



# AGENDA REPORT


**TO:** Jestin D. Johnson  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Joe DeVries  
Deputy City Administrator

**SUBJECT:** MOU with Community Initiatives for  
Town Nights

**DATE:** April 23, 2025

City Administrator Approval

  
Jestin Johnson (May 13, 2025 11:24 PDT)

Date: **May 13, 2025**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Enter Into A Memorandum Of Understanding With Community Initiatives To Support Continued Operation Of The Town Nights Program**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The proposed resolution authorizes the City Administrator to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Community Initiatives (CI) to continue operation of the Town Nights program in Oakland. Town Nights is a community-building initiative that uses evening events to build social cohesion and increase feelings of safety among residents in low-income neighborhoods. The Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) coordinated and funded the Town Nights Program in 2022 through 2024 as part of its community healing strategy, with the intention of promoting relationship building between community members that would lead to long-term reductions in violence.

As of October 1, 2024, the DVP will no longer fund or operate the program due to reductions in funding available for community-based grants and shifts in funding priorities. CI has agreed to fiscally sponsor and implement Town Nights in partnership with community-based organizations beginning during the Summer of 2025. The proposed MOU will formalize the City's continued support for the Town Nights program and recognition of CI's leadership in continuing this initiative. Under this MOU, CI will take full responsibility for operating and funding Town Nights while the City will provide support through in-kind services, interdepartmental coordination, and public acknowledgment of the partnership. The MOU has no direct financial cost to the City.

## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

From 2022 to 2024, the City of Oakland's Department of Violence Prevention implemented Town Nights as part of its community healing strategy, with the intention of promoting relationship building between community members that would lead to long-term reductions in

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violence. Town Nights provided safe spaces for residents to gather on weekend evenings by organizing family-friendly events that helped reduce tensions, build trust, and foster public safety through community presence and engagement. Across sites, attendees had access to sporting competitions (e.g. basketball and soccer games), live entertainment, health and wellness services (e.g. massage and acupuncture), hot meals, city and community resource tables, and activities for kids (e.g. bounce houses, face painting, rock climbing walls, petting zoos, **Tables 1-3** provide the locations, host organizations, number of events held, and total attendance for Town Nights events from 2022 to 2024. Host organizations were primarily selected through Request for Qualifications #267700, which the DVP released in December 2021 based on the DVP's [2022-2024 Strategic Spending Plan](#).

**Table 1. Location, host organization(s), number of events, and total attendance for Summer 2022 Town Nights events.**

Location	Host organization(s)	Number of events held	Total attendance
Hoover Elementary School	Hoover-Foster Resident Action Council and Urban Peace Movement	5	1377
Acorn Learning Center	Khadafy Washington Foundation and Urban Peace Movement	5	940
Lincoln Square Park	Family Bridges	5	1559
San Antonio Park	Trybe, Inc.	4	2950
Liberation Park	Black Cultural Zone	5	519
Josie de la Cruz Park	Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice	5	1505
Arroyo Viejo Park	Homies Empowerment and Black Cultural Zone	5	1190
Verdesse Carter Park	Adamika Village and Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency	5	1472
Elmhurst Park	BASIC Ministries	5	792
<b>Total</b>		<b>44</b>	<b>12,229</b>

**Table 2. Location, host organization(s), number of events, and total attendance for Summer 2023 Town Nights events.**

Location	Host organization(s)	Number of events held	Total attendance
West Oakland Youth Center	Hoover-Foster Resident Action Council and Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency	6	1662
Acorn Learning Center	Khadafy Washington Foundation and Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency	6	1310
Lincoln Square Park	Family Bridges	6	2344
San Antonio Park	Trybe, Inc.	6	3900
Josie de la Cruz Park	Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice	6	1507
Carter Gilmore Park	Destiny Arts Center	6	486
Arroyo Viejo Park	Homies Empowerment, Oakland Raised Me, and Trybe, Inc.	6	2160

Verdesse Carter Park	Adamika Village and Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency	6	2058
Elmhurst Park	East Oakland Boxing Association	6	2945
<b>Total</b>		<b>54</b>	<b>18,037</b>

**Table 3. Location, host organization(s), number of events, and total attendance for Summer 2024 Town Nights events.**

Location	Host organization(s)	Number of events held	Total attendance
Hoover Elementary School	Hoover-Foster Resident Action Council and Trybe, Inc.	6	1630
Acorn Learning Center	Khadafy Washington Foundation and Trybe, Inc.	5	837
San Antonio Park	Trybe, Inc.	3	2615
Clinton Park	Trybe Inc.	1	1060
Fruitvale Transit Village	Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice	3	1069
Carter Gilmore Park	Destiny Arts Center	3	361
Arroyo Viejo Park	Homies Empowerment, Oakland Raised Me, and Trybe, Inc.	4	1555
Verdesse Carter Park	Adamika Village and Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency	3	892
Elmhurst Park	East Oakland Boxing Association	6	3547
<b>Total</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>13,566</b>

As of October 1, 2024, the DVP will no longer fund or operate the Town Nights program due to reductions in funding available for grants with community-based organizations and shifts in funding priorities. Under the leadership of Zach Cohen, a former staff member of the DVP who ran the Town Nights program from February 2023 through April 2025, CI has agreed to fiscally sponsor and operate the Town Nights program in partnership with community-based organizations to begin during the Summer of 2025.

### **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

If approved by the Council, this resolution will allow the City to enter into an MOU with CI to clarify roles and responsibilities related to the operation of the Town Nights program beginning in April 2025. Under this agreement:

- **CI will coordinate all Town Nights events**, including selecting dates and locations, contracting with community-based organizations, and promoting events in collaboration with the City.
- **The City will support CI's efforts through in-kind services** such as permitting fee waivers, facility access, interdepartmental staff coordination, and communications support.

- **City departments will participate in various roles**, such as providing recreational programming (OPRYD), outreach services (Human Services), site readiness (Public Works), and violence prevention support (DVP).

The Town Nights program promotes community building while supporting youth employment, social capital investment, and community safety. The City's ongoing engagement, although non-financial, ensures institutional alignment, access to resources, and enhanced visibility of the program. Alternatives to this MOU include discontinuing formal City support, which could reduce access to City resources for residents of low-income neighborhoods and limit the program's impact.

This resolution supports the citywide priorities of:

- **Holistic community safety:** Town Nights attendees and host organizations report an increased sense of safety during and in the days after events. Host organizations notice more people staying outside in their community, with stores and other merchants staying open later to meet demand.
- **Vibrant, sustainable infrastructure:** Town Nights providers have requested more resources and support for the Town Nights program. These added resources, including additional lighting for underlit parks, cleaning litter, and making minor capital improvements to Oakland parks, provided by CI, would help create a smoother funding, planning, and implementation process that would ensure the program's continued success. In addition, they help provide a cleaner, safer park for the community to use once the events are over.
- **Housing, economic, and cultural security:** Town Nights host organizations noticed more people staying outside in their community, with stores and other merchants staying open later to meet demand. Additionally, organizations use Town Nights as an employment opportunity for many of their program participants, who are paid to assist with event operations.
- **Responsive, trustworthy government:** Attendees and host organizations have been very pleased to see City resources go toward events designed to build community cohesion and an overall increase in perceived safety. Attendees and hosts have requested more frequent events, CI can respond to those requests.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no direct financial cost associated with this MOU. The City will provide in-kind support such as waived permitting fees, use of public facilities, and staff coordination.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

No public outreach was deemed necessary for this report beyond the standard City Council agenda noticing procedures. However, community engagement is a core tenet of the Town Nights program, and all events are open to the public.

## **COORDINATION**

This report and the associated MOU were developed in coordination with the City Administrator's Office, City Attorney's Office, Department of Violence Prevention, and Oakland Parks, Recreation & Youth Development.

## **PAST PERFORMANCE, EVALUATION, AND FOLLOW-UP**

An impact analysis of Town Nights events during Summer 2023 conducted by Urban Institute found no impact of the events on violent crime or calls for police service. However, surveys of 41 attendees across sites demonstrated positive outcomes for residents related to community building and feelings of safety:

- 95% of attendees surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with the activities offered.
- 95% had positive interactions with Town Nights staff, who they said treated them with respect and kindly offered help and explained available resources.
- 83% of interviewees said Town Nights were safe or extremely safe.
- Attendees who were asked explicitly about the frequency of Town Nights events said they'd like more events throughout the entire summer and the rest of the year.
- Several attendees volunteered that the events made locations safer outside event hours.

## **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Economic:** Town Nights provides paid opportunities for transitional-aged youth and community members to work in civic programming.

**Environmental:** CI will coordinate with Public Works to address illegal dumping and beautify public spaces at event sites.

**Race & Equity:** Town Nights addresses racial inequities by promoting community safety and belonging in neighborhoods most impacted by violence, many of which are communities of color.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Enter Into A Memorandum Of Understanding With Community Initiatives To Support Continued Operation Of The Town Nights Program

For questions regarding this report, please contact Joe Devries, Deputy City Administrator, 510 238-3083.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe DeVries", is written over a horizontal line.

Joe DeVries  
Deputy City Administrator

Prepared by:  
Zachary Cohen, Program Planner