

Violence Prevention Work Group Releases Report

Thursday October 25, 2012

"Turning this report into an action plan and implementing the recommendations will take time, but the work has already started," Fischer said. "We need community partners to tell us what role they can play."

Some of the report's short-term recommendations include expanding policing efforts, particularly in the Parkland and Russell neighborhoods. That effort is already underway with the reorganization of the police department and the creation of the VIPER unit (Violence Incident Prevention Enforcement and Response) by Police Chief Steve Conrad. Longer-term tactics include the hiring of a full-time Violence Prevention Coordinator for the city and expanding and improving the quality of after-school and summer programs to keep children and young adults off the streets.

The group, formed in June, had five subcommittees which made recommendations in five areas — community building; education; employment and economic development; health and social wellness; juvenile and criminal justice. Highlights include:

Community Building, chaired by Eleanor Jordan, resident of the Parkland neighborhood

- Continue to tackle the significant and complex issues surrounding vacant and abandoned properties;
- Restore neighborhood/community liaisons to assist in creating neighborhood associations and block watches;
- Encourage the Louisville Metro Housing Authority to require orientation sessions for families moving into scattered-site housing to know what is expected of them as tenants;
- Encourage construction of more market-rate housing in Western Louisville;
- Encourage smaller churches to join together — and pool financial resources — to offer services around violence prevention and programs for ex-offenders.

Education, chaired by Dana Jackson-Thompson, executive director of the Network Center for Community Change, and Dr. Ricky Jones, UL professor

- Create robust programs for youth while they're out of school;
- Implement a comprehensive student support system which bridges school and community and addresses the academic/social/health/behavioral needs of students;
- Increase the number of African-Americans enrolled in Advanced Placement courses;
- Increase post-secondary attainment and graduation;
- Develop violence prevention programs in the schools;
- Develop a full-scale campaign to extol the benefits of a higher education and to create a college-going culture citywide;

Employment/Economic Development, chaired by Samuel Watkins, president of the Louisville Central Community Center

- Focus economic development activity in specific areas of Western Louisville — Park Duvalle, the Old Walnut Street/Muhammad Ali corridor, West Market and West Broadway between 14th and 34th streets;
- Make strategic public infrastructure investments for better streetscapes in those same four areas;
- Ensure that West Louisville residents get a fair share of the jobs created by the Ohio River Bridges Project;
- Grow and develop new entrepreneurs in Western Louisville;
- Hire people from Western Louisville to care for vacant properties.

Health/Social Wellness, chaired by Dr. Nesbitt

- Create a Young Adult Fatality Review Committee to develop a comprehensive and systematic approach for reviewing young adults deaths;
- Develop a suicide prevention program, to be led by the city Health and Wellness Department. More people in Louisville commit suicide than are murdered each year – and suicides have far-reaching impacts;
- Create a Louisville Nature and Outdoor Stewardship Center in Shawnee Park to connect children to the outdoors;
- Replicate Operation Ceasefire, originally created in Boston in the 1990s, that focuses on people involved in gangs and/or drug-related activities;
- Create a Crisis Response Team to help victims' family and friends deal with the immediate aftermaths of homicides (formation and training is already underway).

Juvenile/Criminal Justice, chaired by Circuit Judge Brian Edwards.

- Develop programs to better integrate ex-offenders back into society;
- Provide early intervention programs for young people the first time they have contact with the criminal justice system;
- Create Community Accountability Boards where trained citizen volunteers resolve low-level crimes committed by juveniles;
- Encourage expansion of mental health courts that service people who commit crimes due to mental illness;
- Lobby for legislation to allow automatic restoration of civil and voting rights once ex-offenders serve their time.