



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
{{item.tracking_number}}

Agenda Item Number: 5

Agenda Date: September 19, 2023

In Control: Public Safety Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of the City Manager

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Erik Walsh, City Manager

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

CCR on the establishment of an Office of Crime and Recidivism Prevention

SUMMARY:

On May 11, 2022, Councilmember Jalen McKee-Rodriguez issued a Council Consideration Request (CCR) requesting the establishment of an Office of Crime and Recidivism Prevention. The proposed Office would apply a multidisciplinary criminological and public health approach to violence and crime prevention through the use of research, data, analysis, and data application to make informed policy, budget, and strategy recommendations in order to ensure the sustained safety and stability of families and communities most impacted by crime and recidivism in San Antonio.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On December 13, 2022 the Council Consideration Request (CCR) requesting the establishment of an Office of Crime and Recidivism Prevention was heard by the Governance Committee and sent

to the Public Safety Committee for further discussion.

Over the past year the City has begun several initiatives to address violence prevention and violent crime in San Antonio.

- In April 2022, Metro Health launched its SA Forward plan that presents the strategic direction for the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District to protect and improve the health of the San Antonio community. This plan focuses on six priority areas including, among others, Violence Prevention. Metro Health is currently undergoing a quality improvement effort to enhance its infrastructure and renew its public health mission following extended mobilization in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) partnered the UTSA Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice in April 2022 to develop a Violent Crime Reduction Plan. This plan aims to reduce violent crime in the City's most violence-prone areas and among its most violence-prone offenders with the goal of reducing aggregate levels of reported violence in San Antonio. This plan began in January 2023 and is comprised of three phases:

Phase I: Hot Spots Policing

Drawing from a substantial body of research on the positive impacts hot spots policing can have on reducing violence, this plan begins with a short-term focus on substantially increasing police visibility at and around addresses where violent crime is concentrated and prioritizing street-level deterrence of potential offenders in these areas. The strategy is evidence-based and relies on increased police visibility, deterrence, and a careful focus on repeat offenders rather than generalized "stop and frisk," zero tolerance policing, or other dragnet tactics.

This phase began in January 2023. Based on crime analysis and mapping, the SAPD assigns officers to be highly visible at hot spot locations identified by crime analysis as the most violence-prone and at times when violence is most often reported. Pre- and post-implementation data on crime, arrests, and calls for service are tracked at and around the targeted hot spots, and violence-prone locations and are reviewed and adjusted every 60 days.

The results of this phase have shown a decrease in violent crime in the hot spots treated.

Phase II: Problem-Oriented, Place-Based Policing (POPBP)

In the mid-term, the SAPD will lead and coordinate with other city department on a problem-oriented, place-based policing (POPBP) strategy designed to identify and ameliorate the underlying conditions that contribute to violent crime at crime-prone places. Place-based strategies addressing physical and social disorder are an effective, evidence-based approach to improve criminogenic conditions, reduce fear of crime, and encourage greater, pro-social use of public space. During the first six months of implementation, initial violent places will be identified using crime analysis and local police knowledge and intelligence.

A POPBP Board and working group made up of city departments including Metro Health, Public Works, Code Enforcement, Parks and Recreation, Planning, Human Services, Neighborhood and Housing Services, Solid Waste, City Attorney's Office, and SAPD will design tailored, place-

based strategies to address crime and its underlying causes at violent places. Traditional police enforcement efforts (investigations and arrests) will be coupled with civil enforcement, nuisance abatement, environmental design changes, and disorder-focused efforts (graffiti abatement, trash clean up, abandoned vehicle removal, weed/brush removal) and other efforts to alter the criminogenic nature of the targeted places. Pre- and post-implementation data will be tracked in and around the targeted locations and adjustments made, if needed, to the strategy based on data trends. As crime declines in the targeted areas, new places will be identified and brought into the strategy. UTSA and the nine city departments that make up the POPBP Board met on September 15, 2023 to begin this phase of the plan.

Phase III: Focused Deterrence

The longer-term strategy to reduce violence will involve implementation of a focused deterrence model in San Antonio. First designed and implemented in Boston in the 1990s, focused deterrence strategies have proven successful in reducing violent crime in several cities where they have been applied and evaluated. The goal of focused deterrence is to change the behavior of high-risk offenders through a combination of deterrence, arrest, community involvement, and the provision of alternatives to violence. A key feature of most successful focused deterrence strategies is the clear communication to gang members and other violent offenders of the risks associated with continued criminal activity and the alternatives available to them under a robust suite of counseling/mental health, substance abuse, education, and job-related services made available to them within the strategy.

Focused deterrence is a holistic, resource-intensive process involving multiple law enforcement and community partners, including federal law enforcement agencies and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Initially, the SAPD will work with research partners, city leadership, and other stakeholders to prioritize offenders for focused deterrence interventions. The nature of those interventions may vary according to the problems identified and at-risk populations implicated (gang violence vs. drug markets). The support and partnership of social service organizations, including city agencies, non-profits, and community-based leaders and groups, is necessary and will be sought. A careful evaluation of the implementation and impact of this strategy will be designed and carried out by academic partners at the University of Texas at San Antonio to facilitate modification and/or replication of the strategy to address additional at-risk populations as progress is made.

- The City Manager's Office partnered with UTSA on a Neighborhood Safety Program Assessment and Evaluation project. UTSA is assisting the city to better gauge which of the many programs and services provided by the city (across all city departments) are likely affect public safety. The UTSA research team has completed its work and the City is currently reviewing it.

- As part of the FY 2023 Budget, the City Council approved the reallocation of a Metro Health position to create a Public Safety Outcomes Coordinator. The position is responsible for evaluating how city programs positively impact crime reduction by analyzing delinquency and various social conditions. This position will coordinate assigned activities with Metro Health, SAPD and other City departments and outside agencies. The position reports to the City Manager's Office and is currently being advertised. It is estimated that the position will be filled in the fall.

- Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan. The City continues its efforts to address Violence

Prevention utilizing a Public Health Approach, and Metro Health is taking advantage of several converging opportunities to plan long-term, evidence-based strategies to shift the landscape of health in the community. To this end, Metro Health and SAPD along with UTSA and representatives from St. John Baptist Church, were one of 17 groups selected to participate in the National Leadership Academy for the Public's Health. The Academy focuses on team-based leadership and is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This group is developing a Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan.

The Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan will identify and define strategies to prevent and intervene in violence along a continuum and throughout the lifespan. This plan will update the 2019 Metro Health Domestic Violence plan and build on it to incorporate prevention strategies for other community violence issues such as shootings, child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, and acts of mass violence. This plan will also align with or include strategies from SAPD's violent crime reduction efforts. Using a public health approach to prevent violence and work collaboratively with stakeholders, a multisectoral strategic plan will combine resources and amplify them to increase positive outcomes in the community. This work is underway and is estimated to be completed by November 2023.

ISSUE:

A presentation to the Public Safety Committee regarding a May 11, 2022 Council Consideration Request (CCR) requesting the establishment of an Office of Crime and Recidivism Prevention.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

ALTERNATIVES:

No alternatives.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff does not recommend the creation of an Office of Crime & Recidivism Prevention. The ongoing initiatives from Metro Health and SAPD along with the development of a Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan address the priorities outlined in the CCR.