

Date: May 16, 2024

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Teresa Chandler, Deputy City Manager 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach: Summer of Opportunity and Violence Prevention Efforts**

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An interdepartmental team consisting of the City Manager, Health and Human Services (Collective Impact Bureau) and Police Departments, and the Offices of Civic Innovation and Equity, met to discuss a coordinated plan to provide engagement opportunities for youth throughout Long Beach during the summer months. The City Manager's Office also facilitated a planning process with various City departments to explore the feasibility of leveraging existing resources for youth engagement and connectedness, in preparation for this summer and future opportunities. Because each department oversees various types of youth programs or initiatives, during the planning process, the team was able to swiftly pinpoint upcoming summer programs and activities. This team also exchanged ideas for future engagement, aligning with the Long Beach Advancing Peace (LBAP) violence prevention model and framework utilized by the Health Department (Attachment A). On Saturday, May 2, 2024, Mayor Richardson announced the Standing Together to Reach Our Next Generation (S.T.R.O.N.G.) Beach initiative at Youth Day in the LBC, where many young people engaged in conversations about mental health, housing, and addressing the root causes of violence.

This memorandum provides a detailed overview of the S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach: Summer of Opportunity Initiative and broader violence prevention efforts in Long Beach, and offers additional context regarding the City's efforts to address the recent increase in citywide gun violence, as outlined in the memorandum dated [May 10, 2024](#).

### **S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach Initiative**

S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach is an initiative focused on fostering positive development among Long Beach's youth while simultaneously reducing the occurrence of violent incidents involving young individuals in our city. It represents a concerted effort, uniting citywide programs and community partnerships, to actively engage our youth during the upcoming summer months. S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach recognizes the collective strength of our community and seeks to involve every facet of Long Beach – from service providers to neighborhood associations, faith groups to coaches, mentors, employers, and more – in standing together to support and guide our next generation. S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach aligns the City's violence prevention strategies, to go beyond incident reduction and focus on creating safe spaces and transformative opportunities for our youth. From Safe Passage events to place-based neighborhood activations and violence interruption programming, these initiatives offer hope, resilience, and connectedness for families and neighborhoods

impacted by violence. The goal is to not only ensure a safe summer but also inspire lasting positive change within our community. This work is not new to Long Beach, as many of the programs are already in place or are in the process of getting started. S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach is the City's commitment to co-create safe spaces and provide opportunities at every corner of the city for youth to connect and thrive.

### **Public Health Framework for Violence Prevention**

To achieve optimal health outcomes and safe communities for all, addressing violence requires a comprehensive, multifaceted approach that recognizes its complexity and engages partners from every sector in the city. In Long Beach, the City team employs the Advancing Peace Public Health Framework to collectively address the systemic issues that perpetuate harm, which directly link to violence in homes and on the streets. This robust public health strategy delves into the root causes of violence, such as systemic racism, economic disparities, poverty, and access to weapons, while also addressing generational trauma. This public health approach to violence and advancing peace is grounded in collective impact, recognizing that everyone, every department, and every sector has a role to play. Taking a community-focused approach and fostering partnerships are essential for success. Alongside this collaborative approach, the model emphasizes upstream prevention, intervention/violence interruption, and accountability and healing strategies that work simultaneously to create sustainable, lasting change.

### **Learning from Our Youth at Youth Day in the LBC 2024**

The Office of Youth Development hosted Youth Day in the LBC, in partnership with the Mayor's office, featuring youth panels, performances, and keynotes, a fireside chat with Mayor Rex Richardson and Vince Staples, free food, and a resource fair of youth-serving partners. Following the Youth Advocacy Panel, attendees were assigned to smaller breakout groups where they provided feedback around key topics, including Violence Prevention, Climate Action, Mental Health, and Housing & Homelessness.

About 50 youth between the ages of 13-26 participated in the Violence Prevention discussion, during which participants were asked to define violence, identify the root causes, and recommend solutions. The following Key Themes emerged from the youth discussion on violence prevention:

<b>Administrative Neglect</b>	Fighting on campus is ignored by administrators, as community violence spills over into schools exacerbating tension.
<b>Community Influence</b>	Gang violence, graffiti and vandalism, self-segregation and racial targeting, trauma, and lack of effective conflict-resolution methods contribute to violence.

<b>Root Causes</b>	Normalization of violence at home and in social environments, including family dynamics, socioeconomic pressures, and psychological factors like trauma and mental health escalate conflict.
<b>Proposed Solutions</b>	Facilitated conversations and workshops on violence and de-escalation; community engagement at an early age; on-campus programs for prevention and conflict resolution; foster solidarity within the community and on-campus through inclusive programs and events; supportive services like accessible mental health support and allocation of funding for youth programs to address the violence experienced by Long Beach youth.

Youth participants described violence as a learned behavior, influenced by socioeconomic factors, including their home, neighborhood, and peers. While tension on campus may result from gang violence within the community, youth described the lack of accountability, intervention, and prevention efforts that address the root causes of fighting, conflict, and tension. Of the comprehensive list of interventions youth identified, the need for restorative dialogues, de-escalation tools, and cross-group programming to broker solidarity and relationships were uplifted. Furthermore, youth programming and safe passage, including direct transportation to spaces aligned with the needs and interests of young people are proactive measures youth envision as alternatives to feeling unsafe at school and in community. See Attachment B for the notes from the breakout session.

### **S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach Opportunities and Existing Efforts**

S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach Summer has very specific goals: 1) to decrease violent incidents for opportunity youth (individuals between 16 and 24 years of age who are neither in school nor working, as well as teens and young adults involved with foster care, juvenile justice, and homelessness systems) in areas across the city that are most impacted by violence; and 2) building bridges to opportunity. To this end, interdepartmental collaboration and community partnerships are vital components to addressing violence effectively. Existing efforts include place-based initiatives in North, Central, and West Long Beach, as well as collaborative efforts through the [Long Beach Advancing Peace Initiative \(LBAP\)](#) and violence prevention programs.

The Long Beach Advancing Peace Initiative, housed within the Health Department, works with residents and organizations to achieve four goals: to create social connectedness, support economic opportunity, build safe and healthy neighborhoods, and, create and encourage use of trauma-informed systems. This endeavor necessitates not only partnership but the leveraging of existing community resources and expertise. Within the LBAP, there is a steering committee and collaborative network that includes nonprofit leaders, neighborhood associations, resident leaders, and City staff that all work together to reimagine public safety in Long Beach. They achieve this by coordinating resources

and services, creating violence prevention strategies, and directing the implementation of those strategies within neighborhoods. By starting with community and understanding their unique needs and strengths, tailored solutions can be co-created. This grassroots approach, coupled with City-level coordination and policy development, fosters genuine change and cultivates a safer, more resilient city for everyone.

The [Office of Youth Development](#) also plays a crucial role by convening a Youth Advisory Council, representing diverse demographics across the city, with a focus on health equity and youth development. Additionally, various City departments, including Health, Library Services, Police, Fire, Community Development, Workforce (in Economic Development), and Parks, Recreation and Marine, offer a range of programs focused on supporting youth. Collaborative efforts, such as those between the Public Information and the Office of Youth Development, further enhance coordination and visibility of available resources for youth in the community through multiple media sources, mapping of resources, and sharing a calendar of summer events. Moreover, the team acknowledges the importance of reaching out to youth who may not readily access the resources mentioned and who have yet to engage in school or community programs. Recognizing the value of peer insight, the team will collaborate with youth who are already involved to identify solutions for reaching out to those who are disconnected. These young individuals, having a better understanding of their peers' preferences and needs, can offer valuable guidance on the most effective approaches to connect with them.

Some of the City-led efforts currently underway (*this is not an exhaustive list*):

Program	Description
<b>Advancing Peace:</b> Safe Passage	Safe Passage providers in North and Central Long Beach will provide summer events.
<b>Advancing Peace:</b> Summer Activation/Pop-Ups	Advancing Peace will provide funding for community activation events throughout the summer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage residents to host or cohost summer activities that uplift safety, social connectedness, economic development and enhancing healthy communities.</li> <li>• Funded events must be free of charge and open to the public.</li> <li>• The maximum award amount is \$2,500; one request per organization.</li> <li>• Requests are due May 31, 2024.</li> <li>• Events must occur between June 6, 2024-Sept. 30, 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>Activating Safe Communities</b>	Violence interruption program serving youth, families, and individuals impacted by gun violence. Launching Summer 2024 in North and Central-East Long Beach.
<b>Office of Youth Development:</b> Futures First	Program for Opportunity Youth ages 16-26 who are neither in school or working. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers Personalized Case Management, Expert Life Coaching, Professional Career Counseling.</li> <li>• Hands-On Employment and Training Opportunities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In partnership with The April Parker Foundation and Pacific Gateway.</li> </ul>
<b>Office of Youth Development:</b> Youth Mentoring Program	City employees serve as mentors to middle school students in North, West and Central Long Beach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In partnership with The Boys and Girls Club and LBUSD.</li> <li>Boys and Girls Club will conduct summer field trips with mentees.</li> </ul>
<b>Office of Youth Development:</b> Participatory Budgeting	In partnership with The Nonprofit Partnership and Invest in Youth Coalition, anchored by Khmer Girls in Action and CSULB Dept. of Geography. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth vote on how to spend public dollars on youth projects (602 youth voted on these projects).</li> <li>Will award \$400,000 (Measure US) to 9 organizations.</li> <li>Voting ended May 4, 2024.</li> <li>The winning proposals will be funded through the summer.</li> </ul>
<b>Long Beach College Promise</b>	A partnership/commitment between LBUSD, LBCC, CSULB and City of Long Beach focused on developing community support and belonging through exclusive events and resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students transitioning to LBCC will have an opportunity to participate in the Viking Summer Voyage to help with acclimating to college.</li> <li>Promise at the Beach summer events for LBUSD families.</li> <li>CSULB Campus tours prior to orientation to learn about campus auxiliaries.</li> <li>LBUSD Summer School workshops/informational sessions.</li> </ul>
<b>My Brother's Keeper</b>	With the Obama Foundation, the National MBK is a collective effort of community leaders, members and public/private agencies pursuing the same goals for boys and young men of color. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-sector collaborative action to improve life outcomes of boys and young men of color.</li> </ul>
<b>Love Your Block Grant</b>	Awarded a \$100K grant to embed a Love Your Block Fellow and AmericorpVISTA to support community asset development and volunteer coordination in West Long Beach.
<b>Parks, Recreation &amp; Marine:</b> Be SAFE	Extension of free supervision hours at designated parks from June 17, 2024, through August 23, 2024. 11 Be S.A.F.E. sites are structurally funded; 2 sites are funded through the Health Dept. Cal VIP grant. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers arts and crafts, outdoor games, sports, science activities, computer lab, and more.</li> <li>Employs neighborhood youth.</li> </ul>
<b>Parks, Recreation &amp; Marine</b>	Link to the Parks, Recreation and Marine summer catalogue: <a href="https://www.longbeach.gov/park/recreation-programs/programs-and-classes/">https://www.longbeach.gov/park/recreation-programs/programs-and-classes/</a>

<p><b>Economic Development:</b> Future LB</p>	<p>Youth Employment Center for youth ages 14-30.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Center offers no-cost workforce development services and resources, work readiness workshops, paid internships, career exploration activities, intensive case management, connections to employment opportunities.</li><li>• Youth can be referred through the Unite Us platform.</li></ul>
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### Next Steps (Short-, Medium- and Long-Term)

Many of these programs will be launched in June 2024. The team will work with council members in participating districts to help spread the word and create a launch to reach the maximum amount of youth and their families. Additionally, the city will soon launch a calendar listing the specific summer programs that youth can participate in.

As previously mentioned, the City Manager's Office brought together various City departments to gather feedback on the ongoing interventions and programming efforts to address youth engagement and violence prevention citywide. The primary purpose of this meeting was to lay the foundation for a collaborative and connected summer of programming, resources, and opportunities while also committing to develop a collective impact approach for longer-term strategies. Key themes emerged from the discussion with the Departments:

- Vulnerable Teens and Youth under 12
- Restorative Justice/Diversion
- Family/Adult Support
- Grassroots Crime Prevention
- Police Youth Interaction
- One-time funding
- Problem exploration
- Youth and family activities

Furthermore, staff indicated the need to gain a deeper understanding of the current challenges faced by the City's youth who are directly impacted by violence and committed to continued engagement beyond initial S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach Summer efforts. Moving forward, staff recommend prioritizing:

- The utilization of data to aid in problem definition and help identify areas where interventions are most needed.
- Continued involvement of youth directly impacted by violence to ensure their voices are heard in problem-solving efforts.
- Collaboration across departments and with community partners is necessary to coordinate strategies to address the root causes of violence. Continue planning with Long Beach Unified School District to identify more long-term strategies.

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- Continue to partner with Departments and community partners to identify grant opportunities to contribute to long term funding strategies.

These efforts are a concerted and collaborative approach to addressing violence in Long Beach. The team acknowledges the gravity and urgency of this issue and is committed to working together to create safer and more supportive environments for our youth and their families. The team will persist in meeting and collaborating, both internally and with community partners, to ensure quality planning and sustained momentum in addressing this critical issue that impacts us all.

City Departments already engaged in providing youth services and violence prevention programming will leverage existing funding resources collaboratively. Additionally, for the S.T.R.O.N.G. Beach Initiative, an extra \$60,000 has been identified from the City Manager's Office from Fiscal Year 2024.

For more information, please contact Teresa Chandler, Deputy City Manager, at [Teresa.chandler@longbeach.gov](mailto:Teresa.chandler@longbeach.gov) at (562) 570-5116.

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## **Youth Day in the LBC Violence Prevention Breakout Session Notes**

**When asked to define the problem, in summary, youth shared the following:**

- Fighting on campus often goes unaddressed by administrators
- Discipline problems are often covered up without addressing underlying causes.
- Gang violence in the community spills over into the schools, leading to tension and fights.
- Gangs target young people, exacerbating violence.
- Graffiti and tagging contribute to an atmosphere of disorder.
- Violence is downplayed, leading to a lack of prevention efforts.
- Vandalism, theft, and suspensions are common.
- Self-Segregation and racial targeting contribute to conflict.
- Various factors, including family dynamics and social media influence, contribute to the perpetuation of violence.
- Trauma and lack of awareness of alternatives to violence play a role.
- There is a lack of effective conflict resolution methods available to address issues.

**General Comments about how peers are affected by violence:**

- School
- Community
- Personal life
- Safe in city
- Gang/gun violence
- Influenced/lured into gangs/domestic violence

**General Comments about violence seen in our communities:**

- Fights (beef)
- downplay violence
- vandalism, theft, suspensions,
- gang violence
- self-segregation and race targets
- Sparks to violence
- Lack of prevention
- growing up with it
- family has a role, trying to survive
- Assumptions on recruiting to gangs
- Assumptions that lead to divide
- taught hate, passing on and recruiting to gangs,
- assumptions that lead to divide, know knowing others,
- trauma, thinking the life is the only way, not aware of alternatives,



- social media and friend influence
- lack of ways to address issue and conflicts

**Youth were asked to go a bit deeper about what they see as the root causes of violence, a summary of responses include:**

- Normalizing violence and desensitization.
- Influence of family dynamics and home environments.
- Socioeconomic pressures lead to a focus on survival, particularly in contexts of poverty.
- Racial tension often perpetuated or taught within families.
- The cyclical nature of childhood trauma.
- Disconnection from positive programs and recreational activities.
- Ignorance or lack of exposure to alternatives to violence.
- Peer pressure and influence.
- Mental health issues such as anxiety.
- Various triggers that escalate conflict.
- Encouragement of violence as a solution to conflict, both within peer groups and through learned behavior from family, gangs, and community.

**Youth provided a comprehensive list of solutions to address the root causes of violence they previously identified. In summary, solutions shared include:**

- Facilitated conversations and workshops that discuss violence and provide de-escalation tools.
- Engage youth at school starting in elementary.
- Host on-campus programs focused on prevention and conflict resolution.
- Normalize discussions about feelings and emotions.
- Training for school administrators.
- Encourage asking “why” to understand the underlying causes.
- Foster solidarity within the community.
- Organize inclusive events that bring together diverse groups.
- Provide transportation to community programs.
- Establish safe passage initiatives within neighborhoods.
- Make mental health support accessible within schools.
- Enforce stricter guidelines, processes, and practices to address violence.
- Emphasize the importance of addressing underlying issues, cross-group events, and building relationships.
- Allocate funding for youth-based programs and incentivize youth for their involvement by paying them.
- Direct transportation to programs, positive role models, accessible and available mental health services.

# ADVANCING PEACE

A public health model\*

## Intervention/Violence Interruption

Redirect and invest in individuals who are at highest risk of engaging in violence

Create support for and invest in those at highest risk of being victimized by violence

Detect, anticipate, and interrupt multiple forms of violence

Remove graffiti or other symbols that encourage violence or deter social activity

Respond to incidents to prevent or lessen further violence from occurring

\*Adaptation of Cure the Violence Model

# ADVANCING PEACE

A public health model\*

## Prevention

Coordinate collaboration to reallocate resources and investments that improve the quality of life

Create clear communication for all entities involved in violence prevention work in the community

Engage community in activities that create social connectedness

Focus on upstream approaches to improve environment

Increase opportunities for stable social, economic, and emotional development to increase pathways over the life course

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A public health model\*

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## Accountability and Healing

Promotion and Education

Collective Work

Continuous Improvement

Safe spaces for victims of violence and vicarious trauma

\*Adaptation of Cure the Violence Model