



AGENDA REPORT


TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Holly Joshi
Chief of Violence
Prevention

SUBJECT: Ceasefire-Lifeline Contracts

DATE: April 20, 2026

City Administrator Approval



Jestin Johnson (May 1, 2026 02:45:39 PDT)

Date: May 1, 2026

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Awarding A Grant Agreement To Community Initiatives For The Term Of July 1, 2026, To June 30, 2027, For Community Activation Services Related To Oakland's Ceasefire-Lifeline Strategy, In An Amount Not To Exceed One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed resolution will fund services that will enhance the City of Oakland's Ceasefire-Lifeline strategy, which focuses intensive support services and enforcement efforts on individuals most likely to draw or drive gun violence. Specifically, the resolution will allow the Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) to contract with Community Initiatives, the fiscal sponsor for Town Nights, to support community activations in neighborhoods impacted by incidents of gun violence or ongoing, high-risk conflicts. These activations will be led by DVP violence interrupters to support multi-pronged efforts to prevent retaliatory violence, support long-term mediations, and encourage neighborhood healing through high-visibility presence and community building.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Ceasefire-Lifeline

As part of its comprehensive approach to public safety, the City of Oakland implements the evidence-based, data-driven strategy for reducing gun violence known as focused deterrence. This approach focuses intensive social services and law enforcement efforts on the small segment of the population—approximately 350 to 400 people in Oakland—most likely to draw or drive gun violence. Nationally, this model is referred to as *Ceasefire*. In Oakland, it is known as *Ceasefire-Lifeline* to reflect the model's two interrelated components: the *Ceasefire* enforcement arm, led by the Oakland Police Department, and the *Lifeline* intensive services arm, delivered by the DVP. The goals of *Ceasefire-Lifeline* are to prevent gun violence, reduce the footprint of

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the criminal justice system, and support high-risk individuals in changing their behaviors to achieve long-term safety and stability. The City of Oakland first implemented *Ceasefire-Lifeline* from 2012 to 2018 and saw homicides decrease by nearly 50%, with at least 31.5% being directly attributable to the strategy. Following several years of disinvestment and an associated spike in homicides, the City of Oakland reinvested in the model in early 2024 and subsequently reduced shootings and homicides by over 50% in two years. Oakland's 2025 homicide rate was the lowest seen in decades, and the first quarter of 2026 has seen further reductions.

Lifeline services delivered by the DVP involve a combination of violence interruption activities and intensive life coaching. Violence interrupters use their lived experience and trusted relationships in communities impacted by violence to identify individuals at the center of gun violence and persuade them to avoid violence. Life coaches work closely with individuals at highest risk of drawing or driving violence to support them in identifying and implementing strategies that reduce their risk for violence and increase protective factors. This intensive program model requires life coaches to have daily communication with their participants over a period of at least 12 months and involves the life coach connecting participants to support services funded by the DVP, including mental health, employment, and housing.

Town Nights

Town Nights is a community-driven initiative that brings Oakland residents and organizations together in public parks and spaces through food, music, and recreation to build belonging and heal communities. Rooted in the belief that relationships are the foundation of public safety, Town Nights invests in Oakland's social contract by strengthening the bonds of trust, cohesion, and shared responsibility that make communities resilient.

The DVP coordinated and funded Town Nights from 2022 through 2024 as part of its community healing work, with the intention of building relationships that would lead to long-term reductions in violence. In total, 13 community-based organizations hosted 132 events across 11 sites during the three summers that the DVP operated Town Nights. Zach Cohen led this work for the DVP from February 2023 through its conclusion in September 2024, developing strong partnerships with host organizations and funders as well as highly visible and appealing program branding.

In April 2025, Zach Cohen left the City of Oakland to continue funding and operating Town Nights as an independent program with fiscal sponsorship from Community Initiatives. In June 2025, City Council approved a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Community Initiatives that committed the City to providing ongoing in-kind support for Town Nights events (Resolution 90754 C.M.S.). Since then, Town Nights has partnered with 11 community organizations to successfully host 16 events across Oakland.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The proposed resolution, if adopted, will allow the DVP to enhance the City's Ceasefire-Lifeline strategy by facilitating community activations in neighborhoods experiencing acute incidents of gun violence or high-risk group-related conflicts. The DVP will strategically deploy its violence interrupters to neighborhoods that have experienced shootings and/or high risk, group-related conflicts, ensuring that violence interrupters have a physical presence in a neighborhood for several days. Violence interrupters will wear apparel that clearly identifies them as violence

interrupters and ambassadors of the City of Oakland, and they will engage community members through food giveaways, healing events, family-friendly activities, and connections to services. These activations will accomplish the following:

1. Allow violence interrupters to develop relationships with community members who can support future mediation or interruption efforts.
2. Educate residents about the existence and role of violence interrupters.
3. Reduce the likelihood of retaliatory violence due to an increased presence of violence interrupters and community members in public spaces.
4. Increase trust and visibility of city government.
5. Connect highly impacted residents with an array of services and supports.

Town Nights will support these activations by bringing food, entertainment, marketing materials, and other resources to neighborhoods during activation periods. Town Nights will work closely with the DVP to plan and implement activations, which will involve timely coordination with partner organizations and vendors. The DVP and Town Nights will work with community leaders, including faith-based leaders, neighborhood crime prevention council chairs, and non-profit leaders to determine specific activation locations and activities for each neighborhood. Town Nights will also work with other City departments to facilitate road closures, clean park facilities, remove abandoned vehicles, or otherwise prepare for activation activities.

RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS

This agenda item is a routine item and does not relate to any Oakland strategic planning efforts.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding for the requested grant with Community Initiatives for \$100,000 will come from the DVP's General Purpose Fund allocation for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 contingent on adoption of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Midcycle Budget. This expenditure is a one-time cost.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

No public outreach was deemed necessary for the proposed resolution beyond the standard City Council agenda noticing procedures. Town Nights is uniquely positioned to facilitate the proposed community activations due to its history of hosting community events in partnership with community-based organizations and service vendors, its MOU with the City of Oakland to operate community events, and its ability to implement events citywide in a short timeframe.

COORDINATION

This report and legislation have been reviewed by the Office of the City Attorney and the Budget Bureau. As core members of the *Ceasefire-Lifeline* partnership team, the Oakland Police Department and Office of Mayor Barbara Lee are supportive of the proposal.

PAST PERFORMANCE, EVALUATION, AND FOLLOW-UP

Prior to the DVP's formation in 2019, the City of Oakland's violence prevention and intervention work was housed within a division of the Human Services Department known as Oakland Unite. From 2008 to 2018, Oakland Unite similarly deployed violence interrupters to neighborhoods during periods of increased violence to support mediation and interruption activities. This work was not evaluated, but anecdotal reports from staff suggest they were helpful in reducing retaliatory violence and building trust between violence interrupters and residents. Additionally, Baltimore and Indianapolis, two cities with offices of violence prevention that are considered to be on the leading edge of community violence intervention work with Oakland, are currently implementing similar activation strategies. The DVP will incorporate the proposed community activations into the scope of an existing Ceasefire-Lifeline evaluation being completed by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania.

RACE AND EQUITY

Shootings and homicides disproportionately impact people of color in Oakland, with Black residents experiencing the greatest disparity. In 2024, 33% of shooting victims and 65% of homicide victims were Black, although Black residents represent 20% of Oakland's overall population. Latino residents also experience increased levels of violence, representing 42% of shooting victims in 2024 despite composing 29% of the population. The planned community activations are intended to support reductions in shootings and homicides in Oakland that will reduce these racial disparities in experiences of violence.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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For questions regarding this report, please contact Holly Joshi, Chief of Violence Prevention, and (510) 920-6272.

Respectfully submitted,



Holly Joshi (Apr 29, 2026 13:00:54 PDT)

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