TO: The Kalamazoo City Commission  
FROM: Mayor Anderson, Vice Mayor Griffin, and Commissioner Hess  
DATE: December 7, 2020  
SUBJECT: Gun Violence Interventions  

RECOMMENDATION  

It is recommended that the City Commission approve the use of $100,000 from the City Commission Initiatives line item to support gun violence reduction efforts; direct the City Manager to provide periodic updates to the full City Commission on program development and implementation; and authorize the City Manager to sign all documents related to these efforts.  

BACKGROUND  

Mayor David Anderson indicated in a statement released earlier this year:  

“We have a gun violence crisis in Kalamazoo. And, although cities across Michigan and the nation are having similar experiences, we cannot accept this in our community. Every resident has a right to expect that, no matter what neighborhood they call home, it will be a safe place for them and their families…We must contemplate what daily path to tread so that the idea of serious violence in our shared community is an inconceivable notion. Our response will require us all to determine how we can be a part of the solution. What affects one of us, affects all of us.”  

Kalamazoo is experiencing an increase in gun violence like cities across the country. In 2019 there were 31 non-fatal shootings and 13 gun-related homicides. As of mid-October 2020, there have been 60 non-fatal shootings and 11 gun-related homicides. The map attachment shows gun violence activity that has occurred throughout the city, with concentrations happening in several of our neighborhoods.  

Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) has been actively working to address the increase in gun violence through several different initiatives; however, a systems-change approach is needed that works to address the root of the problem. Effective interventions must recognize contributing factors to gun violence which are linked to social determinants of health. Gun violence can be tied to economic stability, education and access, environment, access to healthcare, etc.
Mayor Anderson, Vice Mayor Griffin and Commissioner Hess each suggested strategies to the
City Manager for addressing gun violence in the community. Over the past several weeks, City
Manager Ritsema convened a series of meetings with the three commissioners, Chief Coakley,
Assistant Chief Boysen, and Deputy City Managers Moore and Lam to discuss gun violence
intervention strategies. The intent of these meetings was to develop a shared understanding on
how to collectively approach the issue of gun violence in our community; and to finalize a plan to
convene community leaders, and take swift action, to advance a collective gun violence reduction
strategy.

Over the course of four meetings, the ad hoc group developed a multi-layered proposal to impact
gun violence in the city of Kalamazoo:

1) **Community mobilization & cohesion**: engaging community leaders actively working to
reduce violence; develop and grow block clubs
2) **Community healing**: mental health services for survivors/victims of gun violence
3) **Housing rehabilitation**: support for repairing homes involved in gun violence
4) **Increased security systems**, such as Ring Security Cameras

**Community Mobilization & Cohesion:**

Community Leadership and Engagement

Interfaith Strategy for Advocacy and Action in the Community’s (ISAAC) Gun Violence
Prevention Task Force, the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) Team, community leaders involved
in the Anti-Gun Violence Coalition, and KDPS have been making plans to intentionally deepen
communication, brainstorming and coordination among various efforts. There are successful
initiatives underway in the community, and City staff are interested in identifying ways to provide
support.

**Block Club Project: $25,000**

Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) is an initiative that originated with the Kalamazoo City
Commission’s decision in 2014 to make poverty reduction a key priority for the city. Under the
leadership of the City Commission, Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo was established to place
emphasis on more broadly shared prosperity, not just the alleviation of poverty. In an attempt to
realize this objective, SPK identified three distinct but interrelated goals to carry out its work: 1)
increase access to good jobs; 2) ensure the healthy growth, development, and learning of all our
youth; and 3) create strong families.

Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) target neighborhoods -- Northside, Edison, and Eastside --
have seen increasing numbers of violent incidents due to poverty. As socioeconomic and
environmental conditions decline, the costs of poverty are negatively affecting local neighborhood
systems. To meet the socioeconomic, human, and safety needs of SPK target neighborhoods, the
City is seeking to pilot a network of resident-led block clubs to offer accessible opportunities for
acquiring security systems and training to build power among residents. Primary goals for this
project are to:
• Improve communications between city organizations and neighborhood residents
• Develop helpful connections to people, information, and opportunities within and between neighborhoods (social capital)
• Foster environments of increased community health and wellbeing, safety, and leadership capacity

As shown in other metropolitan cities across the nation, block clubs have increased community cohesion, collective efficacy, and strengthened social capital, in addition to creating safer spaces. Block clubs should prove effective in SPK target neighborhoods because there is an appetite for involving residents as producers and co-creators of solutions, not just consumers of program services. This can be accomplished via block club development by providing accessible, equitable platforms for people to turn available resources into the power they need to make the changes they want while increasing neighborhood safety. Block clubs should also prove effective in SPK target neighborhoods because they can create a direct channel to communicate with families and youth.

Funds are intended to support resident recruitment, orientation, training, events, evaluation, and outreach.

**Community Healing: $25,000**

As Mayor Anderson has stated, “The tragic, senseless and horrific deaths and shootings are devastating events for the entire community. It is a profound loss for children, for mothers, for family, for friends, for neighborhoods and our City. All of us experience the riptide of this trauma. Everyone suffers. No one is unscathed. We must first hold a place in our hearts for the families for whom these events are front and center, forever and unalterably life changing.” With each act of violence, the need for mental health supports deepen. Funds are proposed to support community efforts underway to improve access to culturally competent mental health professionals for community members impacted by gun violence.

**Housing Rehabilitation: $25,000**

There have been a number of homes that have been severely damaged by gunfire – leaving residents to deal with costly repairs in addition to trauma from the incident. Funds are proposed to support the development and implementation of a pilot for income eligible residents to receive assistance for home repair after a shooting has occurred.

**Increased Security Systems: $25,000**

The City has been researching security camera initiatives in which municipalities partner with a company to improve access to cameras through discounted, bulk pricing and a streamlined purchase process. Security cameras, video doorbells and alarm systems for residential use can link smartphone users to their devices. Through this technology, residents have the capability to see visitors through their smartphones, tablets or desktops.
Funds are proposed to purchase security systems to offer to residents. Initially security system distribution will be focused within the block club initiative to those who wish to participate and could be expanded to larger areas that have experienced the most gun activity. This program is under development while staff work through a number of details.

Proposed Budget

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block club project</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community healing</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing rehabilitation</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased security systems</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$100,000</strong></td>
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The budget is preliminary and may be adjusted as program details are finalized. The City Manager will provide updated budget information in his periodic program updates.

STRATEGIC VISION ALIGNMENT

**Safe Community** - Creating a safe environment for living, working, and playing

FISCAL IMPACT

This proposal intends to utilize the full $100,000 allocated for City Commission initiatives in the 2020 General Fund budget.