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NOW

Author Alex Kotlowitz and others weigh in with views, ideas and analysis in Crain's Forum. **PAGES 16-24**



FORUM

A new mayor vows to confront Chicago's gun violence with all-hands methods that have worked in L.A. and other big cities. But traumatized neighborhoods say they don't have time to wait. **PAGE 15**

BRIAN STAUFFER

Lessons from a Boston casino

Is attracting high-rolling international tourists key?

BY STEVEN R. STRAHLER

Call it an out-of-town tryout for a Chicago casino.

Just outside Boston, in a once-gritty, post-industrial locale, Wynn Resorts this summer opened a luxurious gambling house whose number of gaming positions rivals those recently authorized for Chicago.

Though not the first so-called integrated resort in the U.S. outside of Las Vegas, the \$2.6 billion Encore Boston Harbor project is portrayed as a model as the casino industry creeps beyond its riverboat roots in the hinterlands to attract high-rolling international tourists.

See **CASINO** on Page 11



After three years, Boston's Encore is projected to produce as much as \$1 billion in revenue.

GETTY IMAGES

Was GTCR's investment in Sterigenics a bad bet?

Lawsuits, a plant closure and more spell trouble

BY LYNNE MAREK

Chicago private-equity firm GTCR buys companies all over the world in search of investment gains, but one purchase closer to home has backfired recently, in a big way.

In 2011, GTCR bought Oak Brook-based Sterigenics, which uses chemicals to sterilize medical and lab equipment. One of

its plants in Willowbrook was shut down in February after revelations that it's been spewing cancer-causing fumes into the air for decades. Outraged residents are demanding it be closed permanently.

The plant has lost revenue with the closing, and Sterigenics plans to spend as much as \$27 million in emissions upgrades across all of its U.S. plants. But those amounts may pale compared to a potential hundreds of millions

See **STERIGENICS** on Page 41

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CHICKEN WARS

McDonald's plays catch-up as Chick-fil-A and Popeyes race ahead with premium chicken sandwiches. **PAGE 3**



CAHILL

Illinois' marijuana and gambling bills attracted enough support to pass, but the triumphs may turn into hollow victories. **PAGE 4**



Exploring
public policy
issues that
matter to
Chicago
business

FORUM

CRAIN'S

GUN VIOLENCE

INSIDE

HIDDEN COSTS: The price of gun violence is well into the billions. **PAGE 20**

GUEST COLUMNS: Views from the street, the lab, the clinic and the precinct. **PAGES 16-19, 24**

Children hold hands at a vigil in Englewood for two young mothers killed by errant gunfire. Inset: Tamar Manasseh of Mothers Against Senseless Killings.



PHOTOS BY TODD WINTERS

Chicago has a unique chance to embrace the methods other cities have used to reduce gun violence. But the toll mounts, patience is thin and a new mayor must confront the problem's deep roots. **BY DAVID MENDELL**

THE MOMENT IS NOW



ONLINE

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Between her hard-edged demeanor and unyielding pleas for help, Tamar Manasseh displays the symptoms of someone suffering from Chicago's chronic illness, a deadly plague of gun violence and persistent fear in the city's most distressed neighborhoods that Chicago leaders have been unable to cure.

"No other group of people is expected to live this way," Manasseh says. "Why are we? Why us?"

She asks such unanswerable questions on an early August evening. Her brow furrowed, she stands with arms crossed in an empty lot in Englewood, moments after a vigil for two young neighborhood mothers killed by what police say was errant gunfire.

In the wake of the shootings, Manasseh and the group she leads, Mothers Against Senseless Killings, or MASK, blasted the office of Mayor Lori Lightfoot with letters, emails and phone calls. Even as the city's new leadership is lining up behind a new anti-violence approach more aligned with community groups like Manasseh's, the women delivered an angry message:

People in the line of fire have no time to wait.

Lightfoot came into office in May proclaiming violence reduction as the city's No. 1 priority. She's given signs that she would employ a more comprehensive, less police-intensive approach to gun crime, similar to the strategies that Los Angeles and New York have used to re-

duce gun violence.

Toward that end, she appointed Susan Lee, a highly regarded anti-violence strategist instrumental in Los Angeles' success, as Chicago's deputy mayor for public safety. Lee's charge: to substantially reduce shootings and homicides using the all-in, violence-as-public-health-issue approach that's been effective in those cities. By hiring Lee, Lightfoot is betting on those prescriptions to cure Chicago, too.

National experts in violence reduction are optimistic that the duo of Lee and Lightfoot—a former federal prosecutor and police board chair—

See **MOMENT** on Page 22

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▶ A MEASURE OF URGENCY

Let's be more honest, human in telling story of our city's violence



Alex Kotlowitz is an award-winning author of four books, including the national best-seller *"There Are No Children Here."* His latest, *"An American Summer,"* was published this year. He teaches at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

"He would write her birthday cards and loved her peach cobbler."

The violence in our city persists with such stubbornness and such pervasiveness. The stories of loss roll along with such regularity that they begin to blur with each other. What's more, far too often news articles report that an incident was "gang-related" or that the victim had a criminal record, suggesting that what goes around comes around. Or the articles simply report the numbers as if we were keeping track of a pennant race.

We need to slow down. We need to take a breath. We need to recognize the humanity in those who have lost their lives and those left behind.

In my book *"An American Summer,"* one of the stories I tell is of the murder of 25-year-old Chicagoan Darren Easterling, who was shot multiple times in the suburb of Park Forest. The headline the next day in the *SouthtownStar* read: "Man shot to death in Park Forest had drug, weapons convictions." Readers responded with comments calling Darren "an out of town thug" and "a clown." One asked, "Where are his parents?" (This is not an uncommon refrain. In Chicago, after a 7-year-old was fatally shot in the chest with a bullet intended for someone else, then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel publicly asked of the shooter, "Where were you raised, and who raised you?")

Darren's mother, Lisa Daniels, thought to herself, "You don't know my son. You don't know me." Lisa would be the first to tell you that there was nothing factually wrong with the newspaper article, but it was incomplete. It was not true to who Darren was. He played football and loved to watch documentaries on the Discovery network. He would write her birthday cards and loved her peach cobbler.

She wrote a letter to the newspaper that read, in part, that many "will insist on believing that he was a trash laden thug from another town. . . . However the truth is that my son, just like many before him, has a mother who loved him (and misses him) dearly, he was a brother, a father, a nephew, a friend to many. . . . You all have the right to own your perspective, but I have spoken my son's truth."

Lisa recognizes that stories, if not told honestly, lead to a lazy, simplified view of humanity. If not told honestly, they make it far too easy for people to turn their heads.

She intuitively knows that storytelling's power comes from its ability to evoke empathy, to imag-



Darren Easterling

ine yourself in the place of others, to come to understand others in all their complexities, in all their fullness and richness. If we can do that, then perhaps it will spark a measure of urgency among the rest of us.

As novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has said, "Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity."

Telling stories, I know, will not

eliminate the violence. It may not even reduce it. At least not immediately. But what it will do is build connections. As Adichie says, "Stories matter."

Not long ago, Lisa, who now sits on the state parole board, spoke to 125 men in the gym at Danville Correctional Center. There she told her son's story. She spoke about reclaiming his narrative and urged

these men to tell their stories, to do so with candor and equanimity. She told them the rest of us needed to hear about their grief, their remorse, their pain. And to hear about them, about their loves and their ambitions, about their families and friends.

Afterward, one man approached Lisa. "Thank you," he said, "for not dying in your pain."

DARREN B. EASTERLING CENTER FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

► SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTEXT

Nature of gangs changed, so should our strategy

Another round of violence in Chicago leads to another round of debate as to why and who's to blame. The notion that gangs are the problem and the police are the solution pervades public and policy conversations. Yet the violence persists and the frustrations mount.

To understand violence in Chicago, we must first understand the contexts in which it occurs. The complexities we then see point to the need for more nuanced approaches that go beyond attributing the violence to any single factor or set of actors. The significance of context cannot be overstated.

In early 2019, the Great Cities Institute released a report, "The Fracturing of Gangs and Violence in Chicago: A Research-Based Reorientation of Violence Prevention and Intervention Policy," authored by me and four top gang researchers: professors John Hagedorn (University of Illinois at Chicago),

Roberto Aspholm (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville), Andrew Papachristos (Northwestern University) and Lance Williams (North-eastern Illinois University).

The report illuminates how the structure of African American gangs has changed. They are not vertical hierarchies with leaders at the top calling the shots but are fragmented, horizontal cliques that are rarely connected to one another. Names of these unique formations are sometimes inspired by rap lyrics or a slain member.

While the perpetrators of violence may be members of gangs, the report clearly states, "much violence today is the product of interpersonal disputes and retaliation, unrelated to traditional gang rivalries or drug markets."

"Hypersensitivity to insult," itself a result of socioeconomic conditions in households and neighborhoods,

underlies interpersonal disputes driven by the search for dignity and respect, often denied in other settings. "Existing codes of hypermasculinity" demand response, and a cycle of violence ensues.

While true on the West Side, it's even more pronounced among African American gangs on the South Side where demolition of Chicago Housing Authority projects diffused residents. The Chicago Public Schools' Renaissance 2010 plan, which called for closing 80 neighborhood schools, led to the displacement of many young African American men. The more recent closing of 50 schools further deepened both the exit from schools and cross-neighborhood violence.

These changing realities require a new narrative about the cause of violence and different expectations for how to intervene, including what constitutes good law enforcement.

Focusing on gang leaders is "outdated and ineffective." Effective policing strategies are coming from those on-the-ground police units that understand the inter-clique

dynamics in real time, as they seek to prevent the next shooting. Restorative justice and community policing are integral to the renewal of community-driven values and serve as the basis for rebuilding communities.

But even these efforts may seem futile in the face of much deeper forces at play, evident in the disinvested neighborhoods with high rates of youth joblessness where most of the violence occurs. The authors of the gang report demonstrate that Chicago's persistently high homicide rates resemble those in Rust Belt cities that decades later are still dealing with the impacts of deindustrialization evidenced by dismantled neighborhoods left behind in a restructured economy.

Intervention policies must understand the power of this context. Nonetheless, people in these neighborhoods have the right to enjoy the benefits of living in a safe and secure environment.

Reducing violence in Chicago re-

quires a comprehensive approach to neighborhood development on the scale of a Marshall Plan. This requires public investment (federal, state and local) in education (particularly pre-K), infrastructure (including transportation), social services and workforce development, which sets the stage for quality private investment that rebuilds neighbor-

"... interpersonal disputes and retaliation, unrelated to traditional gang rivalries or drug markets."

hoods and restores the hope that something else is possible.

The call now is for meaningful, nonpolarized conversations that begin by acknowledging the inter-related nature of poverty, violence and security.

The realities of the decline of traditional gang structures should be the start of a changing narrative of Chicago from a "city of gangs" back to a "city of neighborhoods"—including vibrant, revitalized neighborhoods on the West and South sides.



Teresa Cordova is director of the Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The Joyce Foundation invests in the future of the Great Lakes region by supporting policies that advance racial equity and economic mobility for the next generation.

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FORUM IDEAS



READI Chicago participants meet in a peace circle to discuss their experiences.

► ON THE STREET

Outreach, intervention model a better path



Napoleon English is an outreach worker with READI Chicago, a program overseen by the nonprofit Heartland Alliance, which tries to reduce gun violence by connecting people to jobs and services.

North Lawndale is a community grieving. In August, a 20-year-old participant in READI Chicago, a gun violence reduction initiative, was shot and killed while walking home one late afternoon. Another participant had been killed just a few days before.

People in our neighborhood can't even venture off their own block. We know to run zigzag if someone chases us so we won't get hit. This seems normal to us, but it's not. We accept it because it's what we've always known. It's hard trying to convince people to do something different—how can you change your life if you've never seen anything else?

As an outreach worker trained to connect people with READI Chicago, I see every day that what works for some people won't work for everyone. The people who are out here shooting and killing people, those are the ones we have to come at with a different approach.

It's hard to convince someone to leave the money they're making on the street without showing them an alternative. For me, it took reaching my rock bottom in prison to make me realize I needed to make a change, but we need to interrupt the cycle of violence and incarceration before it gets to that point.

Outreach and community involvement are critical to interrupting violence in Chicago. We are peacemakers. That's why it's vital to connect people like me, who have been in these streets and understand the plight, with professional training opportunities like those offered through the Metropolitan Peace Academy. And we need help from the larger Chicago community.

Outreach workers like me at Lawn-

dale Christian Legal Center and READI Chicago are trained in restorative justice, trauma-informed care and cognitive behavioral therapy, a core component of READI that helps people shift their thinking to react to situations in a different way.

These tools are necessary for any effective outreach team out on these streets because it's tense out here—people think we're the police or threaten to shoot us. We need to be able to recognize our own trauma and triggers, and to recognize that someone else might be going through something that will affect the situation.

We need strategies for bringing in new participants, like beginning with a "peace circle" to air out any safety concerns and talk about how to respond if something happens. If someone is kicked out of READI Chicago, we try to re-engage them and bring them back to the program through a peace circle.

We're modeling the shift that we as a community need to make away from retaliation or punishment, to focus instead on healing and coming together.

The solution isn't going to happen overnight. This is a work in progress because we need entire communities on board, and these communities have been lied to and left out.

We're not going to get any progress without trust, and that's why we need to reach every single block and empower community members to be peace ambassadors themselves. We have to expose people to something different from what they've been doing and show them, "Hey, there's a different way than killing our brothers and sisters."

► FROM THE CRIME LAB

Commitments lead to peace

While we still see spikes in weekend violence, and headlines that decry the city not doing enough, it is apparent to me that continual progress is being made to make neighborhoods safer and to create a more transparent and accountable Police Department.

On reform, Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson has revised policy to promote accountability, overhauled training and committed to collaboration with the newly appointed independent monitor for the city's consent decree.

On violent crime, significant declines in gun violence continue since a tragic spike in 2016. This includes a five-year low in murders for the month of July and a

nearly 40 percent reduction in shootings since the Chicago Police Department implemented a data-driven strategy that puts communities first and gets officers to the right places at the right times.

So, Chicago is making progress. But with a murder rate still many times that of New York or Los Angeles, with fraught police-community relationships and one of the most expansive consent decrees ever drafted, much work remains.

What we are all hoping for in the end is peace. Peace fuels progress and prosperity. Peace allows us to come together to solve problems. But how do we achieve peace in the midst of competing priorities, with warring factions on the street and even among our own civic institutions?

► FROM THE CLINIC

Treat lifelong trauma behind the triggers

This year began on a hopeful note. Through the first seven months of 2019, citywide efforts to reduce gun violence in Chicago resulted in the lowest number of shootings and homicides over the same time period since 2015.

Then, in the early morning hours of Sunday, Aug. 4, while a group of people socialized at a local park after an arts festival, someone in a passing car opened fire with a semiautomatic weapon. Seven people were wounded. Less than three hours later, another drive-by shooting took place in the same community. Seven more people were wounded, and one person was killed.

Such cycles of violence—hard-earned peace interrupted by multiple shootings—are painfully familiar in Chicago. And while the specific factors involved in these two incidents aren't clear, what lies at the heart of the violence is chronic stress and trauma.

As we see at Chicago CRED, a nonprofit aimed at reducing violence by, in part, providing economic opportunities to people at highest risk of involvement in street warfare, the young men

and women engaged in community violence typically begin their lives in families struggling with deep, persistent multigenerational poverty, framed in South and West Side neighborhoods by over a century of racial segregation and decades of economic dislocation and resource deprivation.

They grew up in households and neighborhoods overwhelmed by chronic stress associated with joblessness, financial strain, housing instability, inadequate health care, low-quality schools, exposure to crime, domestic and community violence, and mass incarceration. And those who later become shooters (and victims) often experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect and abandonment by caregivers who were impaired by the immense weight of their own traumatic experiences.

When a person is inundated with chronically stressful and life-threatening events from childhood to adulthood, the human stress-response system—brainstem, midbrain, limbic system and autonomic nervous system—can permanently adapt to these conditions. In



Donald Tyler is a psychologist and director of clinical services at Chicago CRED, a nonprofit that provides therapy, training and employment opportunities to young, at-risk men and women.



Based on my 25 years with the Los Angeles Police Department and the last 2½ years working with CPD, here are a few ideas.

First, we need a commitment to collaborate. As Mayor Lori Light-

foot has said, "We have to bring people together." The police, residents, community-based organizations, faith leaders, government, academia and the private sector must meaningfully engage to develop,

implement, evaluate and invest in the most promising solutions.

Second, we need to be laser-focused on reducing the most harmful crime—gun violence. We need to acknowledge what that means.



Sean Malinowski is director of policing innovation and reform at the University of Chicago Crime Lab. He is a former chief of staff and chief of detectives with the Los Angeles Police Department.

It means a combination of prevention, intervention and, yes, enforcement.

Third, we need an urgent commitment to reform. This is a time for real transformation in law enforcement. This builds on the work Johnson has started, but requires the city coming together to give the department the support and investment it needs to institutionalize community-focused constitutional policing.

This includes a commitment to cops. Police officers don't just read about violence in the paper, they rush to victims' sides at shooting scenes and walk away hours later with blood on their boots and scars on their psyches. A recent increase in officer suicides under-

scores this fact.

Part of promoting reform and supporting good, hardworking officers is rooting out cops who may be brutal, lazy or corrupt. Those officers tarnish the badge, and there is no place for them in the CPD.

We know that well-trained, well-equipped officers who feel supported perform better, use less force, commit less misconduct, are more productive and are less prone to suicide. These are the officers Chicago deserves, and now is the time for the city and other funders to dig deep to get us there.

We can achieve peace in Chicago, but first we must all commit to collaboration, to crime fighting, to reform and to our officers—and we need to do it soon.



other words, the brain and body change in ways that make them consistently oriented to identify threats and prevent and defend against harm.

In these circumstances, a person experiences persistent hyperarousal in anticipation of potential or actual danger and remains physiologically primed for fight or flight in rapid response to perceived threats.

Given their history of interpersonal trauma and continuous exposure to ecological stress and incessant gang warfare, the survival response for people entrenched in these conditions is frequently aggression and often violence—fight, not flight.

Many different approaches are being taken to curb gun violence in Chicago, but unless we tackle the chronic stress and transgenerational trauma

that contribute to all of this violence, real solutions will remain elusive.

Chicago CRED, where I am director of clinical services, is aiming to do this by helping increase the safety of all those in our communities, providing pathways to healing that alleviate the compulsion to retaliate while elevating the value of life, and opening up opportunities for young people to change their lifestyles, earn legitimate incomes and build careers.

CRED doesn't have all the answers, and we are continually looking for better ways to make progress, but by addressing the heart of the problem, we hope to achieve a transformative reduction in gun violence, bring an end to immeasurable suffering and establish the lasting peace our communities need for this generation and the next.

► FIVE STEPS NOW

City and region shouldn't wait for Congress on gun control

At first blush, it may seem that gun violence in Chicago is miles away, literally and figuratively, from the recent mass shootings in Gilroy, El Paso and Dayton. But while the root causes of the violence—including racism, misogyny and poverty—may differ, there is one inarguable commonality: the easy availability of guns in our country.

Without question, America has a gun violence problem because we have a gun problem. We have far more guns and far weaker gun laws than any other country in the developed world.

As a result, we in the U.S. are 25 times more likely to die from a gun homicide than our peers. In Chicago, easy access to guns fuels our violence. Last year, the Chicago Police Department took nearly 10,000 guns off the streets—more than Los Angeles and New York City combined.

While shootings have come down since 2016, we have a long way to go to make all Chicagoans safe from gun violence. To do that, we must address the proliferation of guns.

We don't need to wait for Congress to act. Here are five things our local and state leaders should do now.



Nina E. Vinik is program director for gun violence prevention and justice reform at the Joyce Foundation.

1. Improve responsibility and accountability of gun sellers. This year, Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed the Firearm Dealer License Certification Act, which requires dealers to secure their gun stock and train employees to curtail straw purchases. The Illinois State Police should prioritize implementation of this law, which evidence shows can reduce trafficking.

2. Strengthen Illinois' firearm licensing system and institute universal background checks. Legislation to require fingerprints for firearm owner's identification card applicants, the surrender of guns by those who become prohibited and universal checks for every gun buyer

passed the Illinois House this year and is pending in the Senate. These are best practices backed by research.

3. Fully implement Illinois' new Firearms Restraining Order Act. Also known as an "extreme risk protection order," it allows for temporary removal of guns from people at high risk of violence. Similar laws in other states have thwarted mass shootings and disarmed domestic abusers.

4. Use crime gun tracing to tar-

get the supply channels for illegal guns. In 2014 and 2017, the city released Crime Gun Trace Reports analyzing sources of recovered guns in Chicago. This data showed that 40 percent of Chicago's crime guns come from Illinois gun stores—six of the top seven sources of crime guns in Chicago are stores in Cook County; 21 percent come from Indiana. Chicago should release similar reports annually, and jurisdictions surrounding Chicago and downstate should share their crime gun data to identify trafficking patterns and targeted enforcement strategies.

5. Build a regional gun violence prevention partnership with surrounding states. Crime guns do not respect jurisdictional boundaries. Working with the county, Illinois attorney general and counterparts in

"...jurisdictions surrounding Chicago should share their crime gun data."

Indiana, Wisconsin and other states to trace guns, share intelligence and target resources for enforcement would be an important step.

The recent tragedies remind us of the persistent threat gun violence poses to the health and safety of all Americans. Let's tackle the root causes, including the guns.

The Joyce Foundation is a sponsor of Crain's Forum.

FORUM GUN VIOLENCE

► BOTTOM LINE

Hidden costs push price of violence into the billions

BY JAMES WARREN

As an \$18-an-hour operations aide at a prominent Loop law firm, 21-year-old Jeremy Jordan personifies the giant, often hidden costs of Chicago's rampant gun violence.

In 2017, his brother was paralyzed for life in a Pilsen shooting never solved by police, ensuring a lifetime of lost wages and medical bills, including half a dozen surgeries at taxpayer expense. A few days later, Jordan was in Cook County Jail for illegal possession of a handgun, but it wasn't long before he bonded out—and therefore was back on the street, admittedly at risk of getting in more trouble.

But after an improbable jailhouse encounter with Arne Duncan, the former U.S. education secretary now running Chicago CRED—a counseling and job placement service trying to address the violence—Jordan was connected with law firm DLA Piper, which wagered on employing him instead.

"Everyone deserves a second chance, and it is incumbent on all of us to provide that opportunity," says Rich Klawiter, vice chair of DLA Piper's national real estate practice.

Jordan's story is a small window into both the costs of Chicago's gun crime and potential ways to turn it around, each difficult to quantify with precision. The unknowns parallel a lack of consensus on why homicide rates in both New York City and Los Angeles have plummeted far further than in Chicago in recent years. Some cite Chicago's greater concentration of poverty, history of segregation and larger quantities of guns.

One thing is inescapably clear: While calculations differ, the annual bottom line is in the billions as gun crime impairs the economy, culture and emotional health of the

"Whatever (the costs) are, we very likely underestimate them."

city, as well as its worldwide brand. And a turnaround would be more expensive than politicians are given to let on, especially at a time of extreme financial challenges for the city and state.

The violence results in both direct and indirect costs, including lost business, fewer jobs, lowered productivity, declining property values, rising emergency and long-term medical costs, disinvestment across the city's more troubled neighborhoods, and burdens on the criminal justice system.

"Gun violence fundamentally

shapes the way people in Chicago lead their lives," says Northwestern University gun violence researcher Andrew Papachristos. The costs, he says, "whatever they are, we very likely underestimate them."

ADDING IT UP

Among those trying to quantify the costs is Boston Consulting Group, which has analyzed the numbers at the behest of CRED. It has estimated the direct costs in 2018 at more than \$3 billion, including emergency room costs and victims' disabilities in addition to police work, prosecutions and incarceration. That includes \$1.6 million per homicide, and \$1.1 million per nonfatal shooting.

Jens Ludwig, who runs the University of Chicago Crime Lab, estimated a cost to Chicago per gunshot injury, including deaths, of about \$1 million in a 2001 book, "Gun Violence: The Real Costs," written with Duke University economist Phil Cook.

Scaled for inflation, that would be about \$1.5 million in 2019 dollars, the Crime Lab says. Scaled for the number of shooting victims in Chicago annually in recent years, that calculation puts the cost at between \$4.5 billion and \$5 billion per year.

A precise breakdown was offered in an exhaustive 2015 project by Mother Jones, which worked with the Pacific Institute for Research & Evaluation to come up with a figure of \$441,000 for the direct costs of a single murder.

Even with this lower estimate, the annual per-person cost to every Illinois taxpayer is \$770.

UNCOUNTABLE

Many of the costs of the violence cannot be known. For instance, if the Chicago Police Department improved its poor record of solving homicides, jail and prison costs would surely go up. On the other hand, getting shooters off the street might lower costs

by preventing additional crimes.

Meanwhile, nobody has come to terms with the financial impact of the city's population loss, including a declining tax base. Some of it, including an exodus of African Americans, is believed to be driven in some fashion by gun violence.

And there are impacts one can't prove. How many businesses choose not to locate here due to a perception of high crime? It's not something most chief executives discuss openly.

San Francisco-based travel expert Henry Harteveldt says travel nation-

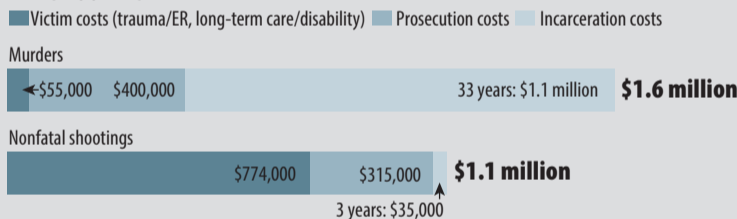


Jeremy Jordan was in jail for possessing a handgun. Now he works in a Loop law firm.

COSTS OF GUN VIOLENCE

The price of a city's gun violence, including both direct and indirect costs, is hard to quantify, and experts disagree on how to add it up. Boston Consulting Group, at the request of Chicago CRED, calculated just the direct costs to Chicago in 2018 at more than \$3 billion.

PER SHOOTING



Note: This does not reflect indirect costs: lost wages/GDP, lost tax revenues, other public assistance required, lost tourism, etc. Average costs of prosecution and incarceration depend on police crime-clearance rates. Source: Boston Consulting Group

wide is up year to year but suggests Chicago's numbers would be higher if not for its reputation for violence. He believes it negatively influences corporate travel managers and executive planners.

Chicago museum attendance? It's down, and some believe anxiety about crime is somewhere in the mix of reasons, including at the Museum of Science & Industry on the South Side, near where a good portion of the violence is concentrated.

"People make decisions not to come here, or to come and not go south," says John Canning, a private-equity investor who has served on multiple museum boards in the city. "I think it's an issue."

PRICE OF SOLUTIONS

Markedly divergent estimates also have surfaced over how much is needed to improve matters, if not solve the problem.

Thomas Abt, a Harvard University researcher, argues that reducing the homicide rate by one person can be accomplished for perhaps \$30,000. He contends that, spending about \$15 million per year, one can reasonably predict a 10 percent annual decline in the city homicide rate if the money is aimed at what he deems focused deterrence. That

includes targeted policing at crime hot spots and using cognitive behavioral therapy to help at-risk individuals make better decisions.

The Crime Lab offers heftier estimates, incorporating issues of poverty, segregation, housing, drug abuse, school funding, jobs for teens, mental health programs and a strengthened police department.

Gary Slutkin, founder of Cure Violence, an anti-violence organization in Chicago, estimates that to significantly drive down the homicides, at least \$20 million annually over several years needs to be spent on street intervention and other programs. He says New York spends \$30 million to \$35 million, while Los Angeles pours in \$20 million to \$25 million, a fraction of their budgets.

"When you are talking about \$25 million or \$30 million out of billions, and violence is inhibiting the progress on everything in your communities, it seems like a no-brainer," he says.

Among the costs will be the price of implementing a 2018 consent decree aimed at ending systemic Chicago police misconduct and improve training. That will cost many millions of dollars a year in oversight and other expenses, if

the decadelong experience of Los Angeles is predictive. For example, a new computer system alone was \$40 million.

That leaves who pays.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who has signaled she supports a more community-based strategy, is faced with raising taxes to deal with a \$1 billion deficit in the city's budget and a deficit in pension payments of almost \$30 billion.

Duncan says Jordan's story suggests how the city's business community could further help. Recruiting and training young people in the CRED program costs an average of \$25,000 to \$30,000 apiece for about a year, he says. But in the end, the program works only if businesses take a risk and hire them.

"My selfish interest is that the business community own this and see this as an economic problem, not a crime problem," Duncan says. "We have to hire our way out of this."

He argues that the trade-off to the city is "pennies on the dollar."

Business leaders point to a history of companies investing in community redevelopment and education when consensus emerges on the requisite solutions. With gun violence, though, some don't see the same agreement.

"The business community clearly wants gun violence in Chicago to end," says Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation. "However, there hasn't been a clear consensus path for what businesses must do—beyond what many Chicago businesses are already doing."

For his part, Jordan, who just rented his first apartment with a paycheck from DLA Piper, acknowledges the stakes—and costs—would be higher if he hadn't been shown a different path.

"If I didn't get arrested," he says, "I probably could have killed somebody and been in jail the rest of my life."

► BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

Another try at 'community policing'

CPD aims to rebuild trust, cooperation, aided by NYU pilot program

BY KARI LYDERSEN

Police officers in a West Side precinct are focused on radically changing how they interact with residents—trying everything from waving from their patrol cars to getting out for a friendly chat to helping people get jobs and health care.

It sounds like a typical “community policing” approach, but one eclipsed in recent years in Chicago in the bitter divide between police and neighborhoods that widened in the aftermath of the Jon Burge torture scandal and Laquan McDonald police shooting.

While some recall a time when officers from other cities came to Chicago to learn about community policing, the city now is looking to resurrect its efforts through a pilot program with help from New York.

The Neighborhood Policing Initiative, launched this year in the Chicago Police Department's 25th District, was crafted and proposed by New York University's law school. It's been a part of the strategy of the New York Police Department, which has had far more success than Chicago in reducing gun violence in recent years.

Overseen by two NYU employees based in Chicago, the strategy aims to assuage deep-seated mistrust of officers and develop collaborative relationships through which residents are more inclined to help police prevent crime and reverse the department's dismal record in solving gun-related cases.

The district covers largely low-income black and Latino neighborhoods with high rates of gun violence, including Austin, Belmont Cragin and Hermosa, where re-



Officer Carolina Salcedo is helping spearhead a pilot project that could help police prevent and solve crime.

lations between officers and residents have long been fraught.

Diana Mireles, 61, used to feel like police viewed everyone in her community as “the criminals they haven't caught yet.”

Today she is a volunteer “community ambassador” in the pilot project, helping build bridges. She and other ambassadors go door to door introducing officers to residents, inviting officers to block parties and basketball tournaments, and organizing “Cop Cafes” where residents and officers sit down to talk.

The idea is that officers and the community then work together to provide resources for those in need, including lawbreakers, while also addressing problems like gang recruitment at a basketball court or drug dealing on a particular block.

Cmdr. Anthony Escamilla, a 27-year CPD veteran who has

overseen the 25th District for four years, says the pilot is a major break from “transactional” policing, where officers only show up when a crime has been committed. Once trust is developed, residents are more likely to tip officers to hot spots or provide investigators with home-security video.

The idea of community policing is hardly new. The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy, or CAPS, was introduced by the CPD in the early 1990s and involved neighborhood-based beat officers and regular meetings with residents. CAPS was considered innovative and successful for a time, but lost funding, participation and personnel over the years.

The Police Accountability Task Force's 2016 final report found that “the CAPS brand is significantly damaged after years of neglect.” Critics point out that meetings are usually attended by the same relatively small group of

“... a major break from ‘transactional’ policing, where officers only show up when a crime has been committed.”

vocal residents and not people of officers most need to reach.

The new program plays out on the streets. The district's several hundred beat officers work only their own beats, rather than responding to calls in other areas. That allows follow-up throughout a case, and even afterward.

“It's a game-changer for them to

be able to finish what they started,” Escamilla says.

The new structure could require additional staffing to ensure enough officers to respond to calls in other areas, notes Barry Friedman, the NYU law professor overseeing the program from New York.

Twelve district coordination officers, or DCOs, were hired to spearhead the program, and they work with beat cops and detectives who investigate gang and drug activity. The DCOs give residents their personal mobile numbers. The hope is that the philosophy filters out to other officers.

When DCO Carolina Salcedo and her partner, Danny Lopez, saw a woman panhandling and shivering in the rain outside a Walgreens, they connected her with a local employment program that found her work at a factory. The woman recently called to say she is in rehab, and Salcedo was planning to visit her on a day off.

“She refers to us as her friends,” says Salcedo, a four-year CPD veteran.

Another DCO helped a young man who had been selling drugs get work through the employment program, and even bought him the steel-toe boots he needed to start the job, according to officers and community ambassadors.

Deondre Rutues, 32, is an ambassador in the Austin neighborhood, where he says he often got “shrugged off” by officers when trying to say hello. He hasn't seen anything change yet under the pilot program, but he's hopeful.

He says when he walks through the neighborhood trying to introduce officers to residents, some residents want no part of it.

“It's going to take a lot” to improve relations, he says. “But I don't believe all police officers are bad. I want to be part of changing the narrative about police officers and policing.”

Q&A: New deputy mayor says Chicago needs 'all hands' approach

BY DAVID MENDELL

CRAIN'S FORUM: You're trying to solve an issue that has bedeviled Chicago for a long, long time. What's your top priority?

SUSAN LEE: Although we have had reductions in violence this year, what we are feeling in these communities is not enough. People do not feel safe. Families do not feel safe going into the parks or even walking to the corner store. So we need to do better. To do that, we need to bring an all-hands-on-deck approach that is not just about crime suppression, that is not just about law enforcement. While we definitely need effective policing, it's really about building

that violence prevention and intervention infrastructure in all these communities.

You're going to need resources. How much do you need?

The lack of resources and services is, well, to some degree, as a newcomer to Chicago, it's astounding. And so this is not a short-term fix. It's not a one-year, two-year kind of investment we're looking at. It has to be a long-term investment strategy, while front-loading the direct interventions that we need. It has to be coupled with economic development approaches that the mayor's team is working on, but it also has to be about truly building a more accountable

police department.

How do you persuade the police unions and other folks to row in the same direction?

You know, in L.A., the federal consent decree had been in place for many years when the violence reduction strategy was put in place. So the Los Angeles Police Department had traveled the road of reform and had done some foundational things. Even then, when the violence reduction strategy came along, we needed a real hands-on approach to build understanding, awareness and partnership between LAPD and community-based intervention. That took many years.

There's always going to be naysayers. We have to balance that with focusing on short-term strategies to have some success around reducing violence while really working on the hearts and minds of not just the Chicago Police Department but people in the community.

I am just going to be honest: I don't think the community trusts the city that much, or the CPD, to come together with them to be true partners in reducing violence and achieving safety. So I think we have to work at it. We have to demonstrate that we are in this for the long haul and earn that trust.

We have entire neighborhoods traumatized by violence and

don't want to hear they have to be patient. How do you respond?

I think we have done some things during the summer differently than in years past. We have focused on the police beats where violence is the highest, and we have coordinated city resources to show up in a visible way in those places to address quality-of-life issues, demonstrating that we are not just flooding those zones with patrol cars. One of the things that we have to keep doing is flooding the communities with these resources in a visible way, to the places that need it the most.

See the complete Q&A online.

FORUM GUN VIOLENCE

MOMENT

Continued from Page 15

are taking the right approach at the right time to tackle the issue and finally cleanse a stain that has bewildered previous mayors.

"I think the present moment in Chicago is the best moment, the best chance the city's had, maybe ever," says David Kennedy, a criminologist credited as the architect of the "Boston Miracle" of the 1980s, when that city dramatically reduced its crime and violence.

Explains Kennedy, "The mayor has the right background and right outlook to redirect city government. There is a core of people around the top of the Police Department who know what needs to be done, and they are finally in a position to do it. And bringing Susan Lee into the equation is something that could be transformative in itself."

Chicago is not Los Angeles, however, and Lee's complex plans will face the city's unique obstacles. She notes that, as in L.A., progress will take time, certainly years, and no shortage of sustained political will and financial resources to produce lasting results.

Signs of trouble already have surfaced, and some are withholding their judgment on the mayor's full commitment.

Lightfoot has joined Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson in complaining that judges are too lenient on gun-crime suspects, blaming their release for more violence. The mayor has clashed with the police union, alleging it isn't fully on board with reform. And some community activists don't trust the mayor, remembering her time on the police board, which they criticized as too lenient on problem officers.

The biggest challenge will be money and where City Hall gets the many millions of dollars gun violence experts say is needed to sustain a comprehensive campaign. In an interview, Lee says she found the previous lack of resources devoted to violence reduction in Chicago "astounding." But the new mayor also is grappling with enormous budget and pension crises.

Others worry that resources and focus could be diverted as a result of

fallen far from the 1990s, when it was common for Chicago to endure more than 900 homicides per year. Still, as homicide deaths dropped elsewhere, Chicago saw them spike to more than 770 as recently as 2016. Last year, the number fell to 561, but even that is more than New York and L.A. combined.

The city's violence is relentless: It subsides, but always erupts again.

This year, the most violent summer weekends have had upward of 70 shootings. A few other cities, such as St. Louis and Baltimore, have higher rates of violence amid smaller populations. But Chicago, with its massive scope and spotlight, stubbornly wears a worldwide reputation as the capital of the country's urban violence.

Inside Chicago, the issue is political quicksand. Many observers believe former Mayor Rahm Emanuel's handling of the 2014 Laquan McDonald shooting by a Chicago police officer cost him another term, along with the city's struggles to deliver on systemwide police reform. A task force's finding that the Chicago Police Department suffers from "racism and systemic failures" added fuel to explosive relations between police and communities of color. Blacks and Latinos already had little confidence in police going back decades, including over a scandal involving police torture of suspects, nearly all of them minorities.

Meanwhile, to critics, Emanuel's wider efforts to quell street violence appeared inconsistent. He opened a special office to address the issue, but poorly funded it, and withdrew a contract from a violence-interruption group when one of its street-level specialists was arrested for participating in gang activity. That forced the group to close all but one of its 14 offices.

That background explains the high expectations that have greeted Lightfoot and Lee.

"Susan has a game plan," says Phil Andrew, a former federal law enforcement official hired by the Archdiocese of Chicago to assist with violence prevention. "It's all about how quickly and effectively we can build capacity and implement this game plan."

For most urban crime experts, there's little dispute that the techniques being advocated by Lee have been successful at diminishing killings in big cities like Boston and New York. Many of them revolve around front-end, problem-solving approaches that already have been tried in Chicago, but in scattershot fashion.

The strategies include:

- ▶ Enlisting and training more street-level interventionists to mediate disputes and head off shootings. As in Los Angeles, supporters are trying to professionalize this work, funding and licensing former gang members and others to give them support and credibility.

"All of these cities have had infighting, but there's nothing like Chicago infighting."

the city's no-holds-barred politics.

"All of these cities have had infighting, but there's nothing like Chicago's infighting," warns Gary Slutkin, a physician who founded Cure Violence, an intervention organization that expanded internationally after launching in Chicago in 2000 and that promotes fighting violence as if it's an epidemic. "I mean, within groups, between groups, within government—the level of infighting is a culture in Chicago."

Chicago's violence goes back generations, and the number of killings in recent years actually has



Before becoming a deputy mayor in Chicago, Susan Lee helped Los Angeles reduce its gun violence.

- ▶ Implementing systemwide reform of police that builds stronger relationships with residents and with interventionists, as opposed to a reactive, military-style presence. The CPD has launched efforts to resuscitate "community policing" methods, which it hopes encourage cooperation in helping police improve their ability to solve cases.

- ▶ Targeting violence "hot zones" with additional resources of policing and street intervention, again with intensive community involvement and other City Hall agencies, like the Public Health Department.

- ▶ Helping guide men at risk of turning to crime and violence toward opportunities for lawful employment through more local job training and counseling programs. That includes cognitive behavioral therapy to help them navigate difficult decisions and situations.

- ▶ Providing mental health coun-

seling to victims of gun violence or people caught up in activities that can lead to violence.

For Lee and other advocates, it's less about trying to figure out the cure and more about making sure the patient receives heavy doses of medicine over the long haul, that leadership focus doesn't wane and that funding of such programming is maintained at a high level.

"The key is not just getting the interventions right," she says. "But it is also about ensuring that the resources are sustainable, and it's not going to be in and out like it's been in the past."

Lee says it will take an "all-hands-on-deck" effort in funding from city, state and private sources. She declines to go into specific figures, but others have called for \$20 million to \$25 million annually, simply for street-level intervention. They say millions more are needed for after-school programs, mental health counseling, job training, mentor-



Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot

ing and summer job programs—all while Lightfoot faces a \$1 billion budget deficit just this year.

"Before, the leadership had been lacking," says Teny Gross, who leads the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago, an intervention and counseling nonprofit. "The questions (the mayor) asks and her behavior indicate to me that her mind is not on political opportunity. Her mind is to start rebalancing and making the invisible people become visible and making that a priority. That's where we are going to have a chance."

Adds Sam Castro, a reformed gang leader who works as a violence intervention specialist: "This is the most I've ever seen a mayor. She came out with us outreach workers and hung with us at something like 1 in the morning. Who does that?"

Castro and Gross spoke on a recent Friday night at a Light in the Night event in Columbus Park on the West Side. The gatherings, which resemble neighborhood festivals, are another component of efforts at community bonding and "reclaiming public spaces as safe places." On a warm evening, music and sweet barbecue wafted in the air. Children flopped in bouncy houses. Young men raced up and down basketball courts in a loosely run tournament.

Perhaps most significant: Walking through the event was police Cmdr. Ernest Cato III of Austin's

STEPHEN J. SERIO

JOHN R. BOEHM

Chicago police officers collect evidence at the scene of a fatal shooting in Englewood last October.



Light in the Night events create safe spaces on the West and South sides.

ten across the South and West sides on a broad scale? And how soon?

Los Angeles faced similar challenges in the 2000s as it addressed an epidemic of gang violence. The Los Angeles Police Department had gone through its own Laquan McDonald incident in the 1991 beating of motorist Rodney King, which incited riots. The Justice Department stepped in, imposing a consent decree in 2001 to force wide-scale reform.

It took years, until 2009, before city leaders finally consolidated gang intervention efforts into a single office, the kind of centralized entity that Lee wants in Chicago. Even so, egos and philosophies clashed over, for example, who would lead a gang-intervention training academy.

At the time, Lee was executive director of the Urban Peace Institute, which helped devise L.A.'s intervention plan. The last two years, before being tapped by Lightfoot, Lee worked at Chicago CRED, another nonprofit focused on containing violence.

Despite similar egos and agendas in Chicago, Lee believes the biggest barrier to long-term success is something else entirely: overcoming Chicago's history of segregation and division, rebuilding communities that have suffered decades of disinvestment and poverty.

Residents of these communities are crying for help, but many have lost faith in police and government. Lightfoot portends to be a different kind of leader, but already there are rumblings within distressed communities that she doesn't grasp their world, even if she is a woman of color.

At a South Side community forum, called by anti-violence activist Ja'Mal Green in late July, one man stepped to the microphone and questioned why Lightfoot

chose an outsider to oversee public safety "who probably doesn't know where 78th and Stony Island is."

Lee acknowledges the challenge: "You know, people sometimes racialize these issues and say, 'How does a short Asian woman know anything about the plight of the African American community?' What I do bring is (an understanding of) where violence reduction efforts have been successful nationally."

The tensions are predictable in a city long riven by racial and economic segregation. Frustration is high, patience thin. Residents in deprived neighborhoods are not comforted when they hear it took Los Angeles nearly a decade.

Manasseh's efforts to force City Hall to address the shootings of the two mothers landed her in a meeting with Lee. Still, she wasn't happy—she wanted an audience with Lightfoot, and while Manasseh felt Lee was sincere, she came away less than pleased. No arrests have been made, and attention has moved on to more recent killings.

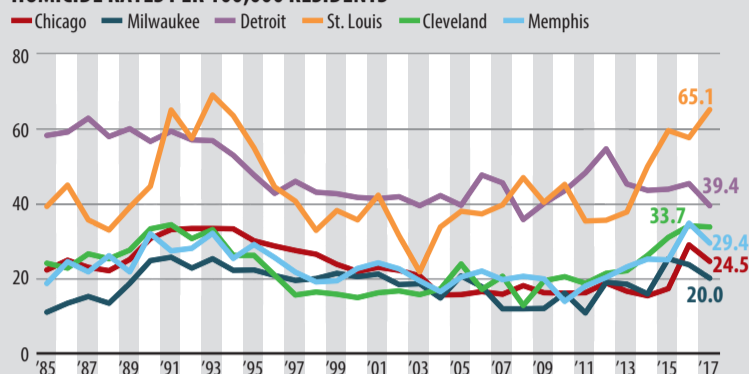
Manasseh founded MASK after a mother was shot in Englewood four years ago. It's mostly local residents who set up shop on the corner lot at 75th and Stewart—"moms like me just trying to keep their kids alive," she says. They put an ear to the ground and sit sentry in vinyl lawn chairs for hours, trying to do what authorities have been unable to do: keep the peace.

"Susan Lee told me, 'Well, you need to be patient.' And I said, 'Sixty people were shot over the weekend. If you think this is a situation that calls for patience, well, fine,'" Manasseh says indignantly. "I can raise my voice and try to be heard, but I can't force anyone to do anything. All we can do is what we do every day, and that is come here and sit and report what I see from my lawn chair on my corner."

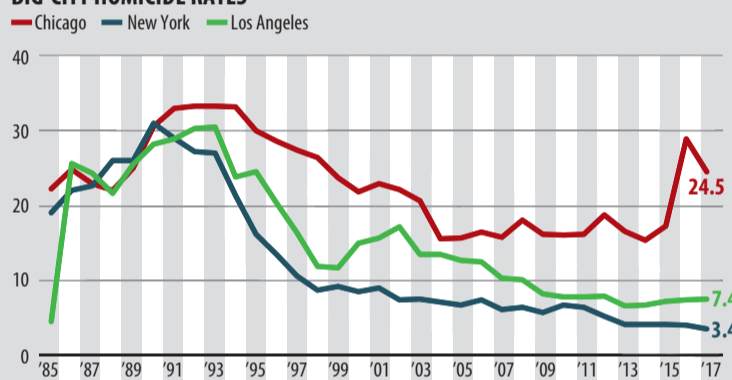
HOW CHICAGO COMPARES

Other cities, including Rust Belt locales that have suffered loss of industry and jobs, have higher per-capita rates of gun-related homicides than Chicago. But Los Angeles and New York have been far more effective in reducing such homicides since the numbers peaked across the country in the 1990s.

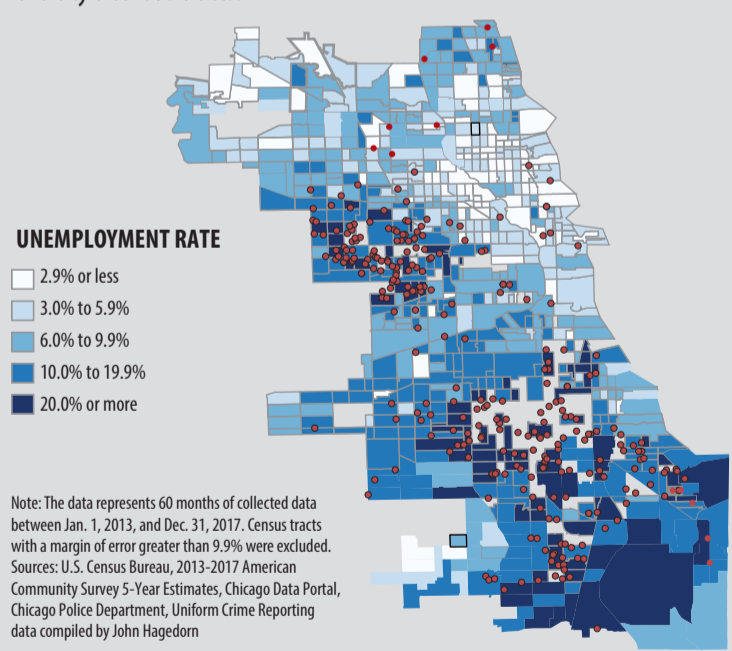
HOMICIDE RATES PER 100,000 RESIDENTS



BIG-CITY HOMICIDE RATES



Through Aug. 4, there were 290 homicides in the city of Chicago. That's more than one per day, though the number dropped 12% from the same period a year ago. The homicides, each represented by a red dot, are concentrated on the South and West sides. This map shows the location of homicides against the backdrop of unemployment rates in the city's census tracts.



IDEAS FOR CONTROLLING CHICAGO'S GUN VIOLENCE

A less police-focused approach includes elements tried in Los Angeles and other cities.

CENTRALIZE

Similar to what Los Angeles and New York have done, Mayor Lori Lightfoot created an Office of Public Safety and named a deputy mayor to oversee it.

SPEND

Experts argue that tens of millions of dollars are needed to support community- and street-based solutions other cities have deployed to bring violence down.

INTERVENE

Advocates are trying to expand and professionalize outreach efforts deploying former gang members and others to intervene and disrupt potential street conflicts.

COLLABORATE

An all-in approach against violence would involve all city agencies, including public health and schools, and partnering with community groups.

EMPLOY

Several programs provide at-risk individuals with job training, transitional work and cognitive behavioral therapy to help them better navigate difficult situations.

REFORM

Police are being encouraged to refocus away from reactive tactics and toward front-end prevention, including better training and community policing approaches.

SOLVE

Police hope better community relations will help solve more crimes. CPD is hiring more detectives, while some call for witness protection and witness reward programs.

TREAT

Advocates recommend counseling to help victims and witnesses recover from trauma and keep it from fueling further conflict.

RESTRICT

Gun control activists demand tighter restrictions on gun possession, litigation against stores selling "crime guns" and better regional cooperation in keeping guns out of the city.

FORUM IDEAS

▶ A VETERAN COP'S VIEW

Don't downplay need for force against gangs

Back in 2013, after President Barack Obama named Zachary Fardon the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, one of Fardon's first statements about Chicago's seemingly endless epidemic of violence was that the city was "not going to arrest our way out of the gang problem."

Six years later, newly elected Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, a former federal prosecutor, has repeated those same words.

But since 2012, Chicago has had over 4,000 souls murdered and over 20,000 wounded, mostly due to gang warfare. It's not cynicism but experience that sometimes has me scoffing at the calls for stronger community policing, extended library hours, organized sports activities and workshops. It's the idea that Chicago's gang thugs would be the least bit interested in any of those

activities.

Those horrific numbers of murders and attempted murders through the years speak for themselves. Chicago's gangs are a powerful force that is not going to be intimidated by words or attempts at reason.

If we look back at the federal government's attempts to stop organized crime in the U.S., no amount of community involvement brought it to an end. Organized crime members were as Chicago's gangs are now—a force that will not relinquish its arrogant power unless challenged by a far greater force.

The gangs of Chicago, make no mistake about it, are surely organized. It is a fact that it's somewhat different than in past years, where the old-time leadership held sway over vast numbers of gang members. However, even the splintered and smaller gangs are run by leaders who sometimes oversee 20 or 30 members. They conspire to sell



Robert Angone is a retired lieutenant of the Chicago Police Department.

drugs, extort money and threaten to kill anyone who could inform on them, or their family members.

Some years back, the Justice Department used RICO statutes as an extremely effective tool against organized crime. Why are we not using them today in Chicago against those violent offenders who are bringing Chicago down with a stream of never-ending, vicious attacks on entire communities?

In my opinion, the mayor's calls for more community involvement and scores of social programs—

including jobs, neighborhood investments, addressing problems in the home and more educational opportunities—are honorable. But they will simply not stop the cancer that has infected those communities.

I spent 33 years with the Chicago Police Department, including duty in the gang units and as a SWAT coordinator. My wife also was a longtime CPD officer. We've mixed with thousands of officers over the years, and I know my opinions are shared with the overwhelming number of cops

who were and are still on the front lines.

The gangs are there now. The guns are there now. The violence will continue. And right now, removing the cancer and arresting the offenders has to be a big part of that effort. Talking, making speeches and marching on expressways are not in any way helping.

We may not be able to arrest our way out of the entire problem, but it will be one of the first tools to give Chicago some needed help.

▶ ACCOUNTABILITY

Put violence prevention in writing and dedicate funds

Gun violence in Chicago continues to make headlines. Meanwhile, our lawmakers use evidence-based solutions to reduce gun violence merely as talking points instead of implementing effective tools and tactics that come with them.

Since her election, Mayor Lori Lightfoot had signaled she will expand the Office of Violence Prevention and take a more community-based approach. It should be known, however, that community advocates such as Live Free Chicago and allied organizations have uplifted the need for an office of gun violence prevention for years.

Although Lightfoot has publicly committed to expanding the Office of Violence Prevention created by Mayor Rahm Eman-

uel on his way out, she must be held accountable and see this expansion through. The city should establish the office through an ordinance so its existence is not subject to political winds, and it should be supported with a \$50 million investment.

This administration must recognize that gun violence is a product of structural violence, racism and poverty. The time is now to implement proven practices versus rallying community members with grassroots talking points but no action.

In recent years community practitioners, advocates and philanthropic communities have amplified the need to address gun violence through a public health model. Research has shown that community-based



Ciera Walker-Chamberlain is executive director of Live Free Chicago, a faith-based, grassroots organization that works to end gun violence and mass incarceration, with chapters across the U.S. She is a Pentecostal minister.



Mayor Lori Lightfoot, center, leads the Disrupting Violence March through the Back of the Yards neighborhood May 18.

services have led to drastic shooting reductions across the country, yet here in Chicago, we struggle to shift from a law enforcement-based strategy.

In a city where more than 80 percent of homicide victims are black, we must address those root-cause issues instead of over-policing communities in dire

need of wraparound services.

Lightfoot has aligned herself with Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson in calling for tougher treatment in the courts for those charged with gun-related crimes. But, while communities need to feel safe, just locking up more people feeds an inaccurate narrative that contradicts

the messaging that must remain constant in support of criminal justice reform and gun violence reduction strategies.

We should no longer look to ineffective, antiquated policing tactics that don't actually reduce crime. This is why we must have an Office of Violence Prevention created through ordinance that will be part of a new way of addressing gun violence as a public health crisis.

Gun violence has been Chicago's No. 1 problem, but not it's No. 1 priority. How many more lives must we lose before it moves to the top of the city's priority list?

Now is the time to show a commitment to a citywide transformation by the administration putting its money where it says its priorities are.

If Lightfoot is serious about gun violence, she will rally the City Council to support a community-led strategy and make a dedicated investment into proven strategies that reduce homicides, such as mental health services, street outreach and jobs.