LISTENING SESSION
EVALUATION REPORT

EMPOWER INITIATIVE

CITY OF *Salem* AT YOUR SERVICE

SALEM POLICE

fosteringbelonging.org

> **Be it til you see it.
> Action brings clarity.
> Correct and continue.**

Lesley Logan

"

The wrong first question is 'What do we need to do?' The right first question is 'Who do we need to become?

Ben McBride
Founder, Empower Initiative

WELCOME

Dear Salem Residents and Leaders,

It is with great enthusiasm that I invite you to explore the *CVRI Listening Campaign and Evaluation Report*. This report is not just a document—it is a gateway to understanding the science of community violence intervention (CVI) and a roadmap for creating a safer, more united Salem.

Community violence intervention is a powerful approach grounded in evidence-based practices, and this report highlights the promising opportunities for Salem to significantly reduce violence. By deeply listening to the community and leveraging the insights from local voices, the report captures what is truly possible when we commit to safety and belonging for all residents.

The findings emphasize that the key to sustainable violence reduction lies in a collaborative commitment. We must prioritize comprehensive strategies that address root causes, empower community leaders, and offer alternatives to violence. It is crucial that the City of Salem dedicates the necessary resources to fully support these interventions. This is not just an investment in reducing violence, but in strengthening the fabric of our entire community.

I encourage you to read this report, reflect on its recommendations, and consider how, together, we can co-create a future where every person feels secure and valued. The time for action is now—let's ensure that Salem continues to thrive as a place of peace, prosperity, and belonging.

In solidarity,

Ben McBride
CEO, Empower Initiative

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When you bridge you can create fertile ground to begin addressing the problems you want to solve.

Dr. john a. powell
Author of *The Power of Bridging*, Professor of Law, African American Studies and Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley, Director of the Othering and Belonging Institute

ABOUT EMPOWER INITIATIVE

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COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION EXPLAINED

Defining Community Violence

Community violence happens between unrelated individuals, who may or may not know each other, generally outside the home. Examples include assaults or fights among groups and shootings in public places, such as schools and on the streets. Research indicates that youth and young adults (ages 10-34), particularly those in Black and Latino communities, are disproportionately impacted.

Community violence affects millions of people and their families, schools, and communities every year.[1]

1. Center for Disease Control (2024, May 16). *About Community Violence*. Link.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION EXPLAINED

Three Goals of a CVI/GVI (Gun Violence Intervention) Strategy

1 **Reducing gun-related homicides and shootings**

Use gun-related shootings and homicides as the metric to determine the progress of a CVI strategy. While community violence is not limited to gun-related shootings and homicides, it has become the determining factor for measuring success across the country due to the higher risk of fatalities involved with gun violence within community violence.

2 **Reduce recidivism**

Defined: Recidivism is one of the most fundamental concepts in criminal justice. It refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime. Move from Incapacitation to specific deterrence to rehabilitation to desistance.[2]

3 **Build trust between the community and police**

Trust and Legitimacy: Building trust and nurturing legitimacy on both sides of the police/citizen divide is the foundational principle underlying the nature of relations between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Decades of research and practice support the premise that people are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have authority that is perceived as legitimate by those subject to the authority. The public confers legitimacy only on those whom they believe are acting in procedurally just ways. In addition, law enforcement cannot build community trust if it is seen as an occupying force coming in from outside to impose control on the community.[3]

2. National Institute of Justice (2024, October 10). *Recidivism*. Link.
3. United States Department of Justice (2015, May). *21st Century Policing*. Link.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION EXPLAINED

History of Community Violence Intervention Strategy

The Boston Ceasefire strategy was initiated in 1**996 by the Boston Gun Project**, a collaboration between the Boston Police Department, Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and community groups. The strategy's most notable success occurred during the period known as the **"Boston Miracle" from 1996 to 2000**, where youth homicides dropped by over 60%. This dramatic reduction in violence was attributed to the effectiveness of the focused deterrence model, coupled with strong community-police partnerships.

Results and legacy:

The Boston Ceasefire strategy became a model for similar programs across the United States, influencing cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, and Oakland. While Boston saw increased violence after 2000 due to shifting social dynamics and reduced funding, the core principles of focused deterrence and community engagement remain widely recognized as effective tools in reducing urban gun violence.

In summary, the Boston Ceasefire strategy stands as a landmark example of how combining focused law enforcement with community support and intervention can lead to significant reductions in violence.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION (CVI) STRATEGY: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Community Violence Intervention (CVI) strategies represent a holistic and proactive approach to reducing violence in neighborhoods by addressing the root causes of violence and engaging at-risk individuals before they commit or fall victim to violent acts. Unlike traditional approaches focused primarily on law enforcement, CVI strategies prioritize community-based solutions, direct engagement with those most at risk, and a blend of preventative, supportive, and enforcement-based tactics. Below is a breakdown of five key components of an effective CVI strategy, each of which plays a vital role in creating safer communities by fostering trust, engagement, and change.

CVI TACTIC #1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES: NIGHT WALKS, ARTS, AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Communication

Enforcement Operations

Groups at High Risk of Violence

Formal Services

Nightwalks & Community Activities

Street Outreach & Violence Interruption

CVI TACTIC #1

Community Engagement Activities:
Nightwalks, Arts, and Support for Families

A cornerstone of the CVI strategy is the deep involvement of community members, particularly through activities that foster a sense of belonging and peace within neighborhoods. These initiatives include **nightwalks led by clergy and faith leaders**, community art projects, summer picnics, fiestas, and holiday giveaways. Such activities serve multiple purposes: reducing stress within families, fostering connections among community members, and providing positive outlets that can deter individuals, particularly youth, from engaging in violence.

Nightwalks Led by Clergy and Faith Leaders

Nightwalks are regular, visible demonstrations of the community's commitment to non-violence, often led by clergy and faith leaders. These walks take place in neighborhoods most affected by violence, signaling that the community is watching and that it cares deeply about the safety and well-being of its residents. These actions send a message of peace and solidarity, often dissuading violent acts simply by their presence.

CVI TACTIC #1

Community Engagement Activities:
Night walks, Arts, and Support for Families

Community Art Projects and Gatherings

Community art projects, picnics, and fiestas are inclusive events that offer residents an opportunity to connect in positive ways. These projects build neighborhood pride and provide youth and families with alternatives to idleness or negative influences. Events like holiday giveaways help reduce financial pressures on families, which can contribute to stress and the likelihood of crimes like robberies. When communities provide spaces for families to come together, it reduces the likelihood that high-risk individuals will spend time outside in volatile situations.

CVI TACTIC #2: STREET OUTREACH AND VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION: PROXIMATE CREDIBLE MESSENGERS

Custom Notifications

In-Custody Conversations

Groups at High Risk of Violence

Street Outreach

Call-Ins

Court System

CVI TACTIC #2

Street Outreach and Violence Interruption:
Proximate Credible Messengers

At the heart of many CVI strategies is the role of **credible messengers**—individuals who are personally familiar with the conditions of those at high risk for violence. Credible messengers are often former gang members or people with lived experience who have "walked the walk" and can relate to those currently involved in or near the cycle of violence. These outreach workers engage directly with at-risk individuals, both to prevent violence and to mediate conflicts before they escalate.

Violence Interruption

Credible messengers use **violence interruption** techniques to defuse situations that could lead to shootings or other violent acts. These individuals leverage their relationships with community members to intervene in real-time conflicts, offering alternatives to retaliatory violence. Because of their proximity to high-risk individuals and their firsthand knowledge of the streets, they are trusted figures in the community and can often succeed in mediating situations where police or other authorities may not be effective.

Incentivized Engagement

To encourage positive behavior, credible messengers often work with community organizations to provide incentives for high-risk individuals. **Incentivized engagement** could involve offering financial rewards, job opportunities, or access to services in exchange for conflict resolution or participation in non-violent alternatives. For instance, a person might receive a reward for informing a mediator about a rising conflict rather than seeking vigilante justice. By rewarding good decision-making, the community creates a culture that reinforces positive behavior.

CVI TACTIC #3

Continuous Communication and Community Support

A core tenet of CVI is **consistent communication** with high-risk individuals, rooted not in punishment but in love and concern. Communities make it clear that they want these individuals to thrive and stay safe, not just to avoid violence. This messaging is delivered through frequent community engagement, often referred to as "multiple touches," in both group settings and one-on-one conversations.

Gatherings and Personal Engagement

Through community gatherings, credible messengers and other leaders consistently engage with those at risk. However, beyond these group settings, it is equally important to engage these individuals **in-custody** before they are released, and once they are out, to ensure a continuum of care and attention. These conversations allow high-risk individuals to see that their community's concern for them is genuine and extends beyond their role in stopping violence.

In-Custody and Post-Release Support

Engagement does not stop when an individual is incarcerated. **Pre-release conversations** focus on reintegration plans and ensuring that the individual feels supported as they prepare to return to their community. Post-release, credible messengers maintain contact, helping these individuals stay on a positive path by connecting them with services or simply checking in to offer moral support. This creates a sense of belonging and accountability, which reduces the chances of recidivism.

CVI TACTIC #4:
FORMAL SERVICES: JOBS, EDUCATION, AND CASE MANAGEMENT

Job Training / Placement Programs

Relocation

Mentoring / Life Coaching (Incentivized)

Groups at High Risk of Violence

Case Management (Incentivized)

Probation / Parole Services & Supervision

CVI TACTIC #4

Formal Services:
Jobs, Education, and Case Management

A successful CVI strategy offers not just moral and emotional support but also tangible resources and opportunities that can help individuals escape the cycle of violence. **Second-chance job placements**, incentivized after-school programs, and comprehensive case management are critical components that give high-risk individuals real alternatives to crime.

Second-Chance Job Placement and Incentivized Programs

Many high-risk individuals turn to the underground economy because they see no other options for making a living. Providing **second-chance job placement** programs allows individuals with criminal records to find stable, legal employment. In addition, incentivized after-school programs can provide young people with stipends or financial support in exchange for participation in positive activities, helping deter them from illegal activities.

Comprehensive Case Management

A vital part of this component is the provision of **comprehensive case management**. Rather than offering piecemeal services, case managers help high-risk individuals navigate the complex network of housing, employment, education, and healthcare services, ensuring that they receive coordinated support. This holistic approach ensures that participants receive all the help they need to stabilize their lives and reduces the risk of them falling back into old patterns.

CVI TACTIC #5

Enforcement Operations:
Targeted and Strategic Law Enforcement

While the primary goal of CVI strategies is to prevent violence through community engagement and services, there are instances where **enforcement operations** become necessary. These operations focus on individuals who have re-engaged in violence or those actively involved in violent activities. Enforcement is not the first option but a **last resort** after other interventions have been tried.

Focused Deterrence and Firearm-Related Crimes

When enforcement is needed, law enforcement works in alignment with the CVI strategy by focusing on **firearm-related offenses**, as the use of illegal firearms is a key driver of fatalities in violent communities. These **targeted enforcement operations** aim to remove the most dangerous weapons and individuals from the streets, minimizing the risk to the broader community while preventing the proliferation of firearms.

Balancing Enforcement with Community Trust

Even in the case of enforcement, the objective remains to **balance law enforcement with community trust**. Law enforcement partners should collaborate with community organizations to ensure that actions are perceived as fair and just, and that the overall goal is still to reduce violence while offering individuals a path to a better future. Arrests and other punitive measures should be carefully considered and should align with the overarching goal of keeping the community safe, not perpetuating cycles of incarceration.

# UNDERSTANDING THE TRENDS: NATIONALLY, REGIONALLY, AND LOCALLY

From 2014 to 2024, gun-related homicides in the United States have exhibited a fluctuating pattern, influenced by socio-political factors, economic changes, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, from 2014 to 2019, the national rate of gun-related homicides showed a slight increase, driven by factors like urban violence and social inequality in certain regions. However, the overall trend during this period remained relatively stable, with local law enforcement strategies, such as focused deterrence, playing a role in mitigating more significant spikes.

UNDERSTANDING TRENDS

In 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with social unrest following high-profile incidents like the death of George Floyd, triggered a sharp rise in gun-related homicides. Between 2020 and 2021, the U.S. saw an unprecedented surge in violence, with major cities reporting record homicide rates. This increase was attributed to several factors: economic hardship, disruption in law enforcement operations, and reduced community programs. By 2022, as the country gradually emerged from the pandemic, gun-related homicides began to stabilize but remained elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels.

From 2022 to 2024, although there was a modest decline in gun-related homicides, the numbers stayed higher than in the mid-2010s. The persistence of high gun violence rates underscores the challenges law enforcement faces in addressing systemic issues, such as gang violence, poverty, and the proliferation of firearms. Effective violence prevention strategies, such as focused deterrence and community-based interventions, are crucial to achieving sustainable reductions in gun violence moving forward.

Here is the chart showing the national trend of gun-related homicides in the U.S. from 2014 to 2024. As observed, there was a notable increase in homicides starting in 2020, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest, followed by a stabilization in the subsequent years, though still elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels.

National Trend of Gun-Related Homicides in the U.S. (2014-2024)
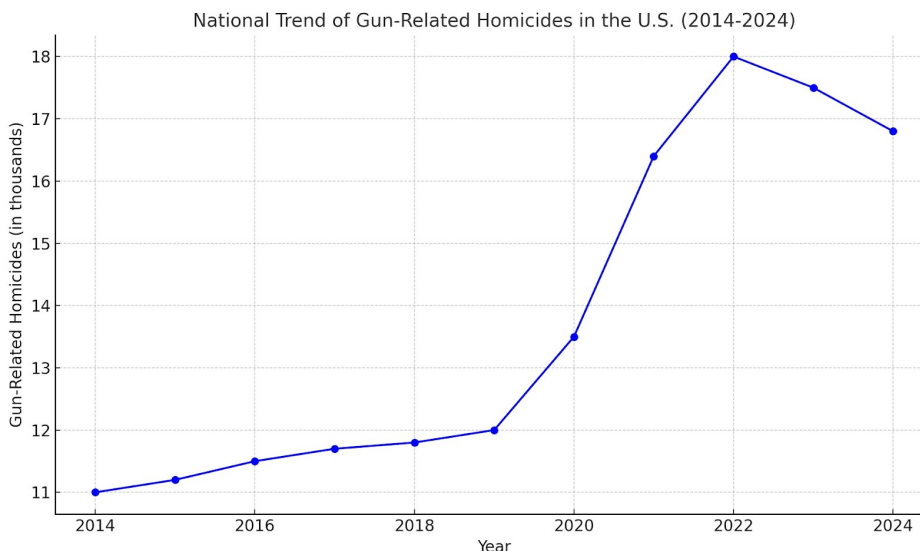
KEY COMPONENTS OF A WEST COAST CEASEFIRE STRATEGY: STOCKTON, CA

1 **Focused Deterrence:** Law enforcement targeted small groups of individuals identified as the most likely to engage in gun violence. The individuals were directly engaged through "call-ins," where they were presented with a clear message: stop the violence, or face severe consequences from law enforcement. This was balanced with an offer of support, including access to resources like job training, education, and rehabilitation services.

2 **Community-Led Engagement:** In parallel to law enforcement, Stockton's Ceasefire strategy prioritized community involvement. Faith leaders, credible messengers, and social service providers played a significant role in reaching out to individuals with a history of violence, offering mentorship, counseling, and pathways out of gangs and criminal activity.

3 **Partnerships:** The key to Stockton Ceasefire's success was the collaboration between police, community organizations, faith leaders, and service providers. This partnership fostered trust, making it possible for high-risk individuals to feel supported rather than solely targeted by law enforcement.

4 **Regular Communication:** High-risk individuals were repeatedly engaged through both community outreach and law enforcement, reinforcing the message that the community valued their lives and wanted them to succeed.

SUCCESSES: 2014 - 2019

1 **Gun Homicide Reduction:** Stockton saw a **40% reduction in gun homicides** from 2015 to 2017, one of the clearest signs of the program's effectiveness.

2 **Non-Fatal Shootings Decline:** Non-fatal shootings also decreased by **50%**, demonstrating that the program was not only preventing fatal violence but reducing overall gun violence.

3 **Community Trust:** By partnering with faith leaders and credible messengers, the police were able to build stronger relationships with the community. This trust allowed individuals to feel safer in seeking help and engaging with law enforcement in positive ways.

4 **Sustainable Change:** The initiative helped shift the narrative around violence in Stockton, showing that collaboration between police and the community could lead to meaningful, sustained reductions in violence.

Stockton Ceasefire is widely regarded as a **success story of community-police collaboration**, highlighting the importance of focusing on the most at-risk individuals, providing support, and fostering strong community ties.

STORY OF SALEM

Community violence, particularly shootings and gun-related homicides, has had a significant impact on Salem, Oregon. The city's crime statistics over the past 15 years indicate an upward trend in violent crimes, including gun-related homicides. While the overall number of homicides in Salem fluctuates, gun violence remains a primary concern for both law enforcement and the community. In 2021, there was a significant increase in homicides, with nine reported, the highest in the 15-year review period, showing a 200% increase from the previous year.

The victims of gun-related homicides in Salem are typically young adults and teenagers, often individuals from marginalized or at-risk communities. These individuals may be involved in or affected by gang activity, drugs, or disputes that escalate to violence. However, innocent bystanders are also victims in many cases, making community safety a critical issue. The rise in violent crimes, particularly aggravated assaults and homicides, can largely be attributed to gun-related incidents.

Perpetrators of gun violence in Salem are often linked to gang activity or criminal enterprises, though not exclusively. Some are individuals involved in domestic disputes or personal conflicts that spiral out of control. The perpetrators, like the victims, are predominantly young males from underprivileged backgrounds, often reflecting broader social issues such as economic hardship, lack of access to education, and systemic inequality.

STORY OF SALEM

The community impact of gun violence in Salem is far-reaching. Besides the direct loss of life and trauma experienced by victims' families, there is a pervasive sense of insecurity in neighborhoods affected by gun violence. This insecurity often leads to decreased community engagement, a reluctance to report crimes, and overall diminished trust in law enforcement. Residents in higher crime areas may also face economic consequences, such as lower property values and businesses being reluctant to operate in violent neighborhoods.

Law enforcement in Salem has been working to address these issues through community outreach and targeted policing. However, the data suggest that while crime rates may fluctuate, gun violence remains a persistent problem, with peaks in violent crime correlating with increases in shootings

The Salem Police Department and local government have implemented several initiatives aimed at reducing gun violence. These include increased policing in high-crime areas and collaboration with community leaders to provide alternatives to gang involvement for at-risk youth. Despite these efforts, the complexity of the problem, which involves social, economic, and cultural factors, makes it difficult to fully address through policing alone.

Overall, the issue of gun violence in Salem, Oregon, is a critical public safety concern that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable members of the community. Addressing it requires a multifaceted approach, combining law enforcement efforts with community-based programs designed to tackle the root causes of violence.[4]

4. Barao, L., Ph.D., & Mastroianni, C. (2023, August). *Salem, Oregon Gun Violence Problem Analysis 2018-2023*. Link.
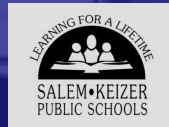
COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

The Community Working Group (CWG) was established in June, 2024 by Empower Initiative, acting as a consultant to the Salem Police Department after two public meetings facilitated by the department to engage the community and solicit input and feedback. Initially, Empower Initiative began with a list of community partners provided by the police, engaging them in a series of 45-minute, in-person conversations and a public listening session in May 2024. Empower invited leaders from organizations such as Salem Police Department, Salem Leadership Foundation, Church at the Park, Mano a Mano, Catholic Community Services, Boys & Girls Club, Salem Keizer Public Schools, EnLace Community Development Project, Willamette Health Council, SVN Commercial Real Estate Advisors, Neighborhood Associations, and the City of Salem.

COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

The selection was based on the availability of these organizations to support summer initiatives and their longer-term capacity for involvement. Empower Initiative also extended invitations to other community leaders who had expressed interest during public events in March and April. The CWG's mission is to create a lasting collaboration between community members, social service providers, and law enforcement, aiming to reduce violence, strengthen police-community trust, and improve outcomes for high-risk individuals. The ongoing partnership seeks to align community resources to address safety and accountability.

The Community Working Group curated the Community Listening Sessions t**o raise awareness in the community** about the existing and potential impacts of gun violence (due to structural and cultural challenges) and **garner input and feedback.** The commitment from the Community Working Group was that this information would be produced into an evaluation report that **informs how the city leaders and community members implement the CVRI strategy.**

The Listening Sessions were structured around three key focuses, informed by data from the Problem Analysis Report, which identified those most affected by community violence, and insights from the Community Working Group on who should be engaged. Each session was co-hosted by local leaders from Salem, chosen to align with the specific focus of the session. These sessions began with a welcome and a community-building activity designed to foster trust and goodwill among participants. Chief Trevor Womack shared his genuine concerns about community violence, emphasizing that while law enforcement must ensure public safety, the issue cannot be solved through arrests alone. His role was also to listen and learn from the community. The sessions included data presentations, community feedback on police analysis, and a presentation by Ben McBride of Empower Initiative, discussing national best practices. Attendees engaged with these ideas, shared feedback, and closed with actionable next steps for the following 30 days.

METRICS

200

ENGAGEMENT
200+ community members engaged

3

GATHERINGS
3 total gatherings

FOCUSES
- Unsheltered individuals and families
- Spanish speaking communities
- Faith communities & Neighborhood leaders

PLACES
- Catholic Community Services
- Chemeketa Community College
- Salem Alliance Church

SESSION #1 HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from the First Listening Session at Catholic Community Services on Community Violence in the Unsheltered Community

The first Listening Session, co-hosted by Pastor Ronnie Brooks of To God Be The Glory Church and Jimmy Jones of the Mid Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, provided valuable insights into how both unsheltered individuals and the broader community are impacted by violence in their neighborhoods. Though the session aimed to engage unsheltered community members, a mix of general community members and unsheltered-serving organizational leaders also participated.

KEY CONCERNS RAISED

1. **Safety in Public Spaces:** Many participants expressed a growing fear of being outside, particularly at night. Frequent **gunfire** and **visible drug deals** have made parks, downtown areas, and even walking to school unsafe, especially for unsupervised children. Parents noted that they no longer feel comfortable allowing their kids to play outside unsupervised due to these dangers.

3. **Psychological Trauma:** Residents reported feeling stressed, tired, and overwhelmed by constant exposure to violence. Witnessing **bullets, guns, and drug activity** regularly contributes to a sense of escalating danger, leading to heightened anxiety and trauma within the community.

5. **Decreased Quality of Life:** Participants noted that they are **avoiding public areas**—including parks, malls, and restaurants—out of fear for their safety. Increased visibility of **needles in public spaces** and more frequent encounters with people asking for money have further discouraged residents from engaging in normal activities.

7. **Impact on the Unsheltered:** The unsheltered community, in particular, voiced concerns about their vulnerability to violence. Many feel unsafe in public areas and have experienced **psychological trauma** from constant exposure to danger. These concerns are compounded by the perception that the **government is not doing enough** to address their needs or protect them.

9. **Frustration with Government Inaction:** Several attendees shared their frustrations with the **lack of effective government action.** They feel that the situation is worsening, with friends and family being assaulted on the streets, and the government system failing to provide adequate support or solutions.

This session provided a platform for community members to express their fears and frustrations, highlighting the urgent need for **better safety measures, mental health support, and government accountability** in addressing violence and its impact on both sheltered and unsheltered individuals.

COMMUNITY IDEAS

During the community discussion, several ideas emerged about how residents, alongside city infrastructure, could better respond to the escalating community violence in Salem. The responses highlight both immediate actions and long-term strategies aimed at fostering safety, connection, and support.

1. Mental Health Crisis Response

Many community members emphasized the need for a robust **mental health crisis response** system. This would provide immediate intervention for individuals in crisis and help prevent situations from escalating into violence.

2. One-Stop Resource Hub

A **centralized resource hub** was proposed, where community members can access information and take action. This hub would offer resources related to housing, mental health, and violence prevention, serving as a go-to for support services.

3. Support Groups and Peer Advocates

Residents called for more **support groups and peer advocates** to help individuals affected by violence. Peer advocates—those with lived experiences—can offer guidance, mentorship, and assistance to others, fostering a sense of community and trust.

4. Addressing Escalation from Language to Violence

Community members expressed concern about the **escalation from hostile language to physical violence.** A focus on **de-escalation training** and better communication strategies could prevent conflicts from turning violent.

5. Homelessness Plan

A **clear, comprehensive plan to address homelessness** was highlighted as essential. Participants noted the need for more **high-barrier shelters** and interventions that address the root causes of homelessness while promoting dignity and support.

6. Teen Programs and Youth Engagement

Participants stressed the need for more youth programs that target teens, particularly those missing from current initiatives. Creating volunteer opportunities and ways for young people to give back to their communities was seen as a way to engage them positively and prevent them from becoming involved in violence.

COMMUNITY IDEAS

7. Engaging with "Victimizers"
There was consensus that it is crucial to engage with those committing violence, referred to as "victimizers." Programs like mentorship from credible messengers who are trusted in the community could help redirect individuals involved in violent behavior.

8. Peace Walks and Nightly Presence
A tangible idea was to start peace walks, with residents walking through neighborhoods between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. to show care and break down isolation. This visible presence would foster a sense of safety and solidarity, while also encouraging neighbors to get to know one another.

9. Proximity and Messenger Training
Several participants suggested leveraging proximity and consistent engagement, particularly with trained messengers who work well with kids. Training those who interact with the community could ensure that they are equipped to de-escalate conflicts and provide positive influence.

10. Language of Dignity and Scale of Intervention
A language of dignity should be prioritized in all interventions, ensuring that individuals—whether they are unsheltered, at-risk youth, or others—are treated with respect. Additionally, the scale of intervention should match the level of need, with proper funding and resources allocated to make a meaningful impact.

11. Community Connection
A recurring theme was the lack of connection among neighbors. Several participants voiced the need to strengthen community bonds and increase neighborly engagement to collectively work towards a safer, more unified environment.

The community's ideas reflect a holistic approach that combines mental health support, youth engagement, peer advocacy, community connection, and tangible actions like peace walks. By working together, alongside the city's resources, these strategies aim to create safer, more resilient neighborhoods in Salem.

SESSION #2 HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from the Second Listening Session at Chemeketa Community College on Community Violence in the Spanish-speaking Community

Listening Session #2, which centered on the experiences of the Spanish-speaking community, specifically addressed the impact of community violence on two age groups: **youth aged 13-17 and young adults aged 18-34**. The session provided insights into the unique challenges these age groups face in Salem, particularly in light of the Salem PD problem analysis report data from 2023. Participants discussed the gaps in resources and support systems, offering recommendations for how the city and community could better address the needs of these populations.

KEY CHALLENGES: 13-17 YEAR-OLDS FACING VIOLENCE AND A LACK OF RESOURCES

1. **Lack of Safe Community Spaces:** Teens in this age group lack access to **community spaces open during late hours** that provide free, safe activities to keep them engaged and off the streets.

2. **Drug Issues and Gang Recruitment:** These teens face significant exposure to **drug use** and are vulnerable to **gang violence** and recruitment. The pressure from gangs and social media compounds their struggles.

3. **Insufficient Police Resources:** The community perceives a **lack of police presence** and resources to effectively protect these youths from violence and gang influence.

4. **Social Media Pressure:** Social media is a source of stress, as it amplifies negative influences, including gang activity and social conflicts.

5. **Fear and Protection:** Easy access to firearms has increased both the **fear and need for protection** among teens and their families, making them feel unsafe in their own neighborhoods.

KEY CHALLENGES: 18-34 YEAR-OLDS SEARCHING FOR CONNECTION AMID VIOLENCE

1. **Suicide by Gun: Adult suicide by gun** was highlighted as a major concern, with easy access to firearms contributing to the mental health crisis within this age group.

2. **Lack of Togetherness and Community Programs:** Young adults face **social isolation** and lack meaningful **interactive programs within neighborhoods** to foster a sense of connection and support.

3. **Gang Violence and Recruitment:** Like younger teens, young adults are also targeted by **gangs** and face violence, but they often do so without the structured support systems that youth might have.

4. **Searching for Family and Connection:** Many in this age group are searching for a sense of **belonging and connectedness** that gangs can sometimes falsely provide. Without family or community support, they are vulnerable to recruitment.

5. **Fear and Access to Firearms:** The presence of guns in the community creates a sense of fear, making young adults feel they need to protect themselves, further perpetuating the cycle of violence.

6. **Need for Age-Appropriate Intervention Resources:** Participants noted that, while these individuals are legally adults, many are still developing cognitively and emotionally. The community needs **intervention resources tailored to this age group** that consider their developmental stages and help them make better life decisions.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Suggested Solutions for Spanish-speaking youth:

- **Need for After-School Programs:** The community identified a critical need for **after-school programs** that could offer a safe and structured environment to keep youth engaged in positive activities.
- **Parenting Support and Childcare:** Parents expressed the need for b**ilingual parenting classes** to help them better guide their teens, especially when dealing with issues like drug use, gangs, and mental health. Many parents work long hours and cannot afford childcare, leaving their children home alone and vulnerable to negative influences.
- **Interactive Police Programs:** Families would benefit from **interactive programs with law enforcement**, where they could build relationships and trust with the police, creating a safer community.
- Establish **youth volunteer opportunities** to give teens positive ways to contribute to the community.
- Create **after-school and late-night programs** to reduce unsupervised time and mitigate the risks of violence and drug exposure.
- Offer bilingual parenting resources to help families navigate the challenges their teens face.
- Increase **interactive neighborhood programs** to foster a sense of connection and reduce isolation.

Suggested Solutions for Spanish-speaking young adults:

- **Need for Age-Appropriate Intervention Resources:** Participants noted that, while these individuals are legally adults, many are still developing cognitively and emotionally. The community needs **intervention resources tailored to this age group** that consider their developmental stages and help them make better life decisions.
- Offer **intervention resources and mental health support** that address the unique challenges of young adulthood, including gang prevention and mental health crises.
- Provide **opportunities for young adults to engage** in positive community-building activities that help create a sense of belonging and family.

SESSION #3 HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from the Third Listening Session at Salem Alliance Church on Community Violence's effect on the Faith Community and Neighborhoods

During Listening Session 3, faith community and neighborhood leaders shared the **impacts of community violence** and proposed several **ideas** to address these challenges. Their input emphasized the emotional toll, disruption of community life, and the need for proactive, collaborative interventions between local groups and city resources.

IMPACTS OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

1. **Fear and Isolation:** Many leaders highlighted a rise in fear and isolation, with people increasingly avoiding public spaces and feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods. Kids are afraid to play outside, and families no longer feel secure attending local events or church gatherings. The violence has fostered distrust within the community and reduced a sense of togetherness.

2. **Church and Neighborhood Impact:** Faith leaders reported a growing sense of hopelessness in their congregations, with churches installing security systems and locking doors to ensure safety. Violence in neighborhoods has also negatively impacted businesses, as fewer people visit local shops and parks, harming the local economy and giving Salem a negative reputation.

3. **Social Stigma:** Violence has created a social stigma around certain neighborhoods, leading to declining property values, vandalism, and a perception that these areas are unsafe for families. The stigma further isolates the residents of these areas, deepening the divide between different parts of the community.

IDEAS FOR RESPONSE

1. **Community-Based Solutions:**
   Leaders advocated for **community activities like sports programs, youth volunteer opportunities, and block parties** to foster connection and provide positive outlets for young people. These activities can help break the cycle of isolation and fear. **Night walks and peace walks** were suggested to provide a visible presence of safety and care in neighborhoods, showing that the community is committed to supporting one another. This can also help engage residents who feel disconnected.

2. **Collaboration with Neighborhood Associations:**
   Leaders recommended that **Neighborhood Associations (NAs)** do more **outreach** to the Spanish-speaking community and other marginalized groups. Better engagement could build trust and ensure all community voices are heard. NAs were encouraged to take the lead in organizing **neighborhood watch programs, conflict resolution training, and community beautification efforts.**

3. **Engagement with Youth:**
   Recognizing the importance of early intervention, leaders proposed creating more **after-school programs, mentorship opportunities**, and partnerships between **churches and schools** to provide safe, supportive environments for youth. Initiatives like **Young Life** and peer mentoring programs could connect at-risk youth to positive role models.

IDEAS FOR RESPONSE

4. **Fostering a Sense of Belonging:**
   Faith leaders emphasized the importance of fostering a sense of **belonging and connectedness** in the community. They proposed that residents and local organizations make an effort to **greet each other**, share resources, and create safe spaces for dialogue. **Murals, community gardens, and beautification projects** were suggested as ways to make neighborhoods more inviting and discourage violence.

5. **Addressing Root Causes:**
   Leaders highlighted the need to address the **root causes** of violence, such as **housing insecurity, mental health issues, and gang involvement**. By offering alternatives like **sports, theater, and arts programs**, and working to strengthen **family units**, the community can provide healthier outlets for individuals who may otherwise turn to violence.

6. **Proactive Engagement:**
   There was strong support for expanding the scope of violence prevention to include issues like **domestic violence and sexual abuse**, as these are often precursors to broader community violence. Proactive interventions such as **call-ins**, where community leaders meet with individuals at risk of engaging in violence, were seen as effective but challenging.

Leaders agreed that **peace walks** offer an easier way to begin, with the potential to evolve into more coordinated efforts like **call-ins** as trust builds. They also stressed the importance of **consistency**, ensuring that efforts like walks, mentoring, and outreach are sustained over time to have a meaningful impact.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Suggested Solutions for Spanish-speaking youth:

- **Need for After-School Programs:** The community identified a critical need for **after-school programs** that could offer a safe and structured environment to keep youth engaged in positive activities.
- **Parenting Support and Childcare:** Parents expressed the need for b**ilingual parenting classes** to help them better guide their teens, especially when dealing with issues like drug use, gangs, and mental health. Many parents work long hours and cannot afford childcare, leaving their children home alone and vulnerable to negative influences.
- **Interactive Police Programs:** Families would benefit from **interactive programs with law enforcement**, where they could build relationships and trust with the police, creating a safer community.
- Establish **youth volunteer opportunities** to give teens positive ways to contribute to the community.
- Create **after-school and late-night programs** to reduce unsupervised time and mitigate the risks of violence and drug exposure.
- Offer bilingual parenting resources to help families navigate the challenges their teens face.
- Increase **interactive neighborhood programs** to foster a sense of connection and reduce isolation.

## Suggested Solutions for Spanish-speaking young adults:

- **Need for Age-Appropriate Intervention Resources:** Participants noted that, while these individuals are legally adults, many are still developing cognitively and emotionally. The community needs **intervention resources tailored to this age group** that consider their developmental stages and help them make better life decisions.
- Offer **intervention resources and mental health support** that address the unique challenges of young adulthood, including gang prevention and mental health crises.
- Provide **opportunities for young adults to engage** in positive community-building activities that help create a sense of belonging and family.

ACTIVATING THE CVRI STRATEGY

In **_Troubling the Water_**, Ben McBride outlines the **5 A's—Awareness, Accountability, Articulation, Advocacy, and Activation**—as a framework for fostering radical belonging and challenging the structures of exclusion that keep marginalized communities outside the circle of human concern.

Radical Belonging Defined: Co-creating with the perceived other to widen the circle of human concern. These steps provide individuals and institutions with a roadmap to create sustainable change and expand belonging.
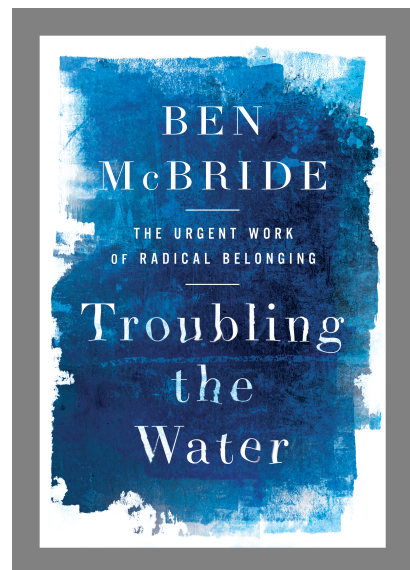
THE 5 A'S OF FOSTERING BELONGING

1. AWARENESS

The journey begins with **awareness**, recognizing the deep-seated issues of othering and the systemic barriers that contribute to exclusion. Individuals and institutions must acknowledge their own biases and understand how societal structures have historically marginalized specific groups. This awareness is the foundation for change, allowing people to see the gaps in belonging.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability follows awareness. This involves taking responsibility for the roles individuals and organizations play in perpetuating exclusion or inequity. It means setting clear, measurable goals for change, and ensuring that those in power are held accountable for progress. Without accountability, awareness remains theoretical; it is accountability that drives real transformation.

3. ARTICULATION

Articulation is the ability to clearly express and communicate the issues of othering and belonging. It is critical for leaders and advocates to be able to explain, in clear and actionable terms, what needs to change and why. This involves storytelling, data, and personal narratives that help others understand the importance of fostering belonging and confronting exclusion.

4. ADVOCACY

Advocacy involves actively working to promote policies, practices, and actions that foster belonging. It is about using one's voice, influence, and position to advocate for those who are marginalized and to push for systemic changes that widen the circle of human concern. This includes partnering with community members, organizations, and allies to drive change on a broader scale.

5. ACTIVATION

Finally, activation is about moving from words to action. It is the step where individuals and institutions implement the changes they have articulated and advocated for. Activation means mobilizing resources, building coalitions, and executing the strategies that bring belonging to life in tangible ways. It's about turning plans into impactful, sustained efforts that create lasting change.

SUSTAINABLE CHANGE OVER TIME

Sustainable change happens as individuals and institutions grow in capacity and their ability to execute these principles improves. Change starts with personal growth as individuals become more aware and accountable, but long-term transformation requires **institutional leadership** that aligns its policies, practices, and culture with the values of belonging. As leadership improves and becomes more effective, institutions can more successfully engage in advocacy and activation, creating environments where everyone is included.

THE "10-10-10" ACTIVATION PRACTICE BY EMPOWER

To guide leaders in this process of sustainable change, the Empower Initiative offers a structured "10-10-10" Activation practice. This practice invites leaders to take concrete steps to activate belonging over three timeframes—ten days, ten weeks, and ten months. The "10-10-10" approach helps create a roadmap for big shifts by breaking the process into manageable milestones:

10

10 Days
Leaders take immediate, small actions to build momentum, such as scheduling key conversations, reviewing internal policies, or meeting with stakeholders.

10

10 Weeks
Leaders focus on medium-term projects, like launching a new program, creating partnerships with community organizations, or developing resource guides for marginalized groups.

10

10 Months
Leaders work toward long-term, systemic changes, including institutional policy shifts, advocacy campaigns, and sustained efforts to foster belonging.

By following this roadmap, individuals and organizations can make measurable progress toward creating environments where all people can truly belong.

RECOMMENDATION: IMPLEMENT A ROBUST COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM IN SALEM

Salem needs to establish a **comprehensive community education program** to bridge the gap between available resources and community awareness. Although the city offers a wealth of services and resources through various organizations in the Salem/Marion Polk County region, there remains a significant disconnect in making these resources accessible and known to the general public, particularly underserved groups like the Spanish-speaking community. This program, coordinated by a full-time employee (FTE) within the City Manager's office, will focus on **community outreach, education, and resource navigation**. The goal is to empower residents with the knowledge of available services and how to access them while fostering a network of community engagement through neighborhood groups, faith organizations, and local leaders.

3 KEY STEPS TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATION

1

1. First 10 Days – Initial Assessment and Coordination

- **Appoint the FTE:** Identify and assign a full-time employee in the City Manager's office responsible for coordinating community resources and leading this initiative. This FTE will serve as the primary liaison between the city, service providers, and the community.

- **Audit Available Resources:** Conduct a quick audit of the existing resources in Salem and Marion Polk County to identify what services are available, what gaps exist, and what materials are already available in multiple languages (particularly Spanish).

- **Engage Key Stakeholders:** Meet with neighborhood associations, community-based organizations (CBOs), faith leaders, and representatives from the Spanish-speaking community to understand their needs and begin building a coalition to spread awareness about resources.

2

2. First 10 Weeks – Resource Coordination and Education Rollout

- **Develop a Resource Guide:** Create a comprehensive and user-friendly resource guide that includes information about housing, mental health services, food security, employment opportunities, and more. Ensure the guide is available in **multiple languages**, particularly Spanish, and in both digital and printed formats.

- **Launch a Community Education Campaign:** Begin an educational outreach campaign, including **radio ads in Spanish**, flyers, social media, and partnerships with local leaders. This campaign should target key communities that face barriers in accessing resources, such as Spanish-speaking residents and low-income families.

- **Host Training for Local Leaders:** Organize workshops and training sessions for **neighborhood associations, faith groups, and CBOs** on how to educate their communities about available resources. Equip these leaders with tools and materials they can share with their networks.

3 KEY STEPS TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATION

3

3. First 10 Months – Long-Term Sustainability and Expansion

- **Establish Ongoing Communication Channels: Create regular communication channels** between the City Manager's office, service providers, and community groups to keep information updated and responsive to changing community needs.

- **Expand Partnerships:** Deepen collaboration with **Spanish-speaking communities, schools, and youth programs** to ensure that every neighborhood is receiving ongoing resource education.

- **Measure Impact and Adjust:** Track the engagement levels and effectiveness of the program through **community surveys and feedback sessions**. Use this data to refine outreach efforts, improve the resource guide, and ensure that the most vulnerable populations are benefiting from the initiative.

By following these steps, Salem can significantly improve public awareness and access to vital services, thereby creating a stronger and more connected community capable of addressing violence, homelessness, and other challenges proactively.

RECOMMENDATION: THE CALL-IN TACTIC: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO REDUCING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

The **call-in tactic** is a nationally recognized, evidence-based approach used to reduce community violence by bringing individuals at the highest risk of committing or becoming victims of violence into direct conversation with a wide range of community stakeholders. These stakeholders include **faith leaders, law enforcement, victims of violence, formerly incarcerated individuals, social services, and the business community.** The call-in meeting offers a clear message: the community deeply cares about these individuals' well-being and is ready to offer comprehensive support, but continued violence will not be tolerated. This approach fosters a culture of **accountability and support**, offering individuals a pathway away from violence.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE CALL-IN

1. **High-Risk Individuals at the Table:** Those identified as being at the highest risk are invited to participate. While Oregon privacy laws may limit how law enforcement collaborates on sharing personal data to identify these individuals, **community institutions**—such as schools, faith groups, neighborhood organizations, and families—can work together to identify and invite those most at risk.

2. **Cross-Sector Representation:** Call-ins include a broad representation of the community. Law enforcement provides the accountability element, making it clear that further violence will result in swift consequences. **Faith leaders, social services, and business representatives** offer support, pathways to employment, and social services, creating a network of positive opportunities for attendees.

3. **Support and Accountability:** The core of the call-in strategy is balancing **accountability with care**. The attendees are given a clear choice: accept the support being offered and change course, or face the legal and social consequences of continued violence. The community demonstrates collective responsibility by offering second chances, mentorship, and employment opportunities.

4. **Business Community Involvement:** The **Chamber of Commerce** and other business networks play a crucial role by offering **second-chance employment** opportunities. Securing stable employment is a critical factor in reducing violence, as it provides an alternative path to financial security and a sense of belonging.

5. **Wrap-Around Services:** Funded community-based organizations, and Willamette Health Council's System of Care, would collaborate to provide a fully staffed **wrap-around services model** for the attendees and their families, addressing the holistic needs—mental health, substance abuse treatment, housing, and family support—that are key to sustaining change.

3 KEY STEPS FOR ACTIVATION

1

1. First 10 Days – Initial Planning and Stakeholder Engagement

- **FTE Appointment:** Appoint an FTE within the City Manager's office to take charge of developing the call-in strategy and coordinating community involvement.

- **Stakeholder Meetings:** Convene initial meetings with key stakeholders, including law enforcement, **Chamber of Commerce**, faith leaders, **Willamette Health Council, DHS**, and neighborhood groups, to discuss the vision for the call-in and gather input on resource allocation and support systems.

- **Draft Algorithm Concept:** The Community Working Group will begin formulating criteria to identify and support individuals at the highest risk of community violence, ensuring the process avoids any form of identity profiling. The criteria must be designed to focus on risk factors while promoting fairness and inclusivity.

2

2. First 10 Weeks – Algorithm Development and Initial Pilot Coordination

- **Develop Algorithm:** Collaborate with community institutions and data experts to finalize the algorithm for identifying high-risk individuals based on **non-law enforcement sources** (e.g., community feedback, school referrals, social service inputs).

- **Business Engagement:** Engage the **business community** through the Chamber of Commerce to identify **second-chance employment** opportunities and secure commitments for job placements for call-in attendees.

- **Prepare for Pilot Call-In:** Identify a target neighborhood or group for the **first pilot call-in** and begin outreach to high-risk individuals, community leaders, and service providers. Plan a clear structure for the meeting that balances support and accountability.

3 KEY STEPS FOR ACTIVATION

3

3. First 10 Months – Launch Call-In and Build Sustainability

- **Launch First Call-In:** Hold the first **call-in meeting** with all relevant stakeholders and community representatives in attendance. Ensure follow-up systems are in place to track participant outcomes and ensure they receive access to jobs, services, and mentorship.

- **Evaluate and Adjust:** After the first call-in, conduct a thorough **evaluation of the process**, gathering feedback from attendees and stakeholders. Make adjustments to improve the identification process, coordination, and support mechanisms.

- **Expand to More Neighborhoods:** Based on the success of the initial pilot, expand the call-in strategy to other neighborhoods and high-risk groups in Salem. Continue to strengthen the wrap-around service model, working with **DHS, health services, and community partners** to ensure long-term sustainability.

By following these steps, Salem can effectively implement the **call-in tactic**, offering at-risk individuals a real chance for transformation while fostering collaboration between law enforcement, the community, and the business sector. Over time, this strategy will become a cornerstone of Salem's broader efforts to reduce violence and create a culture of accountability and belonging.
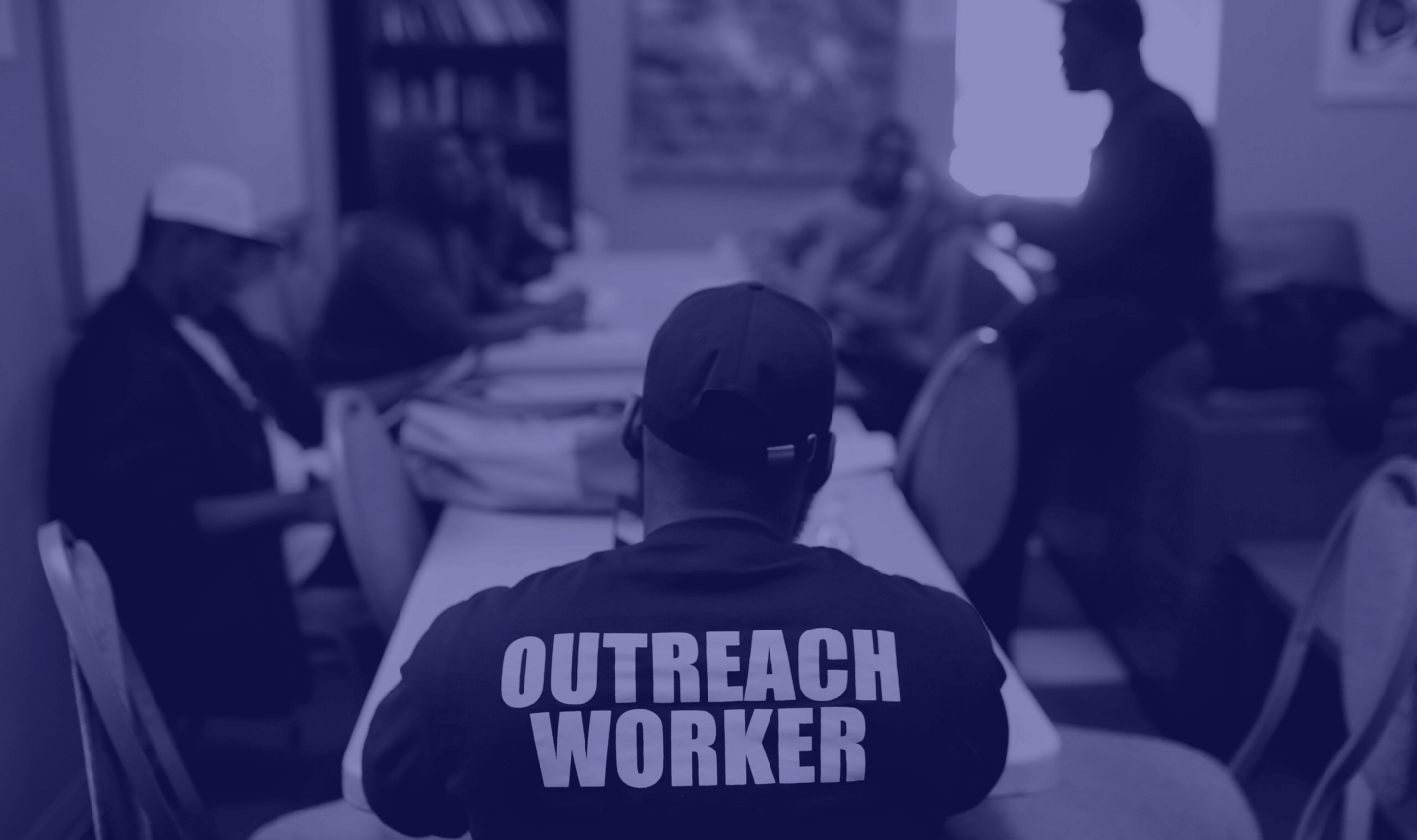
RECOMMENDATION: CUSTOM NOTIFICATIONS AS A CORE COMPONENT OF THE SALEM CVRI STRATEGY

As part of Salem's Community Violence Intervention (CVI) strategy, the implementation of custom notifications—personalized, direct outreach to individuals identified as high-risk for committing or becoming victims of violence—should be a priority. This tactic relies on credible messengers within the community, individuals with lived experiences and connections to at-risk populations, to deliver these custom notifications. The aim is to provide personalized, targeted strategies to avoid conflicts, de-escalate tensions, and guide individuals toward safer, healthier decisions.

HOW CUSTOM NOTIFICATIONS WORK

Credible messengers—trusted figures in the community such as former offenders, faith leaders, or community activists—would have **individual conversations** with high-risk individuals, informed by Salem's h**igh-risk assessment**. These messengers are uniquely positioned to understand the dynamics of violence and effectively communicate the consequences of continued involvement, offering **immediate alternatives and support services**. Through these conversations, at-risk individuals can be alerted to the dangers of escalating conflicts and presented with a **personal strategy to avoid violence**.

For this tactic to be effective, the program must be **paired with case management** that is solely focused on building long-term relationships with those identified as high-risk. **Oregon's Department of Human Services (DHS)** should resource community-based caseworkers to collaborate with the FTE responsible for leading the CVI strategy and the **Community Working Group**. This team will ensure that communication is coordinated and tailored to the needs of each individual, and will **connect individuals to services** such as mental health support, housing, and employment—available on their schedule, when they need them, not only during traditional hours.

Benefits of Custom Notifications:

- **Early Intervention:** By reaching out to individuals before conflicts escalate, custom notifications can prevent violent incidents before they occur.
- **Trust and Credibility:** Using credible messengers who have relationships within the community increases the likelihood that the message will be heard and acted upon.
- **Tailored Strategies:** Notifications are not just warnings but include a **personalized plan of action** that connects individuals to support systems like counseling, housing, and employment.
- **Proactive, Not Reactive:** This tactic shifts the focus from reacting to violence to **preventing it** through targeted outreach and relationship-building.

3 KEY STEPS FOR ACTIVATION

1

1. First 10 Days –Initial Coordination and Planning

- **Appoint Key Personnel:** Work with Oregon DHS to assign caseworkers and ensure they are fully integrated into the CVI strategy, alongside the FTE who will manage the program.

- **Engage Credible Messengers:** Identify and convene a group of credible messengers from Salem's communities. These individuals should be trained and briefed on the custom notification process and prepared to engage high-risk individuals.

- **Review High-Risk Assessment:** Collaborate with local law enforcement and community organizations to refine the **high-risk assessment tool** that will identify individuals for outreach based on data and community input.

2

2. First 10 Weeks – Launch and Pilot Custom Notifications

- **Launch a Pilot Program:** Begin the first round of custom notifications for a selected high-risk group in Salem. Use credible messengers to reach out individually and deliver personalized conflict-avoidance strategies. Each notification should be supported by case managers who follow up to ensure services are offered.

- **Coordinate Services and Access:** Develop a system with local service providers (e.g., mental health, housing, employment) to ensure **immediate access** to resources. Focus on making services available when they are needed, not just during traditional working hours.

- **Track Initial Outcomes:** Monitor the effectiveness of notifications and services delivered through this pilot. Collect data on the number of conflicts prevented, individuals connected to services, and follow-up engagement.

3 KEY STEPS FOR ACTIVATION

3

3. First 10 Months – Expand and Scale the Program

- **Expand the Notification Network:** As the initial pilot succeeds, scale up the notification system to reach more individuals, neighborhoods, and at-risk groups. Build on lessons learned from the pilot to refine messaging and engagement.

- **Enhance Case Management:** Increase the capacity of **case managers** assigned to the custom notification program, ensuring that every individual receives continuous support beyond the initial notification. Strengthen partnerships with Oregon DHS and other service providers.

- **Evaluate and Adjust:** Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program, measuring its impact on reducing community violence and increasing service connections. Use this data to make adjustments and solidify the **custom notification system** as a permanent part of Salem's CVI strategy.

By following these steps, Salem can effectively integrate custom notifications into its broader violence intervention strategy, using credible messengers and dedicated case management to deliver personalized support and conflict-prevention strategies. Over time, this approach will help reduce violence and build stronger relationships between the community and service providers.

RECOMMENDATION: IMPLEMENT NIGHT WALKS AS A CORE CVRI STRATEGY FOR SALEM

As part of Salem's Community Violence Reduction Initiative (CVRI) strategy, night walks should be implemented to increase community presence, foster connection, and reduce violence in neighborhoods heavily impacted by gun violence. Night walks serve as a proactive approach to community engagement, offering messages of care and concern, creating opportunities for targeted interactions with high-risk individuals, and building stronger connections between different neighborhoods and community members. Additionally, these walks can be an effective way to distribute information about available social services, providing impacted communities with tangible resources and support.

KEY OUTCOMES OF NIGHT WALKS

1. **Targeted Engagement with the Community:** Night walks allow **credible messengers**—community members with lived experience—to engage directly with high-risk individuals, providing early intervention opportunities and bringing those at the highest risk onto the radar of local organizations and services.

2. **Build Relationships:** Regular walks will foster relationships within the community, allowing neighbors to **trust and communicate** with one another, and increasing the likelihood that high-risk individuals will seek help from available services.

3. **Increase Goodwill Between Neighborhoods:** By walking across various neighborhoods, community members can **build goodwill** and connections, breaking down divisions and demonstrating solidarity between different areas of Salem. This also helps dispel fear and creates a collective focus on reducing violence.

4. **Maintain Focus on Violence Reduction:** Night walks create an ongoing presence and serve as a visual reminder that the community is actively engaged in addressing violence. The consistent presence keeps the issue of violence prevention at the forefront of community attention.

On Thursday evening, August 29, more than 30 Salem residents gathered to walk for peace in our city.

TWO FORMS OF NIGHT WALKS

1. **Early Evening Night Walks:** These walks would take place in the early evening, engaging the broader community—including families, faith leaders, and local residents. This form of the walk is designed to **build relationships**, distribute information about social services, and bring diverse groups together to show care for high-risk individuals.

2. **Late Night Walks:** A more targeted form of the night walk should happen **during late hours**, coinciding with times when gun violence and other community violence typically increase. These walks would primarily involve **credible messengers** and trained community members who can connect directly with high-risk individuals in the most vulnerable moments. While the focus is on building relationships and preventing violence, these walks must be coordinated with **law enforcement** to ensure safety for those participating.

WEEKLY FOCUS IN NORTHEAST SALEM AND HOTSPOTS FOR VIOLENCE

It is critical that these walks happen **weekly in Northeast Salem** and other neighborhoods identified as **hotspots** for violence. This consistency is key to building trust and creating lasting connections. Impacted communities should be empowered to lead these walks, with support from **federal or state grant funding** to ensure they are well-resourced. These grants could also fund the **training and safety** of the credible messengers and community members who participate.

The **FTE in the City Manager's office** will be essential in coordinating the logistical aspects of these walks, ensuring that law enforcement provides adequate coverage during the **late night walks** to mitigate safety concerns.

3 KEY STEPS FOR ACTIVATION

1 | ## 1. First 10 Days – Initial Planning and Community Engagement

- **FTE Coordination:** The FTE in the City Manager's office should engage law enforcement to establish safety protocols for the late-night walks and begin identifying neighborhoods where early evening and late-night walks should take place.

- **Engage Community Leaders:** Begin discussions with community-based organizations, credible messengers, faith leaders, and neighborhood associations in Northeast Salem and other hotspot areas to gauge interest and identify volunteers for the night walks.

- **Secure Initial Funding:** Identify and apply for federal or state grant opportunities that could fund the night walk initiative, including resources for staffing, training, and service provision during the walks.

2 | ## 2. First 10 Weeks – Launch and Pilot the Night Walks

- **Pilot the Walks:** Begin with pilot night walks in **Northeast Salem** and one other identified hotspot for violence. Implement both **early evening walks** (for broader community engagement) and **late-night walks** (targeting high-risk individuals).

- **Create a Feedback Loop:** Establish a feedback process with community members, credible messengers, and law enforcement to assess how the walks are working, what challenges are arising, and how they can be improved.

- **Increase Outreach:** Utilize local media, social media, and community networks to publicize the night walks, highlighting the **safety and solidarity** focus of the walks. Distribute flyers in both English and Spanish to reach broader communities, including non-English-speaking residents.

3 KEY STEPS FOR ACTIVATION

3

3. First 10 Months – Expand and Scale the Night Walk Program

- **Expand Walks to Additional Neighborhoods:** After the pilot phase, scale the night walk initiative to other high-violence areas of Salem, ensuring weekly walks continue in all identified hotspots.

- **Develop a Sustainable Funding Model:** Secure longer-term funding through grants or city budgets to ensure the sustainability of the night walk program and the **ongoing involvement of credible messengers.**

- **Measure and Report Impact:** Track key metrics, including **community engagement, reduction in violence, and connections to social services**, to measure the impact of the night walks and report back to stakeholders and funders. This data will be crucial for maintaining support and expanding the initiative further.

By taking these steps, Salem can successfully implement a **night walk program** that fosters community connections, enhances safety, and builds relationships with high-risk individuals. Over time, these walks will become a powerful tool for reducing violence and increasing a sense of belonging and care within the community.

RECOMMENDATION: INVEST IN A GOVERNANCE STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE VIOLENCE REDUCTION IN SALEM

The City of Salem must invest in a **governance strategy** that builds a strong foundation for reducing community violence by integrating law enforcement, community-based efforts, and sustainable leadership from the outset. This strategy requires the creation of a **full-time Program Manager or Program Director-level role** within city government. This role will be the critical link between law enforcement and community-based organizations, ensuring the effective coordination of violence reduction efforts and the responsible management of resources.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FTE ROLE:

1

Access to Key Meetings: The FTE will have access to **law enforcement infrastructure meetings and community-based meetings.** This dual access is vital for the individual to understand the complexities of both sectors and foster meaningful collaboration between them.

2

Confidentiality and Strategic Authority: Due to the sensitive nature of law enforcement data, this role must reside within **city government**, where the necessary confidentiality standards can be maintained. A community-based organization, while critical for on-the-ground work, may not meet the required legal standards for handling confidential law enforcement information. This FTE will act as the liaison between the two sectors.

3

Co-Creation of Funding Strategies: The FTE must be empowered to **co-create funding strategies** with city and law enforcement leaders to ensure that **federal and state grant funding** is equitably distributed between law enforcement efforts and community-based interventions. This will ensure that resources are used effectively to address both immediate safety concerns and long-term community healing and prevention.

4

Intermediary with the Community Working Group: The FTE will act as the **intermediary** between the City of Salem and the **Community Working Group**, an ongoing partnership involving community members, social service providers, and law enforcement officials. This group will meet **bi-weekly** to co-create and refine the **Community Violence Reduction Initiative (CVRI)** strategy, ensuring that it remains responsive to the needs of Salem's communities.

POWER SHARING AND GOVERNANCE

To ensure equitable governance and shared decision-making, the Community Working Group should be **co-chaired by community members** who are deeply rooted in **community engagement and organizing disciplines.** This will bring a necessary ethos of cultural collaboration, structural change, and accountability to the process. These co-chairs will have equal decision-making power alongside the FTE and city leaders, particularly in decisions around resource distribution and program implementation.

We recommend **Levi Herrera of Mano a Mano Family Center and Kyle Dickinson of the Salem Leadership Foundation** serve as interim co-chairs of the Community Working Group to ensure continuity and guide the transition toward long-term sustainability. During its first year, the Community Working Group should prioritize establishing a long-term governance structure and appointing or electing permanent leadership as part of its agenda. Both leaders have demonstrated a strong commitment to community engagement and are well-positioned to help guide the governance model alongside the FTE and city leaders.

SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The FTE will require **technical assistance** from consulting groups experienced in the **implementation of CVI strategies.** These consultants will provide support in areas such as strategy development, community engagement, resource management, and data analysis. In addition, a portion of the budget should be allocated to fund a **strategic learning group** that will enable the city's leaders, the FTE, and the Community Working Group to study best practices from similar cities.

3 KEY STEPS FOR ACTIVATION

1

1. First 10 Days – Role Establishment and Initial Alignment

- **Hire the FTE:** Appoint an FTE within the City Manager's office with the authority to coordinate law enforcement and community-based efforts. This individual should have access to both law enforcement and community-based meetings.

- **Engage Stakeholders:** Hold initial meetings with law enforcement, community-based organizations, and city leaders to align expectations and ensure everyone understands the role of the FTE and the shared governance approach.

- **Set Up Initial Governance Meetings:** Begin planning bi-weekly meetings for the Community Working Group, including inviting interim co-chairs **Levi Herrera** and **Kyle Dickinson** to facilitate community representation from the outset.

2

2. First 10 Weeks – Launch of the Community Working Group and Strategy Development

- **Launch the Community Working Group:** Officially launch the bi-weekly Community Working Group meetings, bringing together community members, social service providers, law enforcement, and city officials. These meetings will be the primary space for co-creating solutions, setting milestones, and monitoring progress.

- **Develop Funding Strategies:** Collaborate with the FTE, law enforcement, and community leaders to develop funding allocation strategies for disbursing federal and state resources to law enforcement and community-based efforts.

- **Onboard Technical Assistance:** Secure consulting groups to provide **technical assistance** to the FTE and the Community Working Group on best practices in CVI strategy implementation.

3 KEY STEPS FOR ACTIVATION

3

3. First 10 Months – Governance Model Refinement and Expansion

- **Solidify Governance Structure:** Finalize the governance structure of the Community Working Group, ensuring that it remains a **shared decision-making body** with equal power between the FTE, community co-chairs, and city leaders.

- **Expand Learning Opportunities:** Organize a **strategic learning group** where city leaders, the FTE, and the Community Working Group can study similar CVI implementations in other cities and apply lessons learned to Salem's approach.

- **Measure and Report Impact:** Establish key metrics to measure the impact of the governance strategy, including community engagement, reductions in violence, and equitable resource distribution. Report progress regularly to community members and funders.

By following this strategy, Salem will create a **sustainable governance structure** that ensures the **shared leadership between** city government, law enforcement, and community representatives. This will not only reduce community violence but also foster a lasting partnership that prioritizes safety, accountability, and inclusion for all.

TOP 3 TAKEAWAYS FROM THE REPORT

1

Rising Gun Violence and Its Disproportionate Impact:

Salem has experienced a notable increase in **gun-related homicides and violent crimes**, with a significant spike in 2021. Young adults, teenagers, and marginalized communities are the primary victims of this violence, often linked to gang activity, drugs, or personal disputes. This violence has a profound effect on the community, leading to **trauma, fear, and a sense of insecurity**, particularly in areas with higher crime rates. The impact extends beyond just the victims, affecting the broader community's sense of safety and economic stability.

2

Community-Driven Solutions and Mental Health Support:

Throughout the community listening sessions, there was a **strong demand for mental health crisis response**, **support groups, and peer advocates** to provide guidance for those affected by violence. Community members voiced the need for **resources that address underlying social issues** like mental health, homelessness, and gang recruitment. A recurring theme was the importance of offering age-appropriate and culturally sensitive support, particularly for **youth and young adults**, including after-school programs, parenting resources, and more interaction with law enforcement to foster trust.

3

Collaborative and Inclusive Governance Strategy:

The report underscores the necessity of a robust governance model that integrates law enforcement, community leaders, and social service providers. A full-time Program Manager embedded within the city government is essential for managing confidential information and coordinating efforts. The report recommends a Community Working Group, co-chaired by community leaders like Levi Herrera and Kyle Dickinson, to ensure equitable decision-making and resource distribution. This approach focuses on shared power and accountability, ensuring that solutions are co-created with the community and that progress is measured over time.

THE COST OF INACTION ON COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND THE BENEFITS OF TAKING ACTION IN SALEM

If the City of Salem fails to act on the data from the community violence analysis, the consequences for those most at risk will be severe, leading to long-term damage across various areas of life. These include increased gun violence, economic decline, heightened community trauma, and diminished trust in law enforcement.

THE COSTS OF INACTION

Below are key areas where the cost of inaction will be most visible:

1   Escalation of Gun Violence and Loss of Life

- **Increase in Homicides and Violent Crimes:** Without intervention, gun-related violence will likely continue to rise, further escalating the homicide rates that saw a 200% increase in 2021. The victims will primarily be young adults and teenagers from marginalized communities, leading to a devastating loss of life among Salem's most vulnerable populations.

- **Perpetuation of Gang Activity:** The lack of targeted support will allow gang recruitment and activity to persist, trapping more youth in cycles of violence. This leads to the victimization of more community members, both directly through assaults and indirectly through intimidation and fear.

2   Deepening Economic and Social Consequences

- **Neighborhood Decline and Disinvestment:** Higher crime rates, especially gun violence, have an economic toll. Property values will drop, businesses will avoid high-crime areas, and neighborhoods will continue to see reduced economic activity. This leads to deeper economic hardship for already vulnerable residents, trapping them in cycles of poverty and crime.

- **Lower Quality of Life:** As violence persists, more residents will withdraw from public life. Fear of violence will deter families from using parks, sending their children to school on foot, or visiting local businesses. This will erode the fabric of the community and foster isolation and distrust between neighbors, exacerbating social fragmentation.

THE COSTS OF INACTION

Below are key areas where the cost of inaction will be most visible:

3 Psychological and Social Trauma

- **Increased Trauma and Anxiety:** Continued exposure to violence will contribute to heightened levels of psychological trauma for residents. Constant fear of gunfire and witnessing violent acts will severely impact mental health, particularly for youth, potentially leading to increased depression, PTSD, and anxiety.

- **Trauma Among the Unsheltered Community:** The already vulnerable unsheltered population will face even greater dangers if violence remains unchecked. Without adequate mental health support, many in this group will experience compounded trauma, exacerbating the challenges they already face.

4 Diminished Trust and Community Breakdown

- **Loss of Trust in Law Enforcement:** Continued inaction will deepen the community's distrust in law enforcement and local government. Residents will become more reluctant to report crimes, making it harder for police to respond effectively. This cycle further entrenches criminal behavior and weakens community resilience.

- **Lack of Engagement with High-Risk Individuals:** Without proactive community-based initiatives such as credible messenger programs, high-risk individuals will remain disconnected from support services and will continue to engage in violent behaviors. This missed opportunity for early intervention could allow violence to escalate further.

THE COSTS OF INACTION

Below are key areas where the cost of inaction will be most visible:

5

Missed Opportunities for Prevention

- **Failure to Address Root Causes:** The city's failure to implement a multifaceted approach combining law enforcement with social services will mean missing the chance to address the root causes of violence—poverty, lack of education, mental health needs, and systemic inequities.

- **Loss of Future Generations:** Inaction means a failure to invest in the next generation. Without after-school programs, youth engagement, and support for at-risk families, Salem will lose many young people to violence, drugs, and gang involvement, continuing a cycle of lost potential and broken futures.

The **cost of inaction** for the City of Salem will result in **more violence, deeper social fragmentation, economic losses, and community trauma.** To mitigate these devastating consequences, Salem must act on the data and implement a comprehensive strategy that combines **community engagement, law enforcement, mental health services, and long-term prevention programs.** Without immediate and sustained efforts, the city's most vulnerable populations will continue to bear the brunt of the escalating violence, making it harder to rebuild trust, safety, and resilience.

THE BENEFITS OF TAKING ACTION IN SALEM

If the City of Salem acts on the data and implements a comprehensive response to community violence, there are substantial benefits for those at risk, particularly young adults and marginalized communities. Here's how action could transform the community:

1 Reduction in Gun Violence and Crime

- **Decrease in Homicides and Shootings:** Implementing targeted programs like custom notifications, night walks, and call-ins can prevent violent incidents, significantly reducing homicides, shootings, and aggravated assaults. For at-risk individuals, this could mean fewer lives lost and a safer environment for young people vulnerable to gang violence.

- **Prevention of Escalating Conflicts:** By engaging high-risk individuals early through credible messengers and peer advocates, conflicts can be de-escalated before they turn violent. This will save lives, reduce injuries, and create a safer environment, particularly in high-crime neighborhoods.

2 Improved Quality of Life

- **Enhanced Public Safety:** With fewer violent incidents, residents will regain confidence in public spaces like parks, schools, and shopping areas. Parents will feel safer letting their children play outside, and businesses can thrive without the shadow of violence looming over them.

- **Psychological Healing and Trauma Support:** Addressing mental health through crisis response and support groups will help residents, especially those traumatized by violence, heal from the psychological toll. Programs focused on trauma recovery will give victims and at-risk individuals healthier coping mechanisms.

THE BENEFITS OF TAKING ACTION IN SALEM

3 **Stronger Social and Community Bonds**

- **Increased Trust and Engagement:** Initiatives like peace walks and neighborhood connections will foster unity and trust among community members. Neighbors who feel safer are more likely to engage in activities, contribute to the community, and collaborate with law enforcement, improving overall public safety and reducing crime through collective action.

- **Rebuilding Community Trust in Law Enforcement:** Proactive programs that combine community outreach with policing—such as interactive police programs and governance strategies—will rebuild trust between residents and the police. This collaboration will lead to better reporting of crimes, which will enhance community policing efforts and responsiveness.

4 **Economic and Social Revitalization**

- **Economic Growth in Vulnerable Areas:** Reduced violence will encourage businesses to stay in or return to high-crime neighborhoods, leading to economic revitalization. Property values will rise, and the stigma around violent areas will diminish, making them attractive for investment and development.

- **Job Creation for At-Risk Youth:** Programs like call-ins that offer pathways to employment through business partnerships can provide second-chance employment for young adults at risk of gang involvement. Securing stable jobs gives them an alternative to violence and crime, fostering long-term economic security.

THE BENEFITS OF TAKING ACTION IN SALEM

5 Support for Vulnerable Populations

- **Increased Resources for Youth and Families:** Expanding after-school programs, parenting support, and other youth-focused initiatives will keep teens and young adults engaged in positive activities, reducing the likelihood of involvement in gangs or crime. This will build a stronger foundation for young people to make better life choices.

- **Comprehensive Support for Unsheltered and Marginalized:** Programs that prioritize the unsheltered community and offer wraparound services will ensure that marginalized populations, particularly those exposed to violence, receive the housing, mental health care, and support they need to stabilize their lives.

6 Holistic Violence Prevention and Long-Term Transformation

- **Addressing Root Causes of Violence:** By tackling systemic issues like housing insecurity, poverty, and mental health, the City of Salem will address the underlying causes of violence, leading to sustainable change. This will not only reduce immediate violence but also disrupt cycles of crime, offering hope and opportunity to future generations.

- **Fostering Radical Belonging:** Initiatives designed to expand the circle of human concern—by treating individuals with dignity and addressing their needs holistically—will create an inclusive community where everyone, regardless of background, feels they belong. This will reduce othering and foster lasting social cohesion.

THE BENEFITS OF TAKING ACTION IN SALEM

Conclusion

The proposed 10-10-10 plans should be initiated as resources—time, personnel, and funding—become available. We recommend formalizing these recommendations through a strategic planning retreat with the Community Working Group and key stakeholders. A critical step will be investing in the coordination of a network capable of achieving these outcomes, which includes recruiting new partners and collaborating with city leaders. Leveraging public resources will be vital to ensure the long-term sustainability of this work.

By taking action, Salem can expect to see significant reductions in violence, economic revitalization, and a more connected, resilient community. For at-risk individuals, this means the chance for a future free from violence, increased opportunities, and a safer, more supportive environment in which to thrive. Ultimately, implementing these strategies will transform Salem into a safer, more equitable, and stronger city.

THANK YOU

We extend our deepest gratitude to all the community members, city leaders and law enforcement personnel, particularly Chief Trevor Womack, Deputy Chief Debra Aguilar and Public Information Officer, Angela Hedrick, who attended the summer listening sessions and contributed their voices, experiences, and ideas to this vital discussion on addressing community violence in Salem. Your participation, courage, and insights have helped shape a comprehensive path forward to make our neighborhoods safer, more connected, and filled with opportunity for all. By sharing your stories, you have played a critical role in identifying the challenges and solutions that will guide Salem's response to gun violence, gang activity, and the underlying issues that threaten the wellbeing of our most vulnerable communities.

As we reflect on the powerful recommendations gathered from these sessions—ranging from expanded mental health resources and youth engagement programs to peace walks and stronger partnerships between law enforcement and local leaders—it is clear that the solutions are within reach. Together, we have outlined a framework for fostering safety, rebuilding trust, and creating lasting change. Now, the next step is turning these recommendations into action.

CALL TO ACTION

To every reader of this report, we urge you to ask yourself: **What can I do to support this work?** Whether it's volunteering with community groups, supporting youth programs, participating in peace walks, or advocating for policy changes, your engagement is crucial. Everyone has a role to play in building a safer, more inclusive Salem. The challenge of addressing community violence is complex, but through collective action, we can expand the circle of human concern and create a city where everyone belongs.

The **Empower Initiative** stands ready to support the City of Salem in implementing these recommendations. We recognize that time is of the essence. The urgency to act cannot be overstated—each day without action risks further violence and suffering in our community. By working together now, we can prevent future tragedies, heal the trauma caused by violence, and ensure a better future for all residents of Salem.

Thank you for your commitment, your courage, and your care. Let's continue this work, shoulder to shoulder, and transform Salem into a place where everyone is safe, supported, and truly at home.

THANK YOU