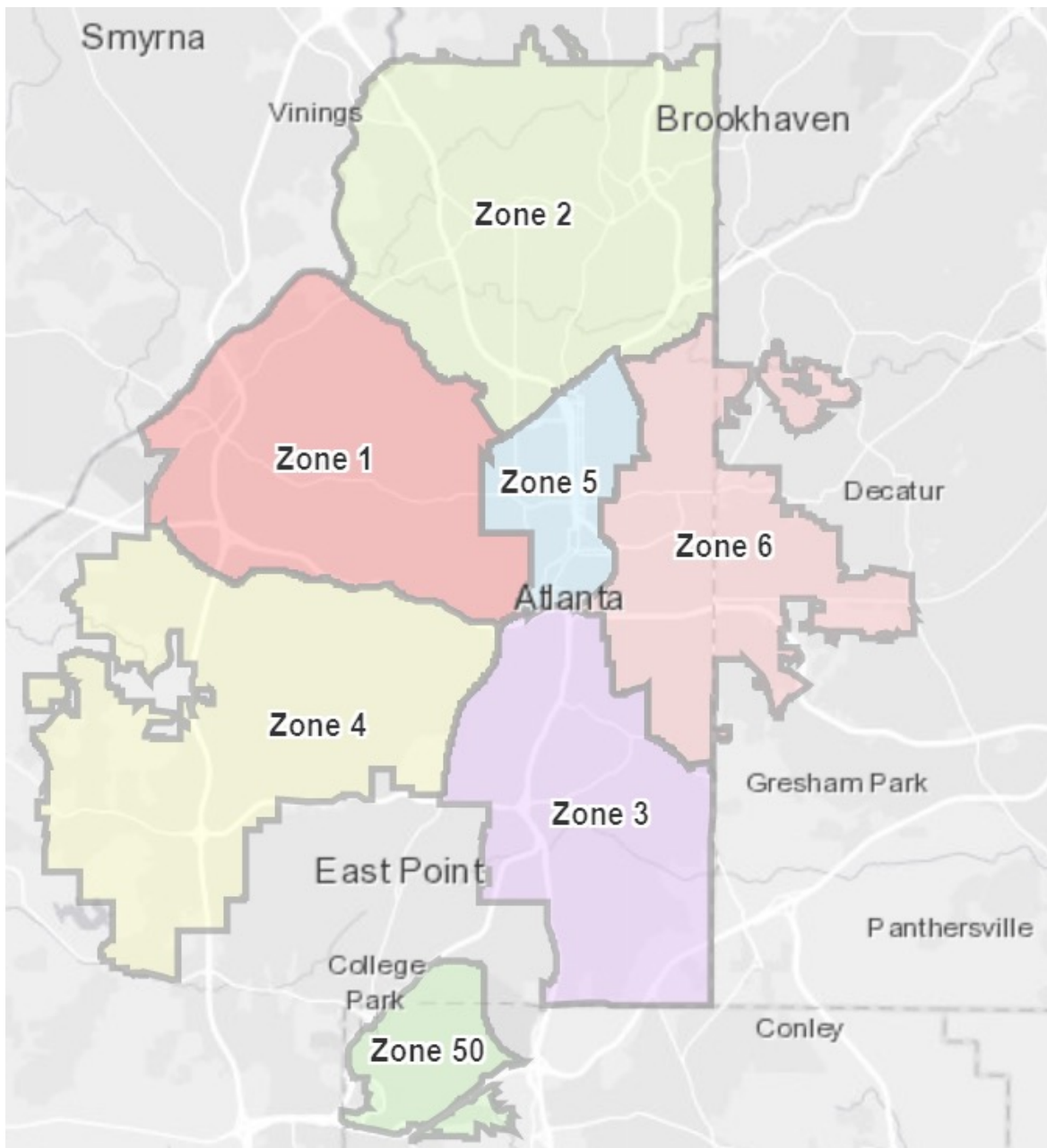
Dave Wilkinson: President & CEO, Atlanta Police Foundation

Matthew Wesley Williams: President, The Interdenominational Theological Center

Sally Yates: Partner, King & Spalding Law Firm; Special Matters & Government Investigations

Appendix II:

Map of Atlanta Police Department Zones



Appendix III:

Long-Term Preventative Solutions to Violent Crime

- **At-Promise Centers:** Continue supporting the At-Promise Centers, which are facilities that provide programming and services primarily focused on engagement with at-risk youth. Services include education, recreation, social support, therapy and counseling, and workforce development. The centers are already showing promise; the Westside At-Promise Center has a recidivism rate below 5%. Seek to further build the connection between the Centers and the court system, facilitating probation requirements linked to engagement in the Centers.
- **Youth Programs:** Expand youth programs such as the Police Athletic League youth summer camps and after school programs to keep youth off the street and help them develop healthy social bonds.
- **Wraparound Services & Job Training:** Provide more public services support and workforce development programs for low-income residents to ensure lack of access to housing, food, transportation, etc. do not trap neighborhoods in cycles of poverty. The new Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative, a program that works to connect residents to support services instead of arresting them, is a strong step in the right direction.
- **Public Safety Training Center:** Build a new integrated public safety training center that facilitates improved recruiting and morale for police officers and other key public safety personnel. In addition, the Center should support realistic training opportunities to improve responses to violence, including de-escalation and use of force, and to facilitate community-oriented policing.

Appendix IV:

Additional Ideas for Further Analysis

- **Creating a 24/7 Special Enforcement Unit** focused on gangs, illegal drugs and targets violent crime hot spots
- **Standing up a mental health street team** to support officers responding to individuals with mental health issues
- **Restoring the Atlanta Youth Commission** and improving communication with youth groups
- **Growing youth entrepreneurship programs**, including for water entrepreneurs and youth conducting illegal activities with scooters
- **Sponsoring non-violent teach-ins from inspirational figures** at schools and community centers
- **Offering subsidy-based employment opportunities** for individuals with a high risk of violent activities
- **Providing paid mentorship opportunities** for community engagement in hotspots for violent crime
- **Conducting a gun buy-back program** and targeting buybacks at parents with at-risk youth
- **Expanding the use of gunshot detection technology** and **the associated response model**
- **Scaling up APD's drone program** with Georgia Tech
- **Developing a tip hotline/email address for the public** to provide APD with additional intelligence about neighborhood crime and information about non permitted large gatherings.

Appendix V:

Example Strategic Framework for Violence Reduction

Focus violent crime reduction initiatives on the specific locations and individuals most afflicted by violence.

	Non-Enforcement	Enforcement
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Awareness Campaign• Community Capacity Building• Violence Prevention Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional Officers for Presence and Investigations• Violent Repeat Offender Coordination
Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Infrastructure Building• Light Up the Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional Officers in Targeted Locations• Security Planning and Supplementation• Nuisance Property Enforcement• Operation Shield Expansion