

# **Savannah, Georgia: A Historic City Looks Toward the Future of Public Safety**

## *Recommendations and Report for the City of Savannah, Georgia*



*Photo by Jerald Watson*

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## Acknowledgments



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# **I. History and Context of Public Safety in Savannah, Georgia**

## **Introduction**



*Photo by Jerald Watson*

Spanish Moss drips from live oak trees and sways in the soft spring winds. The Moss drinks in nourishing water from the air, soaking in the energy to flourish from the warm, wafting breezes. The air in the City of Savannah is also rich with palpable energy and readiness for change. The residents of Savannah match the city in being warm and inviting, and they are invested in making their home a safer and better place.

In recent years there has been an increase in gun violence and an uptick in officer-involved shootings. There is an impetus and appetite for imagining and building a safer community. This report contains observations and insights gained from stakeholders and provides a set of policy recommendations

that allow the city to unite and build a future that is healthy, bright, and safer.

## **Historical Context**

The African American monument stands on River Street, along the city's waterfront, in a major tourist area. This monument depicts an emancipated family of four, standing together in an embrace. Broken chains lay at their feet, and they are dressed in modern clothing. The family face toward the Savannah River and West Africa, from where they were shipped as chattel to their new fates. The City of Savannah was a major port for the slave trade. This monument pays homage to African Americans and brings light to the tragic history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It pays homage to many contributions made by enslaved



*Photo by Jerald Watson*

people, by whom much of Savannah was literally and figuratively built. This very real and tragic piece of history is evident as you walk the brick path, passing through the many squares of the city that were once used as places of slave auctions. This path was built by enslaved people. The history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Savannah is dark and tragic. Although this monument reflects a very dark history for the city, the monument also signifies the rich history of Savannah's resilience and activism. The monument hosts the quote by Maya Angelou:

*"We were stolen, sold and bought together from the African continent. We got on the slave ships together. We lay back to belly in the holds of the slave ships in each other's excrement and urine together, sometimes died together, and our lifeless bodies thrown overboard together. Today, we are standing up together, with faith and even some joy."*<sup>1</sup>

- Maya Angelou

Savannah also played a vital role in the civil rights movement. Young people staged a series of sit-ins and boycotts against segregation in 1960-1961, winning significant victories. Their efforts even contributed to Martin Luther King Jr. declaring Savannah as "the most desegregated city South of the Mason-Dixon line" in 1964.<sup>2</sup> Savannah's oldest Black churches, notably the First African Baptist Church, opened their doors for organizing meetings and hosted visiting civil rights leaders.<sup>3</sup> In short, Savannah is a city with a history of leading its peers to address the nationwide injustices that disproportionately affect Black residents.

### Public Safety

Before going further, we will examine the current state of public safety in Savannah according to crime statistics. The Savannah Police Department's (SPD) crime information for total Part 1 crimes from 2019 to 2021 can be seen in the chart below.<sup>4</sup> According to an article published in February 2022, at that time there had been 25 reported homicides in Savannah. This represents

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<sup>1</sup> "African-American Monument (Savannah, GA)." Omeka RSS. Accessed May 7, 2022. <https://www.slaverymonuments.org/items/show/1158>.

<sup>2</sup> Savannah Protest Movement, photograph, Georgia History, September 2016, <https://georgiahistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/savannah-protest-movement.jpg>.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Hatfield, "First African Baptist Church," New Georgia Encyclopedia, March 3, 2009, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/first-african-baptist-church/#:~:text=First%20African%20Baptist%20Church%2C%20which,Savannah%2C%20feature%20prominent%20Black%20leaders>.

<sup>4</sup> "Savannah Police Department Total Part One Crimes 2019-2021," Savannah Police Department, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://savannahpd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2021-Crime-Stats.pdf>.

an increase from the same time last year.<sup>5</sup> 80% of those homicides have been cleared, compared to the national average of 60%.<sup>6</sup> While violent crime is down 2% from last year, there remains a persistent problem of gun violence involving young people.<sup>7</sup> The police department has been focusing on seizing guns and has confiscated 80 during the summer 2021, 18 of which had been reported as stolen.<sup>8</sup>

*Table: Savannah Crime and SPD Budget Summary<sup>9,10</sup>*

Savannah Crime Statistics (Reported by SPD)					
	2021	2020	2019	% change '20 to '21	% change '19 to '20
Total Violent	1,134	1,234	1,204	↓ 8%	↓ 6%
Total Property	4,930	4,174	5,408	↑ 18%	↓ 9%
<b>Total crime</b>	<b>6,604</b>	<b>5,408</b>	<b>6,612</b>	<b>↑ 12%</b>	<b>↓ 8%</b>

SPD Annual Budget			
Dollar amounts are rounded to whole numbers			
Revenue Source	2020 Actual	2021 Projected	2022 Adopted
General Fund	\$62M	\$59M	\$64M
Grant Fund	\$708k	\$2M	\$1M
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$62.7M</b>	<b>\$61M</b>	<b>\$65M</b>

Savannah Police Department has 536 sworn personnel and 90 professional staff who are City employees.<sup>11</sup> Like many cities across the nation, Savannah faces a shortage of law enforcement

<sup>5</sup> Butler, Brooke. "Is Savannah More Dangerous than Atlanta? Yes, According to the Latest Numbers." WJCL. WJCL, February 6, 2022. <https://www.wjcl.com/article/numbers-show-youre-more-likely-to-be-the-victim-of-an-aggravated-assault-in-savannah-than-atlanta/37827987>.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, "Is Savannah More Dangerous than Atlanta?"

<sup>7</sup> Butler, "Is Savannah More Dangerous than Atlanta?"

<sup>8</sup> Butler, "Is Savannah More Dangerous than Atlanta?"

<sup>9</sup> "Savannah Police Department Total Part One Crimes 2019-2021," Savannah Police Department, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://savannahpd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2021-Crime-Stats.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> "FY22 Adopted Budget for Savannah Police Department," SCRIBD, accessed May 9, 2022, [https://www.scribd.com/document/568430463/FY22-Adopted-Budget-for-Savannah-Police-Department#download&from\\_embed](https://www.scribd.com/document/568430463/FY22-Adopted-Budget-for-Savannah-Police-Department#download&from_embed).

<sup>11</sup> Police stakeholder, An interview about public safety in the City of Savannah, Zoom, March 9, 2022.

officers. With 74 vacancies and 25 future officers in training, as of March 10, 2022, recruiting and retention continues to be a top priority for the police department.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, this year has shown a rise in officer-involved shootings. As recent as April 24, 2022, there were two unrelated shootings in downtown Savannah, which left one young man dead, and two others injured.<sup>13</sup> The two shootings on Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup> were the second and third incidents to take place in Savannah over the weekend. On Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, two individuals were shot on Savannah State University campus.<sup>14</sup>

In early April of 2021, a 60-year-old Black man, William Harvey, died while in police custody after being left alone in a Savannah police interrogation room.<sup>15</sup> Reports say he died by suicide by hanging. The police chief swiftly acknowledged wrongdoing and that officers violated procedures, including not video recording the interaction in the interrogation room. Two officers were fired the day following Mr. Harvey's death for their role in his death. Yet, inappropriate and disgusting behavior of police officers continued. A meme depicting a hanging was circulated between officers in a group text message. Attorney Francys Johnson said, "it disgusts any person of good will."<sup>16</sup> After an SPD investigation, three officers were terminated for circulating the meme. The tragic death of Mr. William Harvey and the toxic meme that circulated thereafter, is a testament to a problem in Savannah police culture.

### Why Now?

To reiterate Maya Angelou's words, "today, we are standing up together, with faith and even some joy."<sup>17</sup> These words ring true today in 2022. Savannah is a city that is rising and standing up together, with faith.

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<sup>12</sup> Evans, Sean. "Savannah Police Chief Discusses Recruiting, Retention for Department." <https://www.wtoc.com>, March 10, 2022. <https://www.wtoc.com/2022/03/10/savannah-police-chief-discusses-recruiting-retention-department/>.

<sup>13</sup> Moorman, Bianca. "Updated: One Person Killed in Two Unrelated Shootings in Downtown Savannah on Sunday." Savannah Morning News. Savannah Morning News, April 25, 2022. <https://www.savannahnow.com/story/news/2022/04/24/downtown-savannah-ga-shootings-sunday-three-injured-one-critical/7431631001/>.

<sup>14</sup> Moorman. "One Person Killed in Two Unrelated Shootings in Downtown Savannah on Sunday."

<sup>15</sup> Jones, Emily. "Five Savannah Officers Fired after Death in Custody." Georgia Public Broadcasting, June 14, 2021. <https://www.gpb.org/news/2021/06/14/five-savannah-officers-fired-after-death-in-custody>.

<sup>16</sup> Jones. "Five Savannah Officers Fired after Death in Custody."

<sup>17</sup> "African-American Monument (Savannah, GA)."



[illegible]

Police Chief Minter stood alongside faith leaders and the mayor and proclaimed, “We need to make sure that we stop apologizing and we move from apology to action...Now is the time for action. Don’t burn down businesses, burn down the system. Don’t destroy businesses, destroy the system. It’s up to you to use your voice to hold us accountable.”<sup>20</sup> The rest of City Council, which includes five Black women, one Black man, and two white men, were also present at the march. Kurtis Purtee of District 6, who has a long history in law enforcement said, “I’ve been in

<sup>19</sup> Laura Wolverton, “Hundreds gather peacefully in downtown Savannah to protest George Floyd death,” WSAV, June 1, 2020, <https://www.wsav.com/news/local-news/live-updates-protesters-gather-in-downtown-savannah-over-george-floyd-death/>.

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law enforcement for 19 years, and I know we can do a better job than what we are doing now.”<sup>21</sup> The community of Savannahians were also out in force. Thirteen-year-old Bethesda Academy middle school student Joshua Johnson held a sign that read, “I am Tamir Rice, Black Lives Matter”.<sup>22</sup> Dressed in his clergy collar and face mask, William Shelburne, minister from the First Presbyterian Church, said “I am here with other clergy members to remember those lives in a peaceful way and to help bring justice in the Black community.”<sup>23</sup>

The city was and still is buzzing with energy around creating a space where racial justice and equity resound. That same summer, Mayor Johnson launched the Racial Equity and Leadership, (REAL) taskforce, with the goal to advance the movement for Black lives and broader racial justice across systems and policies, including building internal muscle and infrastructure of networks for the short- and long-term.<sup>24</sup> The REAL taskforce is grounded in the principle that racial disparities are caused by inequitable conditions due to the unfair distribution of social, economic, political and environmental resources based on race. This group of 45 volunteers looked at Savannah through a racial equity lens to support action.<sup>25</sup>

Now, the stage is set, and the work has already begun. This report will build upon the unique local context of Savannah and propose a set of policy recommendations and implementation strategies to fuel the movement for racial equity and public safety forward.

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<sup>21</sup> Dennis, Zach. “Covid, Protests, and Faith.”

<sup>22</sup> Peebles, “Savannah Mayor, Police Chief Join in Protests of George Floyd Killing.”

<sup>23</sup> Peebles, “Savannah Mayor, Police Chief Join in Protests of George Floyd Killing.”

<sup>24</sup> The Racial Equity and Leadership Task Force. “Seeing Savannah Through a Racial Equity Lens,” October 28, 2021. <https://www.savannahga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/22813/Report-to-Sapelo-Foundation-Savannahs-REAL-Taskforce-final-09202021>.

<sup>25</sup> The Racial Equity and Leadership Task Force. “Seeing Savannah Through a Racial Equity Lens.”

## II. Mandate and Scope of Work

Under the guidance of Professor Cornell William Brooks and as part of the William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice, our team of Harvard graduate students, partnered with the City of Savannah. The team represents a rich variety of disciplines, schools, and professional backgrounds, paired together in an effort “to use data, training, and public health to implement public safety recommendations developed by Savannah’s citizen accountability and review services committee.”<sup>26</sup> Our team was tasked with working in four key areas from the Memorandum of Understanding: a) community review, b) violence prevention and response, c) data and transparency and d) messaging and buy-in. We were asked to use “best practices of methods that integrate several independent crime reduction programs and strategies... and to work with the community to develop and sustain a citywide network of violence prevention and intervention services.”<sup>27</sup>

### The Team



Harvard Divinity School



Harvard Kennedy School  
Penn Law School



Harvard Kennedy School  
Harvard Business School



Harvard Kennedy School  
Harvard Business School



Nieman Fellow for Journalism



Harvard School of  
Public Health

*From top-left to bottom right: Kenashia Thompson, Megan Russo, Jerald Watson, Alexis Williams, Marisa Palmer, Merida Brimhall*

<sup>26</sup> Harvard Kennedy School of Government and Mayor Van R. Johnson II. “Memorandum of Understanding,” January 14, 2022.

<sup>27</sup> HKS and Mayor Johnson, MOU.

### Guiding Principles

The project was guided by five core principles that shaped the questions we asked and our approach to our recommendations. These five principles are:

1. Take a whole of government approach
2. Remain rooted in local culture and history
3. Strive for robust community participation
4. Focus on outcomes over politics
5. Center racial equity

### Sources

We gathered information from a variety of sources, including many stakeholder interviews, weekly Zoom meetings with the Mayor's Office, external research and comparative studies, and a site visit to Savannah. We synthesized all information and data gathered to make recommendations that are actionable and relevant to the unique context of Savannah.

### **III. Policy Recommendations**

#### **Executive Summary**

The rest of this report includes recommendation surrounding three policy areas: community review, violence prevention and response, and data & transparency. Following these recommendations are recommendations related to implementation, specifically around messaging and building buy-in for these policy changes. Across areas, our analysis can be summed up with the recognition that the City of Savannah is rich in assets that will enable it to be a pioneer in public safety. There is a history-making administration ready for change, experienced leaders, and an engaged community. What we offer below are tools to help convert potential into reality.

The city is facing a variety of challenges, many of which are mirrored nationwide. Residents are concerned about their ability to hold the police officers in their community accountable. Residents are also seeking new solutions to old problems. They hope for more effective violence prevention strategies so there is less need to respond. And finally, residents and city employees alike desire greater access to data, to make the best possible use of the tools of our digital age.

*Our key policy recommendations are as follows:*

#### **Community Review**

- Expand the mandate and authority of CARES and make it permanent. Doing so achieves many of the goals laid out by city leadership, is in line with national best practice, and can smooth political tension by expanding an existing institution.

#### **Violence Prevention and Response**

- Set the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) up for success by *formalizing* its structures and processes, *publicizing* its existence and mandate to amplify its impact, and *legitimizing* it as a government department with budgetary runway and partnerships with other organizations.

#### **Data & Transparency**

- Define a citywide strategy for data collection and sharing with respect to public safety.



- Work towards a data-driven culture with hiring, professional development, and updated technology systems.
- Create both internal and external public safety dashboards that are accessible and easy to digest.

## **Part 1: Community Review**

### **Introduction and History of CRB development**

At its core, civilian oversight can be broadly defined as the independent, external, and ongoing review of a law enforcement agency and its operations by individuals outside the law enforcement agency. There are a variety of types of oversight models with varying scopes. Oversight may entail, but is not limited to, the independent investigation of complaints alleging officer misconduct, monitoring various practices of police, assessing trends in officer activity, generating public reports, recommending disciplinary action, training, and co-developing policies and procedures. All these functions taken together can generate positive change and foster accountability and responsiveness between the police and the community.

According to scholars and practitioners, there is a consensus in contemporary literature that American civilian oversight agencies follow three main models, which are distinguished from one another by organizational differences: the review-focused, investigation-focused, or auditor/monitor-focused. The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement, NACOLE, generated a report in 2021 in which they surveyed 58 oversight agencies<sup>28</sup>. They found that newer civilian oversight boards are often organized in ways that go beyond these three traditional models for oversight. These newer boards have often taken a holistic approach and combined several oversight functions to create a system that is both proactive and reactive.

#### *Review-focused models*

These models are limited in scope and represent the earliest and most common form of civilian oversight in the United States, comprising 62% of all oversight agencies<sup>29</sup>. These boards, which are typically made up of volunteers, can receive civilian complaints, hear appeals from complaints, hold public forums, conduct community outreach, and make recommendations on case dispositions, yet there is no authority in the review board nor is any action towards the board's recommendations required. In general, review-focused models have less comprehensive access to department records.

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<sup>28</sup> Vitoroulis, Michael, Cameron McElhiney, and Liana Perez. "The Evolution and Growth of Civilian Oversight." Community Oriented Policing Services, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Vitoroulis. "The Evolution and Growth of Civilian Oversight."

### *Investigation-focused models*

This model of review board often employs professionally trained investigative staff to conduct independent investigations into allegations of misconduct. Boards in this model vary widely with authority and scope and tend to be the most cost and resource intensive oversight. These boards generally have greater access to police databases and are more likely to have subpoena power for documents or witnesses.

### *Auditor/monitor-focused models*

These boards are a relatively recent innovation aimed at promoting systemic change to policing. These agencies typically have broad mandates, authorizing them to audit, monitor, investigate and review a wide range of police practices. One of their main goals is to analyze and address patterns and trends in policies and procedures.

These three models, along with case studies listed below, will provide a scope of reference for the type of community empowerment group needed for the city of Savannah. One that will be able to hold the Savannah Police Department accountable. A group that is responsive to the community in a Council-Manager form of government and would produce a transparent, data driven annual report to the community.

### Observations

Chief of Police, Roy Minter, says it is an officer's 'duty' to build trust between the department and the community it serves.<sup>30</sup> The Savannah Police Department has enacted several community engagement initiatives over the years and begun the restorative process of regaining trust. Still, key stakeholders we spoke to shared their support in developing methods of accountability that live outside the police department and are run by community members. To begin our research into solutions, we start by laying out the issue.

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<sup>30</sup> Ansley Christain, "'Totally unacceptable and egregious': two Savannah Police officers fired following use of force investigation," WJCL, Aug. 12, 2020, <https://www.wjcl.com/article/totally-unacceptable-and-egregious-two-savannah-police-officers-fired-following-use-of-force-investigation/33587411#>.

## Scope of the Problem

- There has been an increase in officer-involved shootings in the last two years. Between December of 2021 and April of 2022, there have been six officer-involved shootings in Savannah.<sup>31</sup> According to city officials, this number represents the most officer-involved shootings in recent memory and five of these resulted in civilian deaths. The Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI) is conducting a review of police procedures, training, and support.<sup>32</sup>
- According to GBI, 46 officer-involved shootings have occurred in the state of Georgia between January 1 and May 10, 2022, with 18 of them involving a civilian death.<sup>33</sup> This means that while less than 2% of the state's population, Savannah is home to approximately 13% of the officer-involved shootings to date.
  - For comparison, 100 officer-involved shootings occurred in Georgia in 2021.<sup>34</sup>

We asked key stakeholders including the police department, local government leaders, longstanding community members about their thoughts on developing a community empowerment committee that is charged with keeping SPD accountable. Here are the themes we came across:

### *Relationship Building*

- Board should enhance and fortify current or longstanding community partnerships with SPD
- Committee should act as a sounding board for the community
- Ideal to include members from various parts of the Savannah community
- Should include representation from people living in heavily policed communities

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<sup>31</sup> Katie Nussbaum, "Mayor Johnson: Six Savannah police officer-involved shootings since December an 'anomaly'," Savannah Morning News, April 18, 2022, <https://www.savannahnow.com/story/news/2022/04/10/gbi-investigates-fourth-savannah-police-officer-involved-shooting-2022/9532239002/>.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Payne, "Spate of officer-involved shootings in Savannah prompts internal review," GPB, April 14, 2022, <https://www.gpb.org/news/2022/04/14/spate-of-officer-involved-shootings-in-savannah-prompts-internal-review>.

<sup>33</sup> "2022 Officer Involved Shootings," Georgia Bureau of Investigation, May 9, 2022, <https://gbi.georgia.gov/news/2022-05-09/2022-officer-involved-shootings>.

<sup>34</sup> "2021 Officer Involved Shootings," Georgia Bureau of Investigation, December 28, 2021, <https://gbi.georgia.gov/news/2021-12-28/2021-officer-involved-shootings>.

### *Internal Politics*

- Biggest concern is that CRBs become political, and this risk is particularly present in Savannah

### *Clear Role/Clarify Authority*

- Emphasis on a clear understanding of the board's purpose and process.
- Emphasis on a committee that solves organizational and operational issues related to identified sub-optimal patterns within the PD
- Broadening CARES into a board with an accountability role is a tangible next step
- The board should be part of meaningful discussion and thoughtful policy creation
- Emphasis on a more formalized connection with the City Manager's office

### Current Engagement

Recognizing the integral relationship between officer and resident, the City of Savannah and the Savannah Police Department have created multiple avenues for engagement between the city's police officers and its residents.

- **Behavioral Health Unit:** Creates an effective community intervention to reduce the use of jail for adults, young adults and juveniles who may need alternative services or may have behavioral health or substance abuse needs.
- **United Community Action Network (UCAN):** A network of neighborhood organizations that meet monthly with SPD to discuss on-the-ground issues.
- **Savannah Citizens Accountability and Review of Emergency Services (Savannah CARES):** A taskforce of volunteers selected to review and recommend changes to SPD's use-of-force policy.
- **Citizens Police Academy:** The program is designed to allow residents to informally interact with the members of the police department and the local criminal justice system. Participants meet officers from each unit of SPD who will explain the how and why of what they do and feature speakers from various agencies with whom they interact.
- **Police Athletic Activities League:** The SPD Police Athletics/Activities League is a community-centered youth organization. The mission of PAL is to offer opportunities for



police, community leaders, and volunteers to collaborate on ways to positively impact the youth by way of enrichment programs and sports teams.

- **Savannah Police and Gay Community Collaborative:** The Collaborative works to create a greater understanding between SPD and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community through open and safe communication, education, and outreach. It consists of an SPD officer and a board of community members.
- **Chaplain Services:** A law enforcement chaplain is a member of the clergy with a passionate interest in, and the specialized training for pastoral care in the dangerous world of law enforcement. Chaplains coordinate activities between the department, local agencies, communities, and religious groups.
- **Neighborhood Resource Officers (NROs):** Officers in specific precincts serve as a direct liaison to the community, holding frequent meetings with neighborhood sectors.

There is an abundance of programs facilitated through the police department that directly interact with community members. However, we believe there is a remaining gap in this ecosystem.

There is no permanent body with codified authority to explore the current status of policing, or specific incidents, and make recommendations to City leadership. Further, while the existing channels are great avenues for SPD to share its key messages with the communities, there are no binding protocols for SPD to receive and respond to insights or recommendations generated within the community. To fill this gap in a way that minimizes political tension and can get off the ground quickly, we recommend an expansion of CARES.

#### Expanding CARES with Oversight Capacity

Now that we have covered what a civilian oversight board is and discussed the rationale for creating one in Savannah, we can dive into recommendations for how to bring this to life in the city. As noted above, there are a few key programs already functioning in Savannah that engage citizens in making recommendations to law enforcement. One of those key taskforces is Savannah CARES. We recommend expanding CARES to formally take on the role of police oversight. We will now discuss why this is a viable path forward and also discuss practical aspects to expanding CARES. Finally, we will examine case studies of comparable cities and

propose aspects of those that can provide benefit to the unique context of public safety in Savannah.

We recommend expanding Savannah CARES' scope and infrastructure to become a permanent forum for community empowerment and engagement with the police department. Given the scope and structure of CARES, expanding the infrastructure and responsibilities of this taskforce is the best option moving forward. Community review is a form of citizen participation where a committee of residents review police policies and misconduct accusations with the goals of increasing transparency and accountability, engaging the community, improving public trust and legitimacy, and demystifying police internal affairs.<sup>35</sup> With further support, CARES is well positioned to take on this work. The structure of CARES is already somewhat similar to that of an oversight board and additionally the taskforce has significant access to data and records from SPD. Since its creation in 2020, Savannah CARES has demonstrated its ability to make meaningful recommendations. Now we will go into practical methods for expanding CARES and draw lessons from comparable cities.

### **Practical Pathways to Expanding CARES**

Grounded in the unique context of Savannah and informed by current literature and case study examples,<sup>36</sup> we recommend the expansion of CARES into a review-focused oversight board with subpoena power. Below the key recommendations are outlined.

### **Key Recommendations**

#### *Mission & Goals:*

- Improve public safety by building trust between the police department and the Savannah community
- Provide a safe and welcome place for complaints to be heard
- Be perceived as fair by members of the public as well as by members of the Savannah Police Department
- Ensure accountability and transparency in the complaint process

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<sup>35</sup> Coles, "National COPS Evaluation Organizational Change Case Study."

<sup>36</sup> Vitoroulis. "The Evolution and Growth of Civilian Oversight."

- Provide community input concerning public safety issues in the City of Savannah
- Promote public confidence in law enforcement and lessen the possibility that future incidents of urban unrest occur

*Type of Complaints Savannah CARES should investigate:*

- Abusive language or discriminatory references
- False arrest
- False imprisonment
- Harassment
- Use of excessive force
- Serious bodily harm
- Discrimination and undue profiling
- Abuse of authority
- Officer misconduct
- Retaliation
- Failure to provide identification
- Violations of other policies

*Community Empowerment:*

- Fair forum for assessment of concerns about Savannah Police Department personnel actions
- Every complaint is fairly evaluated based on the evidence, regardless of the parties involved
- Timely response to citizen's concerns about an officer's action, and if deemed appropriate, redress for officer misconduct
- Citizen participation and engagement in officer accountability
- Transparency of investigations and results to the public (with appropriate protections of sensitive information)
- Accessible and easy-to-use process of submitting complaints

*Savannah CARES Governing Structure:*

- Advise the City Manager on policies and actions of the police department, and specific complaints or incidents
- Exercise subpoena power
- Meet with the Chief of Police, police department personnel, or designees regularly
- Issue periodic public reports including a semi-annual summary report to the City Manager
- Initiate studies upon request directed by the City Manager
- Have full access to relevant police department personnel for interview and relevant documents and records
- Discretion to make specific recommendations at any time, and issue a public report summarizing its activities and recommendations

*Savannah CARES Community Relations:*

- Inform the public about Savannah CARES and its duties
- Receive, investigate, mediate, & make recommendations for active citizen complaints.
- Hold public hearings, as needed
- Expand scope of reviewing misconduct including but not limited to: use of force, unbecoming conduct, arrest, search and seizure, and arbitrary profiling
- Select appropriate individual incidents to review and broader issues to study
- Review specific complaints or incidents of misconduct against individual police officers or neighborhood resource officers; including those involving language related to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.
- Have power to recommend that the Chief of Police take certain actions such as changes in training, policies, preservation of records, and in counseling available to officers. The recommendations may also include recommendations of hiring, firing, promotion, demotion, punishment, or commendation.
- Accept anonymous complaints by mail, in person (available forms at precincts), or online
- Accept use of force complaints involving serious bodily injury or death without signature

*Qualifications for Savannah CARES Committee:*

All members of Savannah CARES shall be residents of the City of Savannah. Current and former City employees, and the spouse, parents, and children of a current or former SPD officer, shall not be eligible to serve on Savannah CARES. Members of Savannah CARES should represent a wide array of lived experiences, including:

- Persons with previous convictions
- Persons within the most policed neighborhoods of Savannah
- Persons with little or no formal education
- Persons who are active in the community daily, such as youth organizations, nonprofit organizations and neighborhood associations
- At least one member between the ages of 18-24.

All Savannah CARES members shall receive training on relevant legal and policy issues as required by the City Manager. Further, each member of CARES shall participate in at least ten hours of training each calendar year, which may include a three-hour “ride-along” with a SPD officer or a neighborhood resource officer. Finally, members of Savannah CARES shall receive compensation for service. In terms of compensation, it is suggested that any costs members accrue due to items like transportation or childcare be reimbursable.

*Recommended Transparency Tools:*

- Develop a website for Savannah CARES.
  - Community members can keep up to date with current processes of submitting complaints and other resources.
  - Savannah CARES’ reports can be readily accessed by the public.
  - Savannah CARES’ public meeting minutes can be readily accessed by the public.
  - There is a higher level of mutual trust and accountability between the public and the Savannah Police Department.

*Membership:*

It is suggested that 9 members serve on Savannah CARES. Three appointed by the Mayor of Savannah, three appointed by the City Manager, and three appointed by the City



Council. Membership shall reflect the community of Savannah who come from a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds.

Term Length: 3 years; with a 2-term limit

Meeting Frequency: Twice per month (and as needed for emergencies)

Meeting Location: City Hall

The above recommendations were grounded in evidence and based on the lessons learned from other civilian oversight boards across the country.<sup>37</sup>

### Case Studies of Comparable Cities

Our team looked at three comparable cities and their frameworks of community review to recommend a model that fits the needs of Savannah. While we have selected these cities based upon population, geographic location and government structures, it is nearly impossible to factor in each state and city's laws, political government and culture. What worked well for one city simply may not work for another. That said, the case studies we have chosen for the City of Savannah offer either traditional or innovative approaches that are worth consideration.

We selected Charlotte, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Given the research above on the basic structures for Civilian Oversight models recommended by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement, three comparable cities with oversight boards were researched by our team to fit the needs of the city of Savannah. Both Charlotte and Atlanta have comparable demographics of crime states relative to Savannah. Cambridge shares a similar City Manager model. Each of the following cities' oversight boards has subpoena power.

### ***Charlotte, North Carolina - Citizens Review Board<sup>38</sup>***

The Citizens Review Board was established in June 1997. The Citizens Review Board reviews appeals by citizens who file complaints on dispositions imposed by the Chief of Police or his designee relating to allegations of misconduct against a sworn police officer. The Board may

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<sup>37</sup> Vitoroulis. "The Evolution and Growth of Civilian Oversight."

<sup>38</sup> "City Clerk." City of Charlotte Government. Accessed May 9, 2022.  
<https://charlottenc.gov/CityClerk/Pages/CitizensReviewBoard.aspx>.

hear complaints regarding alleged violations of the following rules: use of force, unbecoming conduct, arrest, search and seizure, and arbitrary profiling. In addition, the disposition of the review of any discharge of a firearm by an officer which results in the death or injury of a person may be appealed to this Board by the person injured or the next of kin in the event of death. The Board also serves in an advisory role to the Chief of Police, the City Manager, and the City Council<sup>39</sup>. It is charged with making periodic reports to the Chief of Police, the City Manager, the City Council and the Community Relations Committee.

The eleven members of Charlotte's Citizens Review Board represent a wide array of professional citizens in the community, with an equal number of appointments from the Mayor of Charlotte, the City Manager and the City Council. Appointments for this board are on a voluntary basis. The Citizens review board collectively meets twice per month, reviewing complaints submitted either by mail, online, or in person at the Charlotte Police Department. Our team appreciated Charlotte's CRB's accessibility to the public, as their website highlighted very clearly what the board does, qualifications for Board members, reports from the CRB, and other resources including brochures and rules of procedure.

Charlotte was chosen as a comparable city of Savannah due to similarities in crime stats between the two. Charlotte and Savannah are geographically located four hours apart. It is important to note that the qualifications for CRB members in Charlotte make an explicit guideline that persons with prior convictions, including misdemeanors, cannot serve on the CRB. In particular, members must attend and successfully complete the CMPD's citizens academy and receive training on relevant legal, policy, and cultural awareness issues as required by the city manager. This training must happen before any board appointment. We do not recommend this approach when selecting members for Savannah CARES, as this approach narrows the range of voices present.

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<sup>39</sup> "City Clerk." City of Charlotte Government. Accessed May 9, 2022.  
<https://charlottenc.gov/CityClerk/Pages/CitizensReviewBoard.aspx>.

### ***Atlanta, Georgia - Citizen Review Board<sup>40</sup>***

The Atlanta Citizen Review Board receives complaints from members of the public concerning sworn members of the Atlanta Police Department and the Atlanta Corrections Department. Established in 2007, the Board reviews the complaint, and may require an investigation into the complaint. The Board may also conduct public hearings and study broader issues that may be of concern to the community. The Board may advise the Mayor, the President of Council, Council members, and the Chief of Police and Corrections Department with the purpose of improving the ability of police personnel to carry out their duties, and to improve the relationship between the Department, Corrections and the community. The ACRB has subpoena power as of May of 2010.

The Atlanta Citizens Review Board has 15 members and a full staff that represent the city of Atlanta<sup>41</sup>. With the majority of the membership being persons of color and on a voluntary basis, Atlanta's CRB is appointed by the mayor of Atlanta, the City Council and nonprofit organizations. Appointments for this board are on a voluntary basis. Atlanta's CRB collectively meets twice per month via zoom as needed and reviews complaints submitted online. Like Charlotte's CRB website that includes reports and what the CRB does, our team also appreciated the CRB's accessibility to the public. Their website has a complaints map that highlights the type of complaint and in which zone in Atlanta. Atlanta's CRB has a strong media presence, with a robust website and is very active on its YouTube channel, allowing for the public to access the information.

### ***Cambridge, Massachusetts - The Police Review & Advisory Board<sup>42</sup>***

Established by Cambridge City Ordinance in 1984, the Cambridge PRAB provides prompt, impartial, and fair investigation of complaints brought by individuals against members of the Cambridge Police Department. The Board provides citizen participation in reviewing the Police Department's policies, practices, and procedures. The Board develops programs and strategies to

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<sup>40</sup> "ACRB Powers and Duties," ACRB, August 27, 2020, <https://acrbgov.org/education/acrb-powers-and-duties/>.

<sup>41</sup> "ACRB Powers and Duties," ACRB, August 27, 2020, <https://acrbgov.org/education/acrb-powers-and-duties/>.

<sup>42</sup> "Police Review & Advisory Board Ordinance." Municode Library. Accessed May 9, 2022.  
[https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE\\_CH2.74POREADBO](https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE_CH2.74POREADBO).

promote positive police and community relationships and provides opportunities for expanded discussions, improved understanding, and innovative ways of resolving differences.

Members of Cambridge's PRAB embody the true meaning of community engagement. To appoint members to PRAB, the City Manager seeks qualified candidates by advertising in the local newspapers for individuals who desire appointment to the Board. Cambridge PRAB members (5) is a small, intimate group that meets as needed, reviewing complaints of the CPD by members of the community<sup>43</sup>. Service on this board is voluntary. Our team appreciated Cambridge PRAB's accessibility to the public, as their website highlighted a Tips and FAQ tab answering possible questions for the public.

The procedures and practices of citizen review boards in Charlotte, NC, Atlanta, GA, and Cambridge, MA represent a collection of cities with subpoena power. We pulled from each of these cities to develop a model that works with the structures that exist within Savannah.

### Conclusion

During various stakeholder interviews with both the SPD and members of the community, there was a consensus that true public safety for the city could only happen through collaboration. Given the intensified national attention on police reform, expanding Savannah CARES' scope and infrastructure to empower civilians is promising for more equitable policing and community safety. The recommendations encourage the community and SPD to collaborate in the name of public safety. By bolstering confidence in the SPD, Savannah CARES members, who represent the City of Savannah, could increase and improve public cooperation and make communities safer.

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<sup>43</sup> "Police Review & Advisory Board Ordinance." Municode Library. Accessed May 9, 2022. [https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE\\_CH2.74POREADBO](https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE_CH2.74POREADBO).

## **Part 2: Violence Prevention and Response**

### **Introduction**

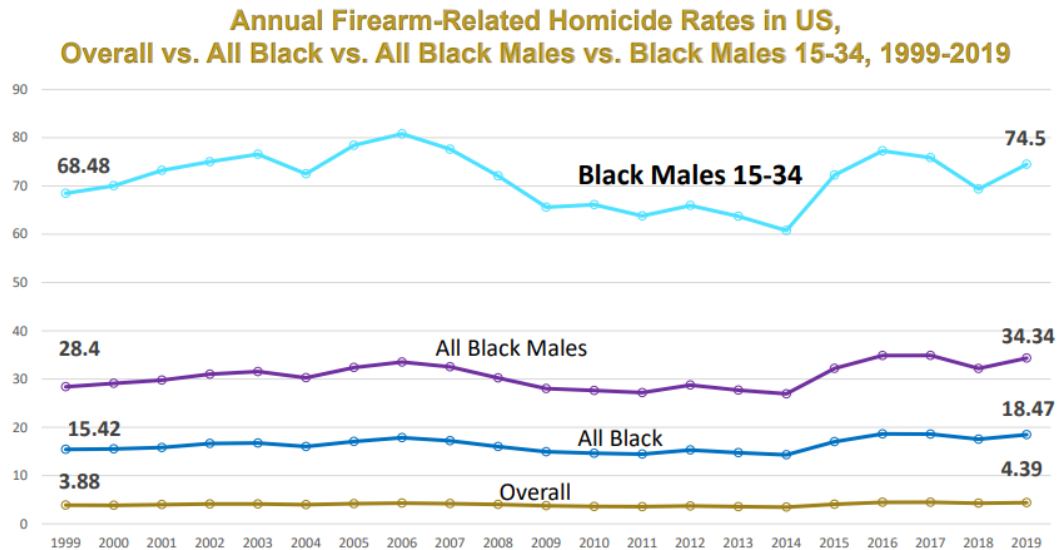
The Mayor's Office tasked our team with assessing violence prevention and response within the City of Savannah. As the newly designated hub of nonpolice public safety efforts, the Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement (ONSE) is where we focused our efforts. We interviewed local stakeholders, researched best practices, and analyzed previous public safety efforts.

The conceptual foundation of our work is taking a public health focused approach to public safety that treats violence as a contagion and, just as with medicine, aims to solve the root causes rather than treat the symptoms. Traditionally in the United States, police forces are solely responsible for responding to crime. Recently, there has been a push to embrace public health measures to prevent violence, which has supplanted several infectious diseases as leading causes of death in the United States, especially among young Black males. The same root cause analyses that helped professionals address heart disease, cancer, and stroke with behavioral changes are being applied to the structural disadvantages and marginalization that underpin community violence. The CDC's Division of Violence Prevention, which has studies dating back to the early 1990s, "helped demonstrate that significant reductions in aggressive and violent behavior were possible with applied, skill-based violence-prevention programs that address social, emotional, and behavioral competencies, as well as family environments."<sup>44</sup> Today public health officials are urging the widespread adoption of individual, communal, and structural interventions that will alleviate the shocking 70% gap in firearm-related homicides between young Black males and the overall population.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Linda Dahlberg and James Mercy, "The History of Violence as a Public Health Issue," (CDC, February 2009), [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/history\\_violence-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/history_violence-a.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Dahlberg, "The History of Violence as a Public Health Issue."



Source: CVI Collaborative Webinar 1, Chart showing gaps in firearm-related homicides in the US by demographic.<sup>46</sup>

### Defining the Problem

Through our conversations with various City officials and community leaders, we learned that there is genuine energy and commitment to improving public safety outcomes. Numerous NGOs, neighborhood groups, and City offices are already tackling this challenge in their own way. However, we heard some common challenges.

- **Lack of Coordination:** We heard that individual community organizations and City departments are not coordinating effectively, and even unintentionally duplicating efforts. There needs to be more intention and structure around coalescing stakeholders around a set of priorities and norms to maximize citywide impact.
- **Law Enforcement Focus:** Residents are frustrated that current approaches to violence prevention and response are disproportionately focused on law enforcement actors and structures. Various stakeholders hope to see a future system in which there is more representation of education, health, housing, and recreation-based interventions.
- **Relationships with City Government:** Various stakeholders, but particularly those outside of City government, articulated a desire to have more direct input and influence

<sup>46</sup> “Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Webinar Series,” BJA, accessed May 9, 2022, [https://bjatta.bja.ojp.gov/sites/default/files/CIWebinarSeriesPart1\\_Evidence-basedTheoryAndResearchOnCVI\\_508c.pdf](https://bjatta.bja.ojp.gov/sites/default/files/CIWebinarSeriesPart1_Evidence-basedTheoryAndResearchOnCVI_508c.pdf).

over policy and legislation. At minimum, they hope for more sustained, two-way channels of communication with decisionmakers.

- **Relationships in the Community:** Multiple stakeholders also opined that there is a dearth of positive relationships with authority figures like police officers and Savannah residents. While they highlighted bright spots, on balance they felt that police officers and other decisionmakers are cut off from lived experiences of heavily impacted areas and do not have strong relationships with residents at-risk of being victim or perpetrators of gun violence.

### Previous Public Safety Efforts

The City of Savannah has engaged in a variety of public safety efforts, three of which we highlight here in part because they served as impetus for the new ONSE office.

The **End Gun Violence Program (EGVP)** is a joint-effort of the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department and the City of Savannah enacted in 2017 aimed at addressing gun-related issues and gang violence. The EGVP kicked off the approach of targeting on the small percentage of people responsible for a disproportionate number of shootings and homicides. A police-led effort, it urged gang members to lay down their weapons but, it also offered social services to those willing to participate and turn their lives around. EGVP grew out of a hospital- and school-based intervention program.<sup>47</sup> A group of supporters comprised of county commissioners, city aldermen, and the mayor realized that a formal stand-alone department was necessary after bearing witness to violence in hospitals and in the streets. The program was originally called Operation Ceasefire from 1999 until it was renamed in 2015.<sup>48</sup>

The **Savannah Impact Program (SIP)** was revived by City Council in December 2020 in response to an uptick in gun violence that year. Its target population is individuals who are re-entering society to stymie recidivism. The SIP is a partnership between the SPD, juvenile probation and parole that builds on existing resources to provide supervision, job readiness, and

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<sup>47</sup> “Intergovernmental Agreement between Chatham County, Georgia and City of Savannah, Georgia for Gun Violence Reduction Partnership,” Savannah GA Government, 2017, <http://agenda.savannahga.gov/content/files/end-gun-violence-mou.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> “Operation Ceasefire becomes End Gun Violence: Step Forward,” Savannah Police Department, September 23, 2015, <https://savannahpd.org/operation-ceasefire-becomes-end-gun-violence-step-forward/>.



mental health services. Mayor Johnson was heavily involved in the program during its prior run from 2001 to 2015. SIP builds on the Problem Oriented Policing approach coined in 1979 by Herman Goldstein that proactively addresses the socioeconomic root causes of crime. The program was an early effort in Savannah to combine the necessary resources under a single roof so that accessibility would not be an obstacle. An ecosystem of supporters from law enforcement, job training entities, and rehab center collaborated in finances and operations. SIP was limited in scope compared to ONSI's current programming as it only received sentenced individuals who have a history of violent behavior or drug usage.<sup>49,50</sup>

The **Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force** was the culmination of Mayor Johnson's commitment to add community engagement to decision-making. The mission of the volunteer group is to advocate for racial equity by identifying the structural barriers caused by racism. The final report from the Task Force released in September 2021 used data to quantify racial inequities across City systems and make recommendations directly to the mayor on how to eliminate them. In the first phase of this report, REAL posed the question, "What action is the community going to take now that it knows the facts?" Former Mayor Dr. Otis Johnson (2004-2012) drew a direct link between the challenges that young, marginalized people have in school and issues with crime. Many of the REAL report's recommendations describe expanding access to social services and resources for Black people extending preventative healthcare, relieving housing unaffordability, community asset building. The REAL report calls out the disproportionate racial representation among incarcerated people from the state to the national level; Black people are 13.5%, 32%, and 20% of the US, Georgia, and Chatham County populations, but 40%, 50%, and 68% of the prison populations, respectively. It sets out a racial equity-based vision for reimagining public safety. There is an explicit acknowledgement of how bail, fines, and fees exacerbate existing economic injustices within the criminal justice system. It uplifts efforts to eliminate or create alternatives to bail already underway with the Deep Center and The Bail Project, local and national-level nonprofits. There is a substantial economic argument for replacing jail sanctions with community-based sanctions, especially when they

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<sup>49</sup> Bria Bolden, "Savannah leaders bring back program to help community policing," WTOC, February 3, 2021, <https://www.wtoc.com/2021/02/04/savannah-leaders-bring-back-program-help-community-policing/>.

<sup>50</sup> "Savannah Impact Program: A Problem Oriented Policing Project," Savannah Impact Program, May 2003, <https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/awards/goldstein/2003/03-41.pdf>.

have proven just as effective and less costly. Community-based alternatives like mental health and substance abuse programs are doubly important for juveniles to avoid future delinquency. Along with reviving SIP, the report suggests forming a racial justice commission that will leverage data to identify how children get involved in the criminal justice system and propose community programs to provide direct services (recreation, education, mentorship) that address those gaps. The commission could support existing Savannah programs like The Front Porch and Restorative Conferencing. REAL recommended it be staffed with demographically representative residents and members of the law enforcement, court, and school systems who would meet monthly as data gathering and analysis infrastructure is built over the first three years. In July 2020, 45 volunteer members were appointed to the taskforce to investigate six issue areas: Criminal Justice; Economic Empowerment and Development; Education; Environmental Justice; Health; and Housing.<sup>51</sup>

### Current Public Safety Landscape

The City of Savannah has a strong public safety landscape with strong leadership from Mayor Johnson, City Manager Jay Melder, and other government officials. Jay Melder was appointed City Manager of Savannah in 2019 after previously serving in Washington, D.C. under Mayor Muriel Bowser. The Council-Manager form of government has the City Manager function as a non-political Chief Executive Officer, responsible for a municipal corporation with a \$425M budget and 2,400 employees.<sup>52</sup> Under this system, the police department reports to Melder and Melder is committed to focus on “reducing violent crime, reducing poverty, and producing and preserving affordable housing.”<sup>53</sup> He is aiming to produce more non-policing assets to free up officers for interactions that promote community trust. Advocating for a whole-of-government approach and a focus on social determinants, Melder said that “Police are there to enforce laws, not to ensure public safety. Public safety is a goal and outcome in infrastructure, recreation, greenspace, and mental health care.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The Racial Equity and Leadership Task Force. “Seeing Savannah Through a Racial Equity Lens.”

<sup>52</sup> “Office of the City Manager,” Savannah GA Government, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.savannahga.gov/394/Office-of-the-City-Manager>.

<sup>53</sup> Isabel Litterst, “New Savannah City Manager, Jay Melder announces 90-day Action Plan,” Fox28 Savannah, September 24, 2021, <https://fox28media.com/news/local/new-savannah-city-manager-jay-melder-announces-90-day-action-plan>.

<sup>54</sup> Melder Stakeholder Interview.

Moreover, the Chief Community Services Officer, Taffanye Young, is sponsoring the effort by setting the table at a bi-weekly meeting that serves to coordinate departmental leadership on priorities and budgeting decisions. The difficult balance is maintaining a good relationship with the police department when understaffing exacerbates internal resistance to oversight measures. In order to avoid unnecessarily politicizing policing, he emphasizes collaborative buy-in approaches and evidence-based practices.

### The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement

The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) was created on January 18, 2022, and John Bush Jr. was appointed its director. He is a former Community Intervention Specialist at Chatham County District Attorney's office, lending him experience in youth violence prevention. In the 2022 fiscal year's budget, City Council allocated \$1 million for grants and partnerships with community organizations. ONSE is "dedicated to implementing crime reduction strategies and increasing neighborhood safety through a collaborative community approach."<sup>55</sup> City Council recently approved an additional \$584K contract with Youth Advocate Program (YAP), which is affiliated with the interrupter program Cure Violence Global. Overseen by ONSE, YAP will be tasked with hiring, training, and supervising a team of seven credible messengers serving as violence interrupters and outreach workers with high-risk youth.<sup>56</sup>

The newly created department is focused on engaging the youth at risk of gun violence involvement and offering them support services and an off-ramp to pursue growth. The \$1 million in City Council funding was earmarked for overhead and community grants to partner organization that will facilitate: conflict management; out-of-school activities; youth sports; and youth mentorship. The partnership-led approach follows the 'participatory office' model seen in Newark, New Jersey. In this model, the office supports programing primarily through grantmaking to the community, thus encouraging participation with decentralization. While

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<sup>55</sup> "Neighborhood Safety and Engagement," Savannah GA Government, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.savannahga.gov/3445/Neighborhood-Safety-and-Engagement>

<sup>56</sup> Drew Favakeh, "City approves funding for Cure Violence program to work with Savannah's high-risk youth," Savannah Morning News, April 17, 2022, <https://www.savannahnow.com/story/news/2022/04/17/savannah-ga-approves-funding-cure-violence-program-high-risk-youth/7330372001/>.

ONSE is currently a staff of one, Director Bush currently has job openings for a Program Analyst, responsible for monitoring grants and contracts, and a Program Coordinator, responsible for building relationships with other communities. In the coming year, Bush aspires to hire a Transportation Coordinator to bridge the gap between low-income residents who are motivated to work and employment centers offering jobs.<sup>57</sup>

A challenge facing ONSE is how to create a whole-of-government public safety approach. According to Bush, “initially [ONSE’s] budget is going to be dedicated to the agencies that are already trying to address these needs...and bring them in together, under one umbrella.” Before he was appointed ONSE director, Bush demonstrated effectiveness through building relationships with hospitals and schools, essentially performing crucial violence intervention in these settings before formalized agreements were in place.

ONSE is within the purview of the Chief Community Services Officer who oversees programs focused on quality-of-life improvements.<sup>58</sup> It provides public safety, sanitation, access to quality housing, recreational facilities, leisure opportunities and supportive services. Community Services is one of five external-facing departments reporting directly to the City Manager. Other departments housed under Community Services include Code Compliance, Housing & Neighborhood Services, Recreation & Leisure Services, Cultural Resources, Human Services, and Sanitation.<sup>59</sup>

### Research and Best Practices

Decades of research has drawn on knowledge across disciplines to develop collective action strategies for cities to tackle the root causes of violence. These public health professionals and experts from other fields have: 1) defined the problem; 2) identified risk factors; and 3) developed prevention strategies. Savannah can leverage that research for quick and sound decision making that responds to rally cries for social justice reform.

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<sup>57</sup> John Bush (ONSE Director), An interview about public safety in the City of Savannah, Zoom, March 23, 2022.

<sup>58</sup> “Chief Community Services Officer,” Savannah GA Government, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.savannahga.gov/477/Chief-Community-Services-Officer>.

<sup>59</sup> “Chief Community Services Officer,” Savannah GA Government.

## **Community-Based Violence Interventions**

In the United States, public safety is traditionally considered to be entirely the domain of police departments, which are now overburdened with issues they were not designed to solve—overdoses, behavioral health, homelessness, and school discipline. Despite a 36% increase in officers from 700K to 950K from 1990-2012, research shows that income growth and nonprofit activities are more impactful on crime rates. Research shows that adding one nonprofit per 100K people decreases crime rates by one percent.<sup>60</sup> While “defund the police” is a political lightning rod, surveys show broad support to have trained civilians, not law enforcement, respond to low-level community issues. Under that paradigm, police are a last resort, a surgical intervention for public health. Instead, we often see that social service departments are the first to face budget cuts when fearmongering is manipulated to make crime about politics rather than public health.<sup>61</sup> Research highlights the benefits, responsibilities, and budget considerations for Community-Based Violence Interventions (CVI).

**Municipalities create Offices of Neighborhood Safety to provide:** 1) a civilian-led public safety focus within government; 2) a pathway for community engagement in public safety priorities; and 3) a budget mechanism that gives residents direct control. The Richmond, California ONS was lauded for an 80% decrease in homicide and a 43% reduction in gun-related crimes but the benefits of an ONS are deeper than statistics.<sup>62</sup>

**Offices of Neighborhood Safety are associated with various benefits including:**<sup>63</sup>

- Building trust community interventions by disentangling them from law enforcement.
- Shifting the narrative by endorsing alternative safety measures
- Destabilizing long-term root causes of violence
- Centralizing and formalize CVI efforts in government

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<sup>60</sup> Betsy Pearl, “Beyond Policing Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety,” (Center for American Progress, October 15, 2020), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/beyond-policing-investing-offices-neighborhood-safety/>.

<sup>61</sup> Pearl, “Beyond Policing Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety.”

<sup>62</sup> Ellicott C. Matthey et al. “Firearm and Nonfirearm Violence After Operation Peacemaker Fellowship in Richmond, California, 1996–2016”, *American Journal of Public Health* 109, no. 11 (November 1, 2019): pp. 1605-1611, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305288>.

<sup>63</sup> Pearl, “Beyond Policing Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety.”

## Responsibilities of an ONS

- **Violence Interruption** posits that credible messengers are better positioned than law enforcement to engage the small group that typically drives violent crime in cities because of distrust issues. They discourage retaliatory violence through outreach to injured individuals at hospitals.
- **Transformative Mentoring** uses credible messengers provide high-touch, one-on-one mentorship to address the trauma that makes people susceptible to violence. In Richmond this includes travel opportunities, and help navigating social services.
- **Job Readiness Programs** provide opportunities that reduce crime's economic incentive. Pairing work experience, training, and supportive services helps people build the life skills to achieve their long-term goals.
- **Bridging Trust Gaps** is it easier for low-income Black communities to access government services. COVID-19 proved the effectiveness of outreach in the form of public health messengers, and such messengers have been similarly helpful in reducing violence.
- **Nonpolice Responses to Calls for Service** – providing civilian first responders can reduce police use of force by targeting interactions from occurring in the first place. Dispatching teams of medical and crisis intervention workers for non-emergency situations effective in Eugene, Oregon where they handle 17% of 911 calls with only 2% of the police budget.<sup>64</sup>

## Considerations When Launching an ONS

- Cities can engage **credible messengers** as either 1) direct hires; or 2) non-profit contractors (like Savannah's Cure Violence partner YAP). Given the dangerous nature of the work, governments must provide messengers: 1) job security, 2) training, 3) career progression, and 4) mental health support.
- Creating flexibility to **hire people with criminal records** as messengers lets cities leverage their valuable lived experience—Savannah 'banned the box' for city government jobs in 2015.

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<sup>64</sup> Pearl, "Beyond Policing Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety."

- **Promoting accountability** is essential to generate buy-in. Goals must be tracked with data and reported publicly on a regular basis. An ONS should share similar scrutiny for public safety problems as law enforcement to convey legitimacy.
- **Community Engagement** can help an ONS restore trust in government by taking community needs seriously. Designating a permanent role to engage residents, non-profits, and service providers in policymaking will encourage participation.<sup>65</sup>

## **Budgeting**

- **Funding** should be consistently provided through the general fund to ensure mayoral and city council buy-in to cover costs above regular operations. Some cities create dedicated funding streams like special taxes or marijuana legalization
- **Capping police budgets** allows for spending on non-punitive and social service spending, ensuring spending on policing does not outweigh health, homelessness, youth, and workforce costs.
- **Shrinking police budgets** is possible during this period of difficulty hiring officers. Non-police alternatives to public safety can benefit from the available capital. Consider banning units that cause the most discriminatory harm. Build the infrastructure to address crime's root causes through long-term community partnerships.<sup>66</sup>

## Case Studies

### ***Richmond, California***

Richmond has an Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) that is responsible for “building partnerships and strategies that produce sustained reductions in firearm assaults.”<sup>67</sup> The ONS’s actions are community-driven, evidence-based, and focused on prevention and intervention; they attempt to stop violence before it occurs by healing the traumas that make at-risk populations

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<sup>65</sup> Pearl, “Beyond Policing Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety.”

<sup>66</sup> Pearl, “Beyond Policing Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety.”

<sup>67</sup> Ellicott C. Matthey et al. “Firearm and Nonfirearm Violence After Operation Peacemaker Fellowship in Richmond, California, 1996–2016”, *American Journal of Public Health* 109, no. 11 (November 1, 2019): pp. 1605-1611, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305288>.

vulnerable to committing or being victims of gun violence. It partners with local non-profits to offer high-frequency, high-impact services to at-risk youth.<sup>68</sup>

Since its inception, the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship has completed 4 cohorts comprising 84 fellows. The program has earned attention for its laudable results; casualties from gun violence were down 71% from 2007 to 2016 and non-fatal shootings decreased 21% from 2015 to 2016. Nearly 30 cities reached out to Richmond looking to adopt its approach to violence reduction. In June 2021, President Biden highlighted the Advance Fellowship founded by the former director of Richmond's ONS as a model for other cities.<sup>69</sup>

Richmond's program is unique in that it offers a stipend to fellowship participants to eliminate the financial incentive to criminal activity. Vital to Richmond's program is the role of Neighborhood Change Agents (NCAs) who are credible messengers with prior involvement in the criminal justice system. NCAs become a support network, helping young men of color turn their lives around to make positive contributions to their communities.

The City of Richmond had to hire formerly incarcerated people with prior gun charges as full-time, well-paid employees to make the program work. Rather than respond reactively to gun-violence, Advance Peace heals the unaddressed trauma that people involved in gun violence share. The Peacemaker Fellowship provided these people with 18 to 24 months of transformative mentoring that involves contact with multiple people multiple times a day. In sharp contrast to the penal system, the Richmond model shows participants that another way of life is possible. Through a suite of services including mentoring, assistance navigating social services, and out-of-state travel, the program can "open the Fellows' minds to life beyond what they've known."<sup>70</sup>

In late 2020, Richmond took its efforts a step further when Mayor Tom Butt convened the 'Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force' which was tasked with creating a plan

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<sup>68</sup> Matthey et al. "Firearm and Nonfirearm Violence After Operation Peacemaker Fellowship in Richmond, California, 1996–2016."

<sup>69</sup> Matthey et al. "Firearm and Nonfirearm Violence After Operation Peacemaker Fellowship in Richmond, California, 1996–2016."

<sup>70</sup> Matthey et al. "Firearm and Nonfirearm Violence After Operation Peacemaker Fellowship in Richmond, California, 1996–2016."



conducive to a reduced police force and staffed with community orgs members, law enforcement officials, and people impacted by law enforcement.<sup>71</sup> Because of the foundation built by prior work, Richmond can broach the politically fraught subject of reducing police budgets, confident that doing so will reduce crime saving public funds.

Specifically, the Richmond Reimagining Safety Task Force recommended:

- Direct non-criminal 9-1-1 calls to a non-police, human services-centric response system
- Encourage people from marginalized populations to pursue careers in human services
- Connect youth and their families to community resources and opportunities.<sup>72</sup>

### *Washington, DC*

The Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONSE) in DC opened in 2017 with the express goal to coordinate with the human, employment and youth rehabilitation services departments on behavioral health, educational engagement, and workforce development.<sup>73</sup> It tackled a surge in homicides with a public health approach based on the Richmond model instead of ineffective “war on drugs”-style policing. Standard model policing strategies that succeeded against organized crime fell short against crime problems rooted in longstanding social inequities.

The DC ONSE program consolidated existing workstreams under one unified office and was created while Jay Melder, current Savannah City Manager, was Assistant City Administrator of DC.<sup>74</sup> The NEAR Act legislation that formed the department also created a hospital-based violence interrupter program and broke down siloes in public safety programs.<sup>75</sup> There are seven initiatives that now fall under the DC ONSE office: Pathways Program, Violence Intervention Initiative, Family and Survivor Support, School Based Initiative, Community Based Crime Reduction, Community Response Team, and Restorative Justice.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> “City of Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety,” Reimagine Richmond, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.reimagine-richmond.org/en/richmond-ons>.

<sup>72</sup> “City of Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety,” Reimagine Richmond.

<sup>73</sup> “About ONSE,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/page/about-onse>.

<sup>74</sup> “About ONSE,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement.

<sup>75</sup> Brent Cohen, “Implementing the NEAR Act to Reduce Violence in D.C.,” (D.C. Policy Center, May 25, 2017), <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/implementing-near-act-reduce-violence-d-c/>.

<sup>76</sup> “ONSE Services,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/page/onse-services>.

Program	Overview
<b>Pathways Program</b> <sup>77</sup>	Provides intensive employment training for individuals 20-35 who have been identified as high-risk for criminal justice involvement. Includes wraparound services such as housing, mental health services, nutrition advice, etc.
<b>Violence Intervention Initiative</b> <sup>78</sup>	A targeted violence interrupter service focused on stemming group related and retaliatory violence
<b>Family and Survivor Support</b> <sup>79</sup>	Coordinates the community response in the event of a violent event by providing support services for victims, families, and bystanders
<b>School Based Initiative</b> <sup>80</sup>	An school-based program providing wrap-around services and extra employment training for students deemed ‘high-risk’ for criminal justice involvement based on school attendance and behavior record
<b>Community Based Crime Reduction</b> <sup>81</sup>	Research based initiative to analyze crime patterns and understand root causes. Conducts both data collection and place-based community participatory research.
<b>Community Response Team</b> <sup>82</sup>	Focused on working with local communities to help them build their own infrastructure to immediately respond to violent crimes.
<b>Restorative Justice</b> <sup>83</sup>	Embeds restorative justice practices into the other ONSE programs

As can be seen in the above chart, the DC ONSE office takes a comprehensive and holistic approach to violence interruption, focusing on community, school, employment, mental health, and root cause analyses. Moreover, housing all these interventions under one roof allows for increased, intentional, and strategic collaboration across initiatives.

DC’s ONSE also regularly tracks their impact on both their long-term and short-term goals. Notably, since the start of ONSE, violent crime has decreased in ONSE priority communities

<sup>77</sup> “Pathways Program,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/node/1454226>.

<sup>78</sup> “Violence Intervention Initiative,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/node/1454211>.

<sup>79</sup> “Family and Survivor Support,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/node/1454236>.

<sup>80</sup> “School Based Initiative,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/node/1454246>.

<sup>81</sup> “Community Based Crime Reduction,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/node/1461521>.

<sup>82</sup> “Community Response Team,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/node/1534106>.

<sup>83</sup> “Restorative Justice,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/node/1535226>.

while it has increased citywide<sup>84</sup> – unified efforts are demonstrably effective. Being able to track this type of impact and making it public via data visualizations, is an important tool for sustainability of the program, transparency, and accountability.

### Nationwide CVI Context

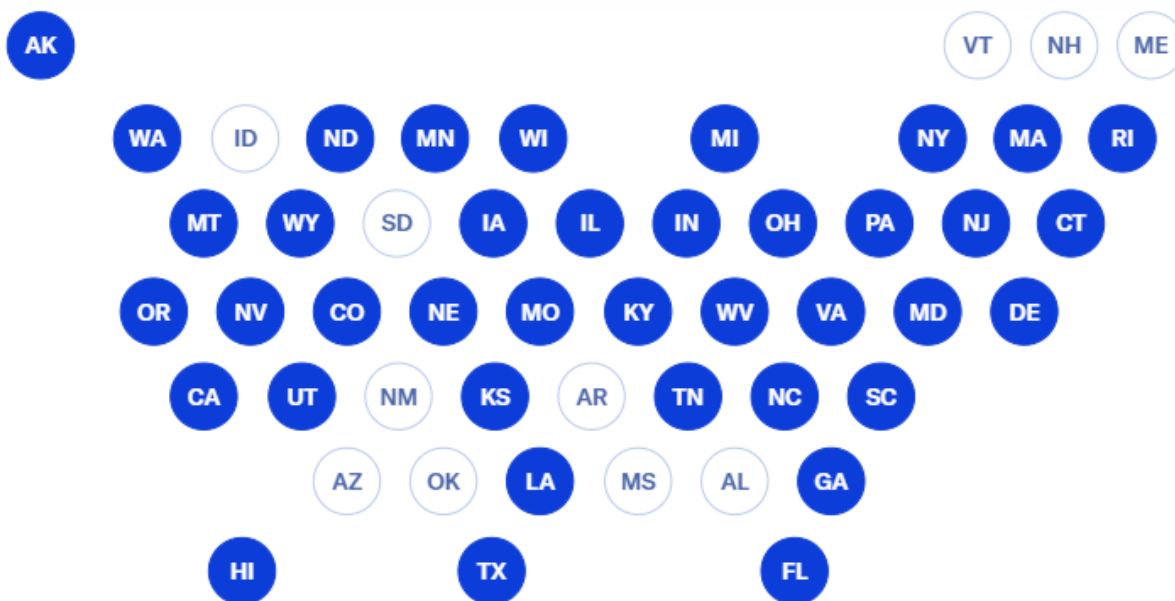
Around the United States, there is a groundswell of support for treating violence as a public health problem. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique opportunity for federal leadership in addressing violence like an epidemic that spreads based on socioeconomic factors that determine vulnerability.

Despite a backwards lurch at the federal policy level in recent years, the Biden administration is building on the foundation set by President Obama’s Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing and Police Data Initiative. President Biden launched a Community Violence Initiative Collaborative in June 2021 as part of a broader strategy to address surging gun violence. It is comprised of 15 jurisdictions that have committed to use a portion of their American Rescue Plan funding or other public funding to expand their CVI infrastructure; 15 philanthropies and research organizations are also involved in the effort. More than \$460M in federal spending has been made available to accelerate reforms. The CVI Collaborative will last for eighteen months and spend its time enhancing partnerships and facilitating communal learning about public safety strategies. Federal agencies and national experts are lending training and technical assistance with closing gaps in each participating city’s safety ecosystem. The leadership of Domestic Policy Advisor Susan Rice and Intergovernmental Affairs Director Julie Rodriguez is a strong signal that the White House takes these matters seriously. A series of webinars sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Assistance has made policy guidance publicly available to local and state governments. According to Hyphen, the nonprofit that is leading the effort, “President Biden’s new collaborative will bring together multi-sector stakeholders, including philanthropy, and

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<sup>84</sup> “Measuring Impact,” Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://onse.dc.gov/service/measuring-impact>.

strengthen and scale proven interventions to help achieve equity and a brighter and safer future.”<sup>85</sup>



Savannah is not alone in its effort to support violence intervention—there are programs in 39 states that have adopted similar policies. Street outreach, group violence intervention, and hospital-based violence intervention are attracting attention for their effectiveness.<sup>86</sup>

### Recommendations

ONSE is a new office and is already showing great potential. It has various assets already baked into its design and leadership structure. However, the decisions and performance in the next several months will lay the foundation for long-run success. In order to strengthen ONSE’s impact on public safety in Savannah, we recommend that the Johnson administration **Formalize**, **Publicize**, and **Legitimize** it.

<sup>85</sup> “Readout of White House Community Violence Intervention Collaborative Meeting,” White House Briefing Room, February 16, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/02/16/readout-of-white-house-community-violence-intervention-collaborative-meeting-2/#:~:text=Announced%20in%20June%202021%2C%20the,community%2Dbased%20public%20safety%20strategi es.>

<sup>86</sup> “Violence Intervention Programs,” Everytown for Gun Safety, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://everytownresearch.org/solution/violence-intervention-programs/>.

## Formalize

Excellent work is already happening in Savannah that should be institutionalized by building formal structures. Memorializing programs has multiple benefits, especially redundancy and resiliency during personnel changes or other shocks to the status quo.

- ONSE should create **procedure and process maps** to help navigate bureaucracy. It appears that both residents and city officials have trouble identifying the lifecycle of someone's involvement with law enforcement and social services, and how ONSE will function within these systems. Having such resources readily available will be critical for both high-risk people in need of service and those trying to deliver it.
- ONSE is the newest city department in Savannah, and it needs to **lay the foundation for longevity**. City leadership can advance this by adding public safety mandates to job descriptions and funding streams. We recommend elevating ONSE to report directly to the City Manager, as does policing, and creating an Office of Racial Equity to manage DEI objectives.
- **Leverage data** to monitor progress on goals using key performance indicators. Gleaning insights from the effectiveness of programs and operators should guide changes to the office and inform the approach to future grantmaking.

## Publicize

As a new department, ONSE must build awareness, firstly within government. In our discussions, even senior leaders were unclear about ONSE's mandate and current efforts. It also needs to build up its profile within the community.

- **Publicly "launch" ONSE** with a series of introductory meetings across key government offices.
- **Convene cross-department programs** led by ONSE so leadership gets used to ONSE's public safety mandate.
- Partner with **community organizers as external messengers**. They are already involved in day-to-day community engagement with ONSE's target population of low-income young Black men and are more likely to be familiar with ONSE through its grantmaking.

## Legitimize

ONSE's will be viewed as a legitimate public safety resource if it has the appropriate powers and responsibilities.

- Provide **longer-term funding** commitments to enable ONSE to invest in program with long-term returns and more effectively plan from year-to-year.
- Authorize ONSE's partners to have **access to flexible funding** to further their mission to prevent crime. For example, in Richmond, credible messengers are reimbursed for providing cash for family necessities or giving someone a trip out of state to prevent a crime.<sup>87</sup> ONSE needs the capacity to provide off-ramps to those at risk of crime or violence through job-training, mentorship, life skills, and behavioral health programs.
- **Build partnerships** that lend credibility. For example, the Biden Administration's Cure Violence Initiative (CVI) will be providing policy guidance that will be easier to implement with federal support. The increasing number of cities embracing ONS departments means there are more opportunities to exchange best practices.

## Conclusion

Overall, we believe ONSE is well-positioned to become a major force for good in Savannah, and a model for its peers. The difference will be made in how it finds its footing and scales its impact. Most importantly, ONSE serves as a testament to the paradigm shift the City of Savannah is making when it comes from moving away from narrow traditional ideas of public safety. Its convening power will have ripple effects across Savannah for years to come.

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<sup>87</sup> Matthey et al. "Firearm and Nonfirearm Violence After Operation Peacemaker Fellowship in Richmond, California, 1996–2016."

### **Part 3: Data & Transparency**

Without data in criminal justice there is no way to understand pressing trends or track progress. Moreover, with data but no method for analysis or tracking across departments – data is virtually useless. Finally, data without transparency avoids accountability. Mayor Johnson recognized this when creating the MOU for this project, putting a heavy emphasis on data and transparency.<sup>88</sup> In speaking with stakeholders about the other components of this project, we were intentional about asking about data capacity, understanding, and needs. We also combed through available data online and pulled together best practices for cities hoping to improve data capacity and transparency for the goal of improving public safety. In this part we outline what we observed in our research specific to Savannah, we summarize best practices in the field, and provide some key recommendations along with some guidance for implementing some of the recommendations. Observations and recommendations in this Part are organized around data collection, data-driven culture, and data transparency as guideposts for the three key focus areas.

#### **Observations of Savannah’s Current Status**

##### **Data Collection**

There appears to be availability of data both from the Savannah Police Department and also from regional and academic partners. For instance, we noted the following publicly available data sources that could be helpful to leverage as either examples to expand for public safety data collection or to use as a model:

- The Savannah City website hosts a series of charts tracking COVID-19 cases (although they are outdated).<sup>89</sup>
- Savannah Housing and Neighborhood Services also links updated year-end dashboard reports to the city government website.<sup>90</sup> Although, the “dashboard” is simply a pdf of an excel table output and is not easily digestible.

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<sup>88</sup> HKS and Mayor Johnson, MOU.

<sup>89</sup> “Data and Charts,” Savannah GA Government, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.savannahga.gov/2999/Data-Charts>.

<sup>90</sup> “Housing Savannah Data & Reports,” Savannah GA Government, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.savannahga.gov/575/Housing-Savannah-Data-Reports>.



- Savannah Area GIS Open Data provides a wide range of demographic data sets which appear to be regularly updated, although there is a lack of public safety related data, and the information is not easily digestible in its current form.<sup>91</sup>
- Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition, a Chatham County data initiative in partnership with United Way of the Coastal Empire, City of Savannah, Chatham County, Armstrong Atlantic State University and several other community partners, provides the most comprehensive data analyses our team was able to find.<sup>92</sup> The website provides robust demographic data analyses on a number of topics and translates the data into dashboards, comparing the region to other parts of the country. Notably, however, the information on public safety is limited to data on violent crimes.

The Savannah Police Department (SPD) also collects a fair amount of data. SPD provides weekly crime reports; however, these are not very digestible and as a lay reader they are difficult to interpret thus providing an opportunity for misinterpretation.<sup>93</sup> There is also a public facing crime map which tracks crime type and location as it is reported to the police.<sup>94</sup> Although the crime map is useful to track crimes in your neighborhood, it is a little clunky to use and does not reflect larger trends. SPD also collects a fair amount of data that is generated through its use and partnership with Shot Spotter,<sup>95</sup> however this information is not shared widely, and it is unclear how this information is integrated (or not) into decision-making.

We had the chance to review data extracts from the Savannah Police Department. Our goal was not to produce statistics about these extracts, but to determine what kinds of questions the data allows us to answer, and which it does not. A caveat of this analysis is that there may be additional data fields that SPD has but did not include. Overall, the interaction data includes location, charge, and demographics of the resident involved. This allows for summaries of the

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<sup>91</sup> “Welcome to SAGIS,” Savannah Area GIS Open Data, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://data-sagis.opendata.arcgis.com>.

<sup>92</sup> “Where We’ve Been,” Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.coastalga indicators.org/index.php?module=Tiles&controller=index&action=display&id=97819990965549707>.

<sup>93</sup> “SPD Weekly Crime Reports,” Savannah GA Government, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.savannahga.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=49&Type=&ADID=>. (Link hosted on SPD website)

<sup>94</sup> “Community Crime Map,” LexisNexis Risk Solutions, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://communitycrimemap.com/?address=Savannah-Chatham,GA>. (Link hosted on SPD website)

<sup>95</sup> Savannah, GA City Council Meeting, April 14, 2022.

count and distribution of individual and combined identifiers. Further improvements would include tracking time of day, assigning unique identifiers to quickly understand the number of unique people interacting with the police, the demographics of the responding officer(s), whether or not BHU was present, and the origin of the interaction (e.g. officer stop, 911 call).

Moreover, the supporting technology for data storage and collection is outdated and cumbersome for city employees to use.<sup>96</sup> One stakeholder reported data systems to be 15-20 years old and another reported there was at least 8 different data systems they may have to consult to collect information.<sup>97</sup> SPD is currently undergoing a process to update their data systems, which should be live in summer 2023.<sup>98</sup> This will be an important step to improving public safety data and transparency. It will be critical, as part of this process, to build in cross-government data sharing capacity. Currently, there are no integrated structures for data sharing making it difficult to build holistic pictures of how violence overlays challenges like poverty, housing insecurity, educational outcomes, and other important metrics at a granular level.

### **Data-driven Culture**

When asked about the importance of data, nearly every stakeholder emphasized the value of good data. They also, however, underscored the lack of a data-driven culture within the city. One stakeholder with a long history of partnership with the city mentioned that there has always been data collected, but a lack of consistent commitment to using that data to make policy changes.<sup>99</sup> There is not presently a strong culture or internal capability related to data analysis, reporting, and data-driven decision-making. More recently, however, there has been a greater push, driven by Mayor Johnson, for data-driven decision-making. To do this successfully, the city will need to bolster its staff with data skills. Although there seems to be staff with some data capacity, it was reported that there are few if any with data expertise.

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<sup>96</sup> Multiple Savannah, GA stakeholder interviews, Zoom, March – April 2022.

<sup>97</sup> Police Stakeholder, An interview about public safety in the City of Savannah, Zoom, March 9 2022 and March 29, 2022; City government official stakeholder, An interview about public safety in the City of Savannah, Zoom, March 11, 2022.

<sup>98</sup> Police Stakeholder, An interview about public safety in the City of Savannah, Zoom, March 9 2022 and March 29, 2022.

<sup>99</sup> Community stakeholder, An interview about public safety in the City of Savannah, Zoom, March 9, 2022.

## Data Transparency

There is a history of sharing data publicly in documents like the annual budget and crime reports discussed above in *Data Collection*. However, it is unclear whether this data has the intended reach or impact on the community. We have not seen examples of data-centered communications designed to be accessible and digestible to the average resident. For instance, SPD published the below graphic on their website:<sup>100</sup>

### Part 1 Crime Reduction

2017 Total Part 1 Crime – 143 (as of April 7)



2018 Total Part 1 Crime – 121 (As of April 7) 18% Reduction



However, the data in the graphic is outdated and difficult to interpret the implications of this graphic other than there was general “crime” reduction. Other reports and visuals have been more convoluted to interpret. Although it is commendable that there are published reports and data, this is not enough for data transparency to be a reality. Moreover, there is a lot of missing data and no clear explanation for why some data is public while other data is private. This can leave the public feeling confused at best or mislead at worst.

## Research and Best Practices

Local governments tend to garner more public trust and support than the federal government, and research shows that this trust increases with more positive interactions with local government officials and services.<sup>101</sup> Notably, however, law enforcement agencies have some of the lowest levels of trust for local government agencies.<sup>102</sup> One core way to increase this trust and garner support and engagement from citizens is to proactively increase transparency and improve

<sup>100</sup> “Savannah PD,” Savannah Police.

<sup>101</sup> Kate Elizabeth Queram, “State and Local Government Beats Out Federal in Survey of Citizen Trust,” Route Fifty, Sept. 23, 2021, <https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2021/09/state-and-local-government-beats-out-federal-survey-citizen-trust/185584/>.

<sup>102</sup> Queram, “State and Local Government Beats Out Federal in Survey of Citizen Trust.”

quality of data shared with the community.<sup>103,104</sup> In fact, the International Association of Chiefs of Police highlighted that to build trust with the community, one core step is to “increase transparency by collecting data, policies, and procedures and making them publicly available.”<sup>105</sup> The Open Government Partnership emphasizes that the lack of available public data on policing makes it difficult to address problematic practices that impact public safety perceived trust in public safety officers.<sup>106</sup> This is not to say that the purpose of data collection in public safety is oversight, rather some practices can have unintentional outcomes and it can be hard to identify these concerning practices without data to reveal trends. Data collection and analysis can be a strong tool to reveal unintended consequences of well-intentioned policies and practices as well as a strong tool to highlight ongoing inequities and gaps in the system. The Open Government Partnership makes several core recommendations for improving data in public safety, including codifying and standardizing data collection, releasing data online and publishing summary reports, describing data restriction policies, and facilitating the use of data to drive decision-making.<sup>107</sup>

To better understand public safety trends and to increase public trust in local government, data needs to be integrated which requires “commitment from leadership, technical and analytic expertise, and stakeholder support.”<sup>108</sup> Even after this is all in place, effective use of the data to drive decision-making requires a shift to a data-driven culture, which integrates data into all

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<sup>103</sup> Kate Elizabeth Queram, “State and Local Government Beats Out Federal in Survey of Citizen Trust,” Route Fifty, Sept. 23, 2021, <https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2021/09/state-and-local-government-beats-out-federal-survey-citizen-trust/185584/>.

<sup>104</sup> Tom Amburgey, “3 Best Practices on How Local Governments Can Use Tech for Transparency,” GovThink, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.govthink.com/2019/08/3-best-practices-on-how-local-governments-can-use-tech-for-transparency/>.

<sup>105</sup> “Steps to Building Trust,” IACP, Aug. 15, 2018, <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/steps-to-building-trust>.

<sup>106</sup> “Transparency and Accountability at the Frontlines of Justice: Police Data Transparency,” Open Government Partnership, July 8, 2020, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/transparency-and-accountability-at-the-frontlines-of-justice-police-data-transparency/>.

<sup>107</sup> “Transparency and Accountability at the Frontlines of Justice: Police Data Transparency,” Open Government Partnership, July 8, 2020, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/transparency-and-accountability-at-the-frontlines-of-justice-police-data-transparency/>.

<sup>108</sup> Megan Russo, Jesse Jannetta, and Marina Duane, “Using Data Dashboards to Drive Criminal Justice Decisions” (Urban Institute, October 12, 2018), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/using-data-dashboards-drive-criminal-justice-decisions>.

levels of government.<sup>109</sup> Engaging in a process to increase data quality and transparency, however, is highly local and can be time consuming and costly without the right expertise.

### Recommendations

Given our observations and research, our team recommends Savannah implement the following six recommendations, stated in brief and then elaborated on below.

#### *Data Collection*

1. Modernize data systems (in progress)
2. Create a specific data collection plan (and publish online)
3. Invest in professional development and hiring.

#### *Data-Driven Culture*

4. Institute a strategy for intergovernmental data review and decision-making.
5. Create an internal data dashboard.

#### *Data Transparency*

6. Create an external data dashboard.

### **Data Collection**

**(1) Modernize data systems.** The data system is already in the process of a reboot, but we include this here to keep it top of mind. As SPD reworks their data system, it should be accessible to a set group of critical city employees with government wide norms for collecting and sharing data. Now is the time to include asks for the system to prevent the new system from becoming quickly outdated. Moreover, if the new data system will only host SPD data, it should either be expanded or integrated into the broader city government systems as the budget allows. A core component of a modern data system is one that standardizes data input and allows for uniform data output. This requires trained staff and a data-driven culture.

**(2) Create a specific data collection plan (and publish online).** This plan is to standardize what data is collected and why. It also improves transparency inside and outside of the SPD and government because citizens are able to understand what data is being collected. Although it may

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<sup>109</sup> Megan Russo, Jesse Jannetta, and Marina Duane, “Using Data Dashboards to Drive Criminal Justice Decisions” (Urban Institute, October 12, 2018), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/using-data-dashboards-drive-criminal-justice-decisions>.

not be feasible to share all the data categories that are collected to the public, providing overarching principles for data collection and analysis that the public can see goes a long way in increasing public trust and engagement.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, having these policies to refer back to provides accountability for staff and improves data quality.

**(3) Invest in professional development and hiring** focused on building up data literacy and analysis skills across government departments. Without staff with data analysis expertise, data collection is virtually meaningless. Although hiring additional data analysts is costly, the pay-off is exponential. In the meantime, Savannah should consider bolstering already existing partnerships to build capacity.

### **Data-Driven Culture**

**(4) Institute strategy for intergovernmental data review and decision-making.** A core component of data collection and analysis is using the data to drive decision-making. Using the data to drive decisions, however, does not come automatically. There must be intentional processes set up to incorporate data into decision-making conversations and to hold decision-makers accountable to emerging trends in the data. One way to integrate this is to include data analysts as part of the intergovernmental planning meetings, having them provide trends for the meetings and present to a group of stakeholders.

**(5) Create an internal data dashboard** with key metrics defined to best understand the status of not only violence, but also contributing social determinants. This dashboard should be available to all departments involved in improving public safety at a minimum. See *Building Data Dashboards* below.

### **Data Transparency**

**(6) Create an external data dashboard** with quarterly or biannual updates (if not automatic). The public facing safety dashboard can be different than the internal one, but should host key metrics to improve data transparency for the community. See *Building Data Dashboards* below.

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<sup>110</sup> This report provides detailed information specifically about collecting traffic stop data, however, the principles expounded in the report are largely applicable to improving data collection and transparency system wide and is a good guidepost for additional information on implementation. See Marie Pryor and Philip Atiba Goff, “Collecting, Analyzing, and Responding to Stop Data: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement Agencies, Government, and Communities” (Center for Policing Equity, 2020), [https://policingequity.org/images/pdfs-doc/COPS-Guidebook\\_Final\\_Release\\_Version\\_2-compressed.pdf](https://policingequity.org/images/pdfs-doc/COPS-Guidebook_Final_Release_Version_2-compressed.pdf).

## ***Building a Data Dashboard***

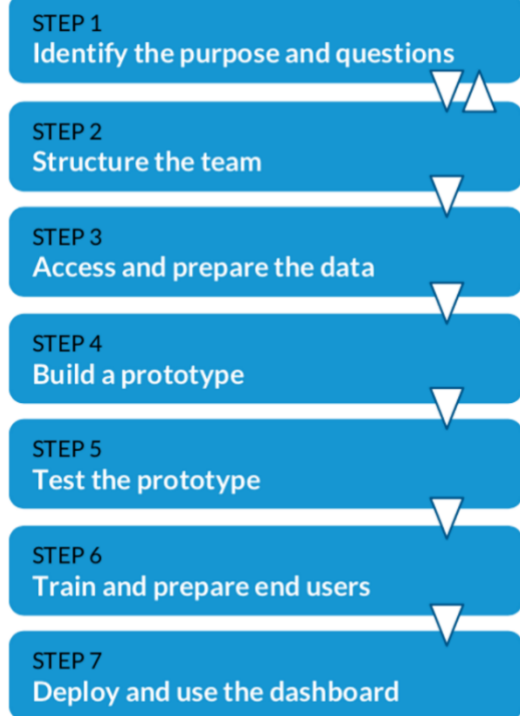
Since two of our recommendations in this part suggest developing a data dashboard, we provide more detailed explanation for how this might occur here. Developing a data dashboard, for both external and internal use, can appear burdensome at first. The payoffs, however, can help Savannah better understand their justice-involved populations, create a data-driven culture, and help the city make more targeted and effective decisions. Drawing on a research study produced by the Urban Institute,<sup>111</sup> we outline here in brief the steps for creating a data dashboard and some core considerations specifically relevant for Savannah.

Planning for this dashboard should begin early and in conjunction with development and integration of the new data system. Without this critical integration, a data dashboard could become infeasible or unnecessarily more complicated. Moreover, depending on the current contract with the data system provider, it is possible to have them begin this development process as part of the data system development and integration. The city should consider partnering with Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition, whom already have data dashboard creation expertise to build out at least the public facing dashboard.

### ***Step 1: Identify Purpose & Questions***

- Be very specific about the purpose of the dashboard. Define exactly what it will be used for, who will be using and maintaining it, and who it will be shared with.
- Often there can be internal and external components of the dashboard and at the outset this should be crystal clear.

#### **Process Map for Data Dashboarding**



*Source:* Russo et al., “Using Data Dashboards to Drive Criminal Justice Decisions,” Urban Institute (2018).

<sup>111</sup> Megan Russo, Jesse Jannetta, and Marina Duane, “Using Data Dashboards to Drive Criminal Justice Decisions” (Urban Institute, October 12, 2018), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/using-data-dashboards-drive-criminal-justice-decisions>.



- Decide if it be operational (provide detailed view of a specific program/agency) or system-level (focus on higher level data trends and point-in-time information to guide multiple city agencies).

*Step 2: Structure the team*

- The team that creates the dashboard should have a lead agency, a core team of workers, people with analytical skills, and a broader collaborative entity that can provide higher level oversight and support. In Savannah's case, it makes sense that the Police Department is the lead agency, the team is a mix of a small group of dedicated team members with analytic skills and criminal justice knowledge, and the collaborative agency is the mayor's office.
- As mentioned, Savannah should consider a strong partnership with Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition due to their experience in this space already.

*Step 3: Access and prepare the data*

- This step is about understanding and integrating the technical aspects of building the data dashboard and is the most likely step to undergo challenges and roadblocks.
- First, clearly identify the data points that are needed from each participating agency – then see what data is (or will be/can be) collected that can be integrated.
- Ensure there is a common set of definitions for what metrics you seek to measure and a clear pathway for data integration that is sustainable.
- This step may require data-sharing agreements between varying agencies depending on what data you seek to collect and how often. Data-sharing agreements help to formalize and mandate this process.
- This step also involves cleaning the data, making sure it is high quality and not corrupt. This step can be time-consuming and requires the expertise of data-skilled staff members.

*Step 4: Build a prototype*

- The prototype allows you to begin to see what the dashboard will look like and how useful it will be in its current form (and thus how to change it).
- Think critically about public understanding, especially for non-criminal justice experts who may not understand technical terms.

- Common tools for this are Tableau and Microsoft PowerBI. Although the exact tool will depend on existing contracts and available funding and possible integration with the new data system.

*Step 5: Test the prototype*

- Testing the dashboard with a small subset of people is critical to get feedback and iterate on the look, available metrics, and use.

*Step 6: Train and prepare end users*

- This part of the process can help to spur a data-driven culture and is critical to sustainability and usefulness of the dashboard.
- End users will include non-data analysts and as such all intended regular users of the dashboard should be well versed on the dashboard and understand generally how data is populated, what the metrics mean, and how to ask for updates.

*Step 7: Deploy and use the dashboard*

- As much as possible, automate the data input so that it does not require as regular maintenance and continues to stay updated without manual input (which leads to error and can go missed during worker turnover).
- Make sure it is announced via social media and clearly visible / accessible on the City's website and the Police Department's website.

#### IV. Implementation: Building Buy-in & Messaging

Public safety is an issue governed by emotion and perception as much as facts on the ground. A major factor in the efficacy of these initiatives is successful messaging that shapes the mental models of Savannah elected officials, employees, and residents.

Mental models are the maps we create inside our minds to help us understand and navigate external circumstances. They are the foundations of our subconscious assumptions and habits. In many cases, they are incredibly helpful. However, in other cases, they fail us. They can fail when we build mental models on flawed assumptions or when the environment has changed. To make lasting change, we often need to unlearn mental models that are not conducive to our current environment and objectives and move on to more effective ones<sup>112</sup>.

Overall, the core messaging should be consistent, regardless of the audience, but messengers should emphasize different elements based on the audience. Further, the way messages will be instilled into an audience varies based on the structures they operate within. This report focuses on three audience-structure combinations. First, we discuss elected officials on the City Council. Second, we explore the City's non-elected staff. Finally, we think about the Savannah residents at large.

##### The Overall Message

Overall, the core messages are similar to the foundational principles laid out in the introduction of this report. The policy recommendations are strategic manifestations of core values and objectives. We recommend rooting all conversations about implementation or strategy on these key messages.

- **Public Safety is about protecting Savannah from the root causes of violence, not just violence itself.** Savannah is aiming to do more than react to violence, it is striving to prevent it. To do that, we have to know and address the range of things that lead to an individual

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<sup>112</sup> Shift Thinking, "Unlearning Mental Models," SHIFT Thinking, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.shift.to/essentials-guidebook/unlearning>.

choosing to use a gun against another person. This includes (but is not limited to) access to jobs, mental health care, addiction recovery, education, recreation, and role models.

- **Ownership for public safety belongs to all of government, not just law enforcement.** We intend to show continued support for the Savannah Police Department and their efforts to prevent and respond to violent crime. However, we believe investing in public safety does not, and cannot, begin and end with the police. They are important parts of our community and our efforts, but we cannot expect them to single-handedly resolve such a complex and nuanced challenge. This effort is about giving the whole community, including the Police Department, the support they need by empowering a wider range of responsible actors.
- **We are focused on what works, not politics.** Our approach is not about buying into slogans or political positioning, we are working together to make substantive changes based on best practices, data, and the needs of our community. In addition to looking externally, we will also look toward Savannah's own recent history for evidence
- **Community engagement and empowerment is a necessary factor of success.** The city organizational chart places Savannah residents at the top. This needs to more than sentiment, more than a check-the-box exercise. Having engaged and empowered community representation in Savannah's public safety efforts allows us to make fully informed decisions. It allows us to ensure our policies translate into practice.

### **Audience 1: Elected Officials**

#### **Building Political Will**

While the bulk of efforts described in the report can be accomplished under the City Manager's powers and via Mayor's taskforces, that will not be enough. City Council will be needed at many critical junctures for explicit approvals. And outside of the areas where City Council is necessary their support and willingness to be champions of these efforts is invaluable.

#### ***Key Recommendations:***

- **Amplify areas of consensus.** As a team who engaged with a wide range of Savannah stakeholders, including Council Members, we were struck by the degree of consensus on many of the topics we were investigating. Compared to more polarized bodies in other

cities, there is shared understanding of the problem, and a desire to act. Returning to that shared vision, especially in times of tension, will be valuable.

- **Partner with community organizations and foundations.** There are two primary reasons to court a broad base of non-governmental support. First, they can be less politically charged “faces” for presenting new ideas or building coalition for specific measures. Further, foundations in particular can be sources of supplemental funding, which can remove concerns about incremental spending.
- **Leverage relationship with City Manager.** As a non-elected official, City Manager Jay Melder is positioned to make arguments for a given tactical course of action, without being viewed as posturing for political gain. The Mayor’s Office has ongoing opportunities to shape the agenda and content of Council Meetings, and efforts in the interim.
- **Demonstrate buy-in from Police Department leadership.** A significant political concern is appearing unsupportive or unappreciative of the Police Department. There is a desire to speak up for accountability and policy changes, while also not wanting to receive backlash of the kind received by the notion of “defunding the police.” While there may be points of disagreement, to the extent that SPD leadership endorses stronger community relationships and a wider variety of violence prevention strategies, it will foster greater Council support.
- **Rally around the evidence.** Grounding changes in the best qualitative and quantitative data available is a particularly helpful tool to reframe conversations away from unproductive directions.

## **Audience 2: City Employees**

### **Setting New Norms**

The signs of how well the core messages, especially the message of shared responsibility for public safety, have been absorbed by City employees (those in City Hall, in service delivery, and elsewhere) will show up in workplace cultures and practices. Culture change is hard and has to be reinforced from multiple angles. Our recommendations about how to structurally reinforce the key messages of the evolved approach to public safety are informed by two powerful tools of organizational strategy: agile and behavioral nudges.

Agile refers to a methodology originally pioneered for software development but since adopted widely in the private sector for both technical and business functions. Agile emphasizes deploying cross-functional teams that focus on discrete challenges in a way that is iterative and responsive to early input from the end users of the product or service, in this case the residents of Savannah.<sup>113</sup> Although less widespread than in the private sector, local governments are also adapting agile principles for their teams and projects as well.<sup>114</sup>

Behavioral nudging is a concept stemming from behavioral economics that posits that meaningful changes in behavior can arise from relatively simple changes to the environment. When making the right or preferred decision is easier, people are more likely to follow through.<sup>115</sup>

### ***Key Recommendations:***

In the short term...

- **Show vocal leadership commitment.** Change starts at the top. Hearing the vision from the Mayor, the City Manager, and the Police Chief can jumpstart changes in individuals to make changes in their own daily work and lead others to do the same.
- **Pilot government-wide approaches in select initiatives.** Employees will have a range of reasons to be resistant to change, including comfort with the status quo, uncertainty of the personal implications of change, and lack of confidence in the outcome. We can address the last of these with piloting. Pilots will give leadership more space to expend more energy developing a “playbook” for cross-departmental collaboration in Savannah and build proof points for future efforts.
- **Continue and expand regular convenings of City Manager and Department leaders.** It is an existing strength that the City Manager regularly convenes representatives across the government to discuss public safety. To address tactical implementation, we

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<sup>113</sup> BCG, “How to Get Agile Right,” BCG Global (BCG Global, April 8, 2021), <https://www.bcg.com/featured-insights/how-to/agile>.

<sup>114</sup> Miguel Carrasco et al., “Getting to Agile at Scale in the Public Sector,” BCG Global (BCG Global, April 7, 2021), <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2020/getting-to-agile-at-scale-public-sector>.

<sup>115</sup> Nina Mazar, Nicole Robiltaille, and Julian House, “Do Behavioral Nudges Work on Organizations?,” Harvard Business Review, February 22, 2021, <https://hbr.org/2021/02/do-behavioral-nudges-work-on-organizations>.

recommend expanding the structure and frequency of these meetings, particularly among the level of leaders that report to the department heads.

- **Highlight early successes of ONSE & CARES.** Demonstrating momentum against the mission of a new approach to public safety can excite those that may otherwise be hesitant by demonstrating the value of new initiatives based on expanded assumptions around public safety.

In the long term...

- **Reduce barriers to cross-functional working.** Evaluate the current structure of the City organizational structure and policy to identify places that may unintentionally or unnecessarily make it harder for individuals and teams to work across Department lines towards shared objectives. This may include how projects are funded, how team members are evaluated, and more.
- **Institute additional roles that cross siloes.** In future organizational planning and hiring, we would strongly recommend roles that are designed to cut across siloes, liaise with other departments, and are filled by those with multidisciplinary backgrounds.
- **Nudge productive behaviors.** Identify small ways to remind or encourage people to think cross-functionally and to take ownership over public safety in Savannah. This could include changing language to forms like self-evaluations or project planning templates and proactively sharing contact information for peer roles in other departments.
- **Hold leaders accountable to cross-department outcomes.** Make it clear to managers and department leaders that cross-functional teaming is an expectation, one that over time, will become an explicit criterion for evaluations and promotions. Give details about what this looks like in practice and create professional development and coaching opportunities for managers seeking to improve in this area.

#### *A note on engaging police officers*

We expect there will be some degree of skepticism or even antagonism towards these approaches from across city government. However, we acknowledge that this may be particularly true for police officers who may feel underappreciated, maligned, or even villainized. We believe that getting the rank-and-file police officer to accept new mental models is critical, and possible. To

do so, we recommend framing messaging in ways relevant to their lived experience and immediate concerns. A review of the results of the recent Continuous Improvement Survey completed by 137 SPD officers revealed a few key themes. There is a clear consensus that SPD is understaffed, and work/life balance is a challenge. However, there are also a plurality of respondents that believe there is not enough communication from leadership or enough training.<sup>116</sup> We believe that garnering police support is possible if leaders within and outside of the chain of command listen and frame this issue in the context of these concerns.

Based on our conversations with police officers with a range of ranks and years of experience in Savannah, we heard consistent themes about overwork and low morale. Specifically, we heard officers say that while they believe in their role as first responders, there are calls they do not feel they are the best responders for.<sup>117</sup> Now is the time to open up clear lines of communication about where the Department has come short in the past, where it hopes to go in the future, and how each officer plays a role and will be supported in making changes.

### **Audience 3: Savannah Residents**

#### **Changing the Narrative**

The broader Savannah public is also a key factor for success in turning the tide on public safety. For changes to be successful, residents need to have enough awareness and trust to use new services, enough context to give changes time to show outcomes, and enough hope that change is possible to be active participants in the process. Changing the narrative means a few different things. It means sharing the core message to highlight the updated approach. It also means educating the public about why the new approach is the preferred one and building trust in the City's ability to make a positive impact on their sense of safety.

#### ***Key Recommendations:***

- **Target Savannah youth.** Savannah's young people are more likely to be directly involved in gun violence, both as perpetrators and victims. Therefore, we recommend

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<sup>116</sup> Savannah Police Department, "Complete SPD Survey Results," Scribd (Scribd, 2022), [https://www.scribd.com/document/568429937/Complete-SPD-Survey-Results#from\\_embed](https://www.scribd.com/document/568429937/Complete-SPD-Survey-Results#from_embed).

<sup>117</sup> Various interviews with SPD officers April 13-15, 2022, in-person.



that any messaging plan to the public reaches young people and centers their needs. Social media will be a strong tool for this, but it cannot only come from authoritative spokespeople and formal accounts. To reach the most impacted, Savannah will also need to reach out to community members who already have the ear of young people in the community as communication surrogates.

- **Emphasize a vision of public safety that goes beyond law enforcement to encompass public health and economic prosperity.** This is a time to articulate a clear paradigm shift for the city. Savannah officials need to continue to express that, in line with advocates across the community, Savannah is a city that believes that safety comes from factors beyond law enforcement presence. Safety is also ensured with investment in public health (especially mental health, addiction support, and trauma recovery) and building prosperity for all.
- **Tie back to the City's history.** History has the power to inspire and ground future changes. Savannah has a rich history of civil rights struggle and accomplishment. The root causes of gun violence, and its tragic effects, are disproportionately borne by low-income and Black Americans. Savannah can leverage its own history and elders to move today's generation to find their own way to pick up the mantle and play a role in bringing about positive change today.
- **Offer specific commitments.** To foster trust with the community, be specific about what the city is (and is not) committing to, and the timeline in which outcomes are expected. It is important to be realistic in these commitments. In the wake of 2020, countless organizations across sectors made large commitments around racial justice and public safety with no path forward on how to meet them. This can lead to disappointment, broken trust, and disengagement. In addition, Savannah should proactively open the door for accountability by sharing with the community when it can expect updates, what those updates will include, and what channels are available for the community to reach out to contribute input.

## **Communication Channels & Tools**

We recommend that Savannah pursue a variety of channels to express the core message to Savannah residents across a variety of channels and formats to reach and engage the widest possible audience. Possible communication channels could include:

- **Social media:** Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook posts from Mayor, City, and SPD accounts, as well as from community organizations, news organizations, and local influencers. *See Appendix for sample messaging tools.*
- **Traditional local media (Print, TV, Radio):** Interviews with City officials and community leaders, Op-eds, profiles of CARES and ONSE, advertisements for events or opportunities for engagement, educational campaigns (e.g. PSAs)
- **Public spaces:** Infographics and advertisements displayed on public property such as trash cans, buses, mailboxes, park benches, and in public buildings.
- **Community email lists & newsletters:** Tailored messages for distribution to NGO donor & stakeholders lists, neighborhood organization lists, and other existing community forums.
- **Public meetings:** City Council workshops & meetings, town halls and listening sessions, school visits, hospital visits, and working sessions with advocacy group

## V. Appendix

### Sample Messaging Tools

*Sample 1:* Introduce important resources and people to the community! Below is an example of a social media tool that can be used to publicize the BHU to the public. Helping people learn more about non-police alternatives to public safety.

Meet SPD's  
**BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH UNIT**

We create effective community interventions to reduce jail use by providing alternative services for those with behavioral health and substance abuse needs.

Learn more at  
[savannahpd.org/bhu/](https://savannahpd.org/bhu/)

*Sample 2:* This image is an example of the type of graphic Savannah can consider using when promoting the new approach to public safety – emphasizing a whole of community approach.



There are endless examples of messaging tools that could be provided, and these are simply provided as examples of possible tools to demonstrate the possibilities. Using clean graphics with clear messages can be effective for information dissemination on social media.

## **Full Case Study Details: Civilian Oversight Boards with Subpoena Power**

### ***Charlotte, North Carolina - Citizens Review Board<sup>118</sup>***

The Citizens Review Board (CRB) was established in June 1997. The Citizens Review Board reviews appeals by citizens who file complaints on dispositions imposed by the Chief of Police or his designee relating to allegations of misconduct against a sworn police officer. The Board may hear complaints regarding alleged violations of the following rules: use of force, unbecoming conduct, arrest, search and seizure, and arbitrary profiling. In addition, the disposition of the review of any discharge of a firearm by an officer which results in the death or injury of a person may be appealed to this Board by the person injured or the next of kin in the event of death. The Board also serves in an advisory role to the Chief of Police, the City Manager, and the City Council. It is charged with making periodic reports to the Chief of Police, the City Manager, the City Council and the Community Relations Committee.

Members of Charlotte's Citizens Review Board represent a wide array of citizens in the community, with an equal number of appointments from the Mayor of Charlotte, the City Manager and the City Council. The Citizens review board collectively meets twice per month, reviewing complaints submitted either by mail, online, or in person at the Charlotte Police Department. Our team appreciated Charlotte's CRB's accessibility to the public, as their website highlighted very clearly what the board does, qualifications for Board members, reports from the CRB, and other resources including brochures and rules of procedure.

Charlotte was chosen as a comparable city of Savannah due to similarities in crime stats between the two. Both Charlotte and Savannah...It is important to note that the qualifications for CRB members in Charlotte make an explicit guideline that persons with prior convictions, including misdemeanors, cannot serve on the CRB. We do not recommend this approach when selecting members for Savannah CARES, as this approach narrows the gap for whose voice is present.

#### **Board Information**

- *Membership:* 11 members (3 appointed by the Mayor, 5 appointed by the Council, 3 appointed by the City Manager)
- *Term Length:* 3 Years; with a 2-term limit
- *Meeting Frequency:* Twice per month
- *Meeting Location:* Government Center Building

#### **Qualifications for Citizen Review Board Members:**

- All applicants must be a registered voter in Mecklenburg County and apply online.
- Current and former City employees, and the spouse, parents, and children of a current or former CMPD officer, shall not be eligible to serve on the board.
- Nominees are subject to a state criminal background check.
- Individuals with a felony conviction or Class A1 misdemeanor conviction shall not be eligible to serve.

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<sup>118</sup> "City Clerk." City of Charlotte Government. Accessed May 9, 2022.  
<https://charlottenc.gov/CityClerk/Pages/CitizensReviewBoard.aspx>.

- Individuals with a Class 1 or Class 2 misdemeanor conviction within 3 years of their nomination for appointment shall be ineligible to serve.
- Members must be continually domiciled within Mecklenburg County and be registered to vote within the County.
- All board members shall attend and successfully complete the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Citizens Academy and receive training on relevant legal and policy issues as required by the City Manager. This training must be completed prior to any board appointee serving as a member of the board.
- Candidates for the board may be interviewed by a panel comprised of a representative from the Community Relations Committee, the Citizens Review Board and the City Manager's Office to assess core characteristics necessary to serve on the board. Such panels shall provide their assessments to the relevant appointing authority.
- Each member of the board shall participate in at least eight hours of training each calendar year, which training may include a four-hour "ride-along" with a CMPD officer.
- Appointees are subject to City Council's Attendance and Anti-Harassment Policies.
- Appointees are subject to the Code of Ethics, Gift Policy and Disclosure Requirements for members of boards and must file a Statement of Economic Interest by February 1st each year.
- Appointees must sign and adhere to a confidentiality agreement.
- Appointees serve on a voluntary basis without compensation.

### ***Atlanta, Georgia - Citizen Review Board<sup>119</sup>***

The Atlanta Citizen Review Board receives complaints from members of the public concerning sworn members of the Atlanta Police Department and the Atlanta Corrections Department. Established in 2007, the Board reviews the complaint, and may require an investigation into the complaint. The Board may also conduct public hearings and study broader issues that may be of concern to the community. The Board may advise the Mayor, the President of Council, Council members, and the Chief of Police and Corrections Department with the purpose of improving the ability of police personnel to carry out their duties, and to improve the relationship between the Department, Corrections and the community. The ACRB has subpoena power as of May of 2010.

#### **Board Information**

- *Membership:* 14 members appointed by the Mayor, City Council, and nonprofit organizations
- *Meeting Frequency:* Twice a month
- *Meeting Location:* Zoom

#### **Appointment of Citizens Review Board Members**

- One member is appointed by these groups/entities
  - Mayor
  - City Council
  - President of Council with experience as a law enforcement professional

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<sup>119</sup> "ACRB Powers and Duties," ACRB, August 27, 2020, <https://acrbgov.org/education/acrb-powers-and-duties/>.

- Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) by group sections, Gate City Bar Association, Atlanta Bar Association, League of Women Voters, Atlanta Business League

### ***Cambridge, Massachusetts - The Police Review & Advisory Board<sup>120</sup>***

Established by Cambridge City Ordinance in 1984, the Cambridge PRAB provides prompt, impartial, and fair investigation of complaints brought by individuals against members of the Cambridge Police Department. The Board provides citizen participation in reviewing the Police Department's policies, practices, and procedures. The Board develops programs and strategies to promote positive police and community relationships and provides opportunities for expanded discussions, improved understanding, and innovative ways of resolving differences.

#### **Board Information**

- *Membership:* 5 members appointed by the City Manager
- *Term Length:* 5 years with a 2-term limit
- *Meeting Frequency:* Once per month
- *Meeting Location:* City Hall

#### **Qualifications for Police & Advisory Board**

- Prior to appointing any member to the Board, the City Manager shall seek qualified candidates by advertising in the local newspapers for individuals who desire appointment to the Board.
- All members of the Board shall be residents of the City at the time of appointment.
- If a board member ceases to be resident of the city, he/she shall remain on the Board until the City Manager appoints a suitable candidate to fill the position.
- The members of the Board shall not hold any other position for the city while he or she is a member of the Board.
- No member of a City Employee's immediate family (husband, wife, brother, sister, son, or daughter) shall be appointed to, or hired by the Board.
- No member of the Board shall have been an employee of the City within two years of his or appointment to the Board, and no member of such person's immediate family shall be appointed to or hired by the Board.
- Members of the Board shall not receive compensation or services but shall receive reasonable expenses and fees incurred as a result of their membership on the Board.

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<sup>120</sup> "Police Review & Advisory Board Ordinance." Municode Library. Accessed May 9, 2022.  
[https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE\\_CH2.74POREADBO](https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE_CH2.74POREADBO).