



# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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July 29, 2021

Honorable Jamie Gauthier  
3<sup>rd</sup> District Councilmember  
City Hall Room 582  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Honorable Rebecca Rhynhart  
City Controller  
1401 JFK Blvd., 1230 MSB  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

*Via Email*

Dear Councilmember Gauthier and Controller Rhynhart:

Thank you for your letter of July 22<sup>nd</sup>. As I said in my correspondence dated July 19<sup>th</sup>, I look forward to our continued partnership to battle the epidemic of gun violence. Your letter listed eight “objectives” for which you desired a response, which I will provide below, and I am pleased to note that work is underway in each “objective” area.

- **Objective #1:** Philadelphia Parks and Recreation shall lead efforts to substantially and immediately increase programming at Recreation Centers in the aforementioned ZIP codes. Please provide in writing a detailed plan for expanding programming, including which programs are being offered and will be offered, and at which recreation centers.
- **Administration Response:** Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR), in conjunction with Community partners and philanthropic funders, offers over 120 weekly programs at 47 Recreation Centers (list of sites [HERE](#)), located in the priority zip codes you identified. Over 2,300 youth, primarily ages 6 and up are served through our programs, however, adult programming is also offered at select sites. To date over 465,000 summer meals have also been distributed through summer programs. Programs include:
  - summer camps,
  - sports programs such as boxing, basketball, and martial arts,
  - enrichment programs supporting playful learning and literacy,
  - tech and nature programs,
  - anti-bullying and empowerment programs,
  - and dance/fitness programs.

Recreation Centers are open Mon-Friday, 9am-9pm, with approximately 20 locations in the referenced zip codes open on Saturdays and Sundays. Throughout the Fall, PPR will continue to build on this programming and work with community partners, organizations and service providers to provide fun, safe programming for Philadelphia youth and adults. To ensure participant and staff safety, PPR is staffing Recreation Centers with two City staff. Additionally, we are open to working with community partners interested in holding programs at Recreation Centers. Aligned to PPR’s staffing realignment effort, PPR is poised

to increase hours at Recreation Centers on weekends, to form new partnerships and programs as well as provide expanded hours.

- **Objective #2:** The Department of Public Health and the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services (DBHIDS) shall lead efforts to ensure that all residents in the aforementioned ZIP codes have access to quality treatment and mental health services.
- **Administration Response:** The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) operates five Health Centers in the zip codes you identified, with a service area substantially covering all zip codes (Health Centers 3, 4, 5, 9 and the Strawberry Mansion Health Center). The centers provide high quality primary medical care and support services, including behavioral health counselors, social determinants of health navigators (who assist with benefits, housing, and other needs), and medication assisted treatment for substance use disorder, to patients of all ages. More than 25,000 Philadelphia residents living in the target zip codes, including more than 4,500 children, are served by these health centers.

The Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services (DBHIDS) offers behavioral health (mental health and substance use) treatment, intellectual disability supports and early intervention services through an integrated system of over 200 provider agencies. DBHIDS also offers various community-based programs, including the Network of Neighbors Responding to Violence. The Network responds to the traumatic stress associated with community violence, sudden loss, tragic accidents, suicides, burnout, or ongoing circumstances such as living or working in a neighborhood plagued by high rates of gun violence. All Network interventions are free and take place in community-based settings. If a community is experiencing heightened stress, they can call or email the Network to discuss the situation and available supports at 267-233-4837 or [networkofneighbors@phila.gov](mailto:networkofneighbors@phila.gov).

A full list of providers in the priority zip codes can be accessed [HERE](#). Providers in these communities offer a full range of quality behavioral health services including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) which is a form of psychological treatment that has been demonstrated to be effective for a range behavioral health challenges including trauma.

Steady service utilization across individuals who live in the aforementioned zip codes is demonstrated below. This data reflects individuals who live in the targeted zip codes and are receiving one or more mental health and/or substance use treatment service (the zip codes are for the individual’s residence not the location of the provider).

Zip Code	Resident Population (from census count)	Unduplicated Number of DBHIDS Mental Health/Substance Use Treatment Service Users	Unduplicated Number of DBHIDS Mental Health Treatment Users	Unduplicated Number of DBHIDS Substance Use Treatment Service Users
19104	53,560	3146	2454	2681
19120	74,060	5779	4567	5374
19121	32,385	4320	2793	3872
19124	70,304	8981	6506	8481
19131	44,723	3182	2283	2870
19132	31,378	5347	3550	4771
19133	27,102	5138	3874	4860
19134	62,087	10579	7567	10075
19139	46,397	4938	3474	4441
19140	51,766	8597	6426	8047
19141	34,701	2945	2238	2598
19143	64,630	5792	3888	5295
19144	43,884	4352	3239	3928

- **Objective #3:** The Commerce Department shall coordinate with DBHIDS and City partners under the Roadmap to Safer Communities to strategically invest \$5.6 million in additional workforce development funding to reach individuals involved, or at risk of being involved, in gun violence within the aforementioned ZIP codes.
- **Administration Response:** The Health and Human Services cluster of the Managing Director's Office, including DBHIDS, the Office of Homeless Services (OHS), and the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (CEO) work in partnership with the Department of Commerce to support a number of key initiatives targeting at-risk individuals and build bridges to more traditional workforce development programs. These include:
  - **Same Day Work and Pay:** Since 2019, the City has supported the Same Day Work and Pay program and leveraged in-kind staffing supports, public funds and philanthropy funding. With two City entities currently serving as work hosts (Mural Arts and CLIP), this program provides meaningful work opportunities and service supports to residents who face multiple barriers to work, including lack of housing, lack of ID, and often mental health and/or substance use issues. The Mural Arts program operates in Center City and employs 10 individuals in each cohort; the CLIP program operates in Kensington and employs 10 individuals (half are housed residents and half are unhoused) each week. The program is nearing completion of a strategic planning process that is aimed at ensuring its sustainability, ability to expand to include other host work sites, and bridge to other workforce opportunities.
  - **First-Step Staffing:** Three HHS agencies support First Step Staffing (FSS), which first replicated its successful model in Philadelphia in 2018 with headquarters in the Kensington neighborhood at 1952 E. Allegheny Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19134, and a satellite office in MSB (slated to reopen in late fall 2021). First Step is a non-profit staffing agency that recruits and employs individuals who face barriers with traditional employment programs. First Step's model focuses on rapid reemployment and utilizes support services including job coaching and a transportation program to help individuals obtain and retain employment. Since 2018, First Step Staffing (FSS) continues to prove to be a force in the area, employing over 650 (400 Philadelphia residents) per week in jobs throughout Philadelphia. Currently over 75% of these jobs (350+) are filled by individuals experiencing or transitioning out of homelessness, returning citizens and military veterans.

Working with CEO and DBHIDS, in FY21, FSS engaged 1,548 participants (6,749 since 2018) with its employment program. This partnership has resulted in paying over \$63.4 million in earned wages and provided over 75,000 rides to and from work for its associates. Additionally, 323 Philadelphia residents transitioned from temporary to permanent employment with FSS customers. The City continues to invest in First Steps Staffing, with DBHIDS and CEO providing a total of \$550,000 per year in FY20 and FY21 and OHS infusing \$1,145,730 in FY21 for the new Help for the Hurdles program, which gives people living in homeless shelters transportation and childcare to make it easier for them to get FSS jobs.

The Department of Commerce is focused on connecting Philadelphians to careers, whether in large corporations, small businesses on commercial corridors, or new ventures all their own. In FY22, Commerce will double down on existing solutions that have proven effective and make a series of new investments focused on building wealth and opportunity in Black and brown communities, improving the safety and appearance of commercial corridors, attracting high-quality jobs and ensuring that Philadelphians are prepared for and can connect to those opportunities. Commerce's workforce development priorities, which are executed in partnership with Philadelphia Works, Inc., the City's workforce intermediary, are as follows:

- **Job Seeker Services:** The PA CareerLink® System, supported by Philadelphia Works, Inc., provides job seeker services, placement support, and industry-specific trainings at no cost. 4,000 residents will be placed into jobs using the PA CareerLink® System through 2023.
- **Targeted Investment:** Commerce will continue to invest in the top-performing job training programs that connect residents to immediately available, high-quality, future-proof jobs through the Workforce Solutions Fund, which was launched in 2020. This \$1M commitment is intended to drive innovative workforce programming through an open RFP process. Each proposal requires an employer partner commitment to interview and hire graduates. This funding is intended to spur solutions that connect

residents looking for career opportunities to employers looking to hire from the community and pay a living wage. This program will result in 200 job placements by 2023.

- **Population-Specific Employment Strategies:** Through a series of targeted employer partnerships, Commerce has cultivated a network of 40+ employers that are enthusiastic about providing opportunities to returning citizens. Through programs like the Fair Chance Hiring Initiative and PHL Taking Care of Business, 500 jobs seekers will be placed by 2023.
- **Staff:** Commerce will invest \$240K in Class 100 funds for additional staff to increase the workforce development unit's overall capacity. Specifically, staff will be focused on bringing workforce resources to small and medium sized businesses on commercial corridors, which are likely to hire directly from the surrounding neighborhoods, thereby increasing community economic health and reducing unemployment.

Additionally, Commerce convenes and coordinates the Workforce Professional Alliance (WPA), an organized entity of 22 of Philadelphia's top workforce training providers that collaborate to increase the quality, capacity, and professionalism of the workforce development field. As an entity, the WPA represents \$109M in training funds; average placement rate of 60%; capacity to serve 14,000 individuals; and an actual FY20 placement outcome of 11,000 residents. Funds will be applied to provide a specialized professional development training series for frontline staff, WPA leadership, and an educational workshop series for jobseekers, employer partners, and stakeholders throughout the year.

- **Objective #4:** The Managing Director's Office of Community Services shall lead efforts to mobilize a community response by engaging individuals and additional non-profit and for-profit partners.
- **Administration Response:** The Community Service Office has worked with both local CDC's, nonprofits, faith-based leaders, and residents to develop a public-private-community partnership between the community, regional funders and the City of Philadelphia. The Department will continue to work with The Office of Violence Prevention to advance the following goals:
  - To promote wellness, build resilience, and improve the quality of life
  - To increase agency and support equity and racial/social justice by having community partners and residents direct funding decisions
  - To build cohesion and connectivity among community providers, residents, and city agencies to support collaborations, information sharing, and alignment of services
  - To expand capacity of participants – both organizations and individuals to pursue sustainable, quality of life focused programming to support community
  - To serve as a catalyst and build the infrastructure to support long-term, sustained investment and partnership with funders

The Kensington Community Resilience Fund addresses the needs of the Kensington, Fairhill, and Harrowgate communities through grants that advance the three key pillars: community empowerment, neighborhood investment, and economic opportunity. Core to its approach is a participatory grantmaking process that elevates resident and community provider experiences and priorities, placing the power to make funding decisions in the hands of those who know best – community members and those with lived experiences.

- **Objective #5:** The Managing Director's Office shall formalize a Gun Violence Emergency Response Team, consisting of senior officials who shall meet daily to develop, implement and measure multi-departmental, place-based strategies to respond to gun violence hot spots. All City departments shall cooperate with the Gun Violence Emergency Response Team.
- **Administration Response:** We have already implemented the type of framework which you recommend. The Executive Implementation Team is comprised of top city leadership which includes the Mayor, Managing Director, District Attorney, Police Commissioner, and many others. The Executive Implementation Team convenes to discuss the progress of the Tactical Team and violence prevention programming throughout the city including but not limited to Operation Pinpoint, the [Philadelphia Roadmap to Safer Communities](#) (PRSC), and Group Violence Intervention.

The Executive Implementation Team created and implemented the PRSC Tactical Team which includes key representatives from the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) DBHIDS, PDPH, the Department of Human Services, Department of Commerce, Department of Licenses & Inspections, Department of Streets, the School District of Philadelphia, PPR, Town Watch Integrated Services (TWIS), CEO, and many others.

In the *Roadmap to Safer Communities* Tactical Meetings, similar to COMPSTAT, the goal is to provide important context for the gun violence within the designated police districts' pinpoint areas to City's environmental and social service providers. Under the leadership of Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for Criminal Justice and Public Safety, the Tactical Team convenes weekly and has served as the vehicle for the operational work of implementing the goal of developing a standardized definition of "hot spot" by following the PPD's pinpoint grids and using real-time police and community data to coordinate and target city services and support.

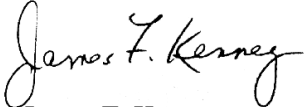
- **Objective #6:** The Gun Violence Emergency Response Team shall communicate actions supporting its objectives to the public, the press, and elected officials on a weekly basis, as the Opioid Emergency Response did. The Gun Violence Emergency Response Team shall develop a website in which weekly targets and progress will be posted, similar to the Opioid Emergency Response Group.
- **Administration Response:** The Administration shares your commitment to transparency and accountability. We launched bi-weekly press conferences beginning in March 2021 to regularly update the public about key initiatives for advancing our violence prevention goals. At the same time, we have expanded our outreach through social media with the launch of the @ [PhillyAlive215](#) on Instagram, and use the Office of Criminal Justice and Public Safety [website](#) to share information. We also plan to develop a website to track the progress of the Anti-Violence Community Partnership Grant program. In addition to promoting transparency, we will use this as a tool for communities to access critical programs in their neighborhood.
- **Objective #7:** The Managing Director's Office of Violence Prevention shall work collaboratively and expeditiously with City Council to develop a framework to allocate \$20 million in additional anti-violence funding from the FY 2022 budget toward trusted grassroots organizations to deliver culturally relevant anti-violence programs, in particular those that employ credible messengers and create access to services for individuals most likely to shoot or be shot. Program results should be tracked and measured.
- **Administration Response:** On July 28, 2021, we announced the framework for distribution of this new funding. We will focus the majority of these funds to mid-sized, community-based organizations with grants of up to \$1 million. We will work with the organizations to provide capacity building one-on-one assistance to improve their organizational infrastructure, fiscal management, data analysis and fund and program development. We will also dedicate funding to evaluate the programs that are funded through grants to assess their impact, recommend improvements and scale success. Finally, we will develop and maintain a website and data dashboard to promote transparency and accountability.
- **Objective #8:** The Managing Director's Office of Violence Prevention shall lead efforts to expand the Community Crisis Intervention Program in the aforementioned ZIP codes, and offer a timeline for increasing staff capacity and number of outreach workers on the ground in these areas.
- **Administration Response:** As with all other objectives, this work is ongoing. Instead of delineation by zip code, we have chosen to focus our efforts through police districts, specifically those with Operation Pinpoint areas that experiencing the highest instances of violence. The Police Districts align with the zip codes you highlight, and are: 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup>.

As you can see from the above, as well as the recently released update to our Roadmap to Safer Communities, my Administration is taking a whole of government response to gun violence, the dueling public health crisis of

our time with the COVID19 pandemic. The pandemic has impacted everything we do, and the ripple effects on society are causing spikes in gun violence in cities across the country. And while I've not declared a state of emergency, something no other city suffering like ours has done, it certainly does not mean my Administration has not acted with due urgency to address this epidemic. Your letter states you have found me to be defensive and dismissive of ideas, which could not be further from the truth. Leadership takes many forms, and effective leaders must support their teams, and listen to others. I will always defend the dedicated team I have assembled to do this difficult work. They have decades of experience working in and with the communities they serve, with most returning to those very communities every night because they live there. They have and will continue to collaborate with stakeholders to address violence. This work is too difficult and too important to be weaponized to advance a political career or agenda. I trust you agree.

My team looks forward to further collaboration and are happy to meet and discuss any of the above issues further.

Sincerely,



James F. Kenney  
Mayor

CC: James Engler, Chief of Staff  
Tumar Alexander, Managing Director  
Vanessa Garrett Harley, First Deputy Managing Director  
Danielle Outlaw, Police Commissioner  
Erica Atwood, Senior Director for Criminal Justice and Public Safety