

March 12, 2025

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

202500448

From: Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager

Subject: Cincinnati Permanent Gun Violence Victims Memorial

REFERENCE DOCUMENT #202401206

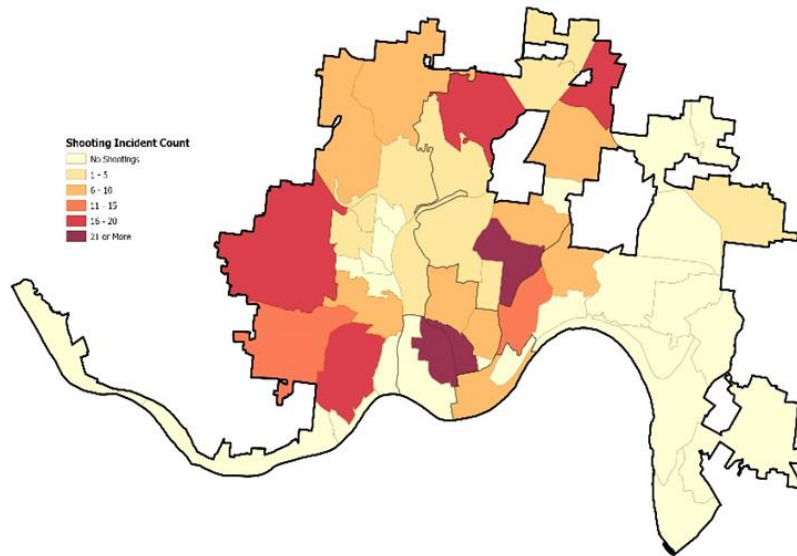
On May 5, 2024, the City Council referred the following for a report:

MOTION, submitted by Councilmembers Owens, Albi, and Vice Mayor Lemon-Kearney, **WE MOVE** that the Administration prepare a report within (30) days on the feasibility of the formation/construction of a permanent memorial for victims of gun violence in Cincinnati. This report should include the following: 1) Funding sources/opportunities, 2) Overall cost, 3) Community Engagement process, 4) Site identification, 5) Key community partners, 6) Key external partners including but not limited to The Gun Violence Memorial Project and 7) Educational Opportunities.

Overview

This report assesses the feasibility of creating a permanent memorial for victims of gun violence in the City of Cincinnati. Gun violence has far-reaching consequences that not only affect victims and their families but also helps shape the socio-economic and emotional fabric of communities.

Sadly, gun violence has become a pervasive issue that devastates families, communities, and the City as a whole. In 2024, there were nearly 300 shooting incidents with 355 victims injured by gunfire. This stretches from senseless gunfire hitting unintended victims to shootings between domestic partners. Gun violence in 2024 is the second lowest in the past decade, with only 2018 recording fewer incidents. Gun violence has largely affected the City's minority community: 90% of shooting victims (318) were Black despite about 50% of the City reporting being a part of a non-White race or ethnic group. In addition, more than half of the victims were young people under the age of 30, including 42 victims under the age of 18.



In response to this crisis, there is an increasing demand for memorials dedicated to honoring victims and raising awareness about the consequences of gun violence. A memorial could potentially serve as a space for remembrance, reflection, and healing, while also raising awareness about the devastating effects of gun violence.

Funding Sources & Opportunities

The creation of a memorial to honor the victims of gun violence necessitates a comprehensive and strategic funding approach, encompassing a diverse range of financial sources, including public, private, and philanthropic contributions. This multi-faceted strategy will ensure the memorial's successful realization, engaging various sectors of the community and fostering widespread support. The following are potential funding sources that could be used secure the necessary resources for impactful project:

- General Capital Funds
- Grants
- Corporate Sponsorships
- Fundraising Events/Activities

Project Cost

The cost of building a permanent memorial can vary greatly depending on several factors, such as size, scope, design, materials, and location. However, the below captures the various elements required in the building of a permanent structure.

- Design and Architectural Fees
- Construction and Site preparation

- Landscaping and Landscaping Features
- Maintenance Fund
- Education/Interactive Components

The overall cost of constructing a memorial may range from \$800,000 up to \$3 million depending on the scale and scope of the project. Once construction is completed, ensuring its upkeep and relevance will require ongoing investments and community involvement. Plans should be put in place for future maintenance, and the memorial could serve as a hub for ongoing educational and advocacy activities. Further research and analysis will be required to fully understand the complexities associated with a project of this magnitude.

Community Engagement Process

Effective community engagement is crucial to ensuring the memorial reflects the values, stories, and needs of the residents it aims to serve. The process must be transparent, and it must be inclusive of not only our community partners and the general public, but specifically the family and friends of victims of gun violence.

Engaging with family members and other community stakeholders early on helps clarify the memorial's intent and significance. During this process, it could potentially reveal a need for adjustments in the project's vision and approach. It's critical to recognize that defining the project and understanding the necessary resources such as funding and time, may evolve as the community shares their perspectives. Trying to define the scope and budget for a project that hasn't been fully shaped by its stakeholders is a significant challenge, and flexibility in the process is essential. A topic of this nature may require the assistance of outside consultants who are especially skilled at conducting the engagement process with the sensitivity and compassion it deserves.

Site Identification

Selecting an appropriate site for the memorial is critical to its accessibility, visibility, and relevance. When making the selection the following considerations for the site should include:

- Proximity to affected communities
- High-traffic urban area
- Accessibility
- Visibility and symbolism
- Security and safety

It is important to note that a site that is currently under the control or ownership of the City will be more advantageous and cost effective. Extensive due diligence by staff, coupled with comprehensive and inclusive community engagement efforts, will be essential to thoroughly assess and identify potential sites, ensuring all relevant factors and concerns are addressed.

Community Partners

Community partnerships and active involvement are crucial to the long-term success and meaningful impact of a permanent memorial. By engaging gun violence survivors, their families, advocacy organizations, local leaders, and residents in the planning and design process, we ensure that the memorial is not only a symbol of remembrance but also a true reflection of the lived experiences, struggles, and needs of those most affected. This collaborative approach fosters a deeper sense of connection and purpose, ensuring the memorial serves as a powerful, authentic tribute that honors the resilience and voices of the community. The City actively collaborates with the following organizations in its ongoing efforts to address gun violence, providing crucial support to survivors, families, and communities impacted by these tragedies

- CPD Victims Assistance Liaison Unit (VALU)
- UCanspeakforme
- Parents of Murdered Children (POMC)
- Save our Youth Kings and Queens
- Moms Demand Action (MOMS)
- VALU - Survivors Advisory Board
- Seven Hills Neighborhood House and Trauma Recovery Center

Together, these organizations play a critical role in both immediate crisis response and long-term recovery efforts, ensuring that those impacted by gun violence receive the support and resources they need.

Educational Opportunities

The memorial can serve as a powerful education tool in several ways, providing a space to reflect on the impact of gun violence while promoting awareness, understanding, and most importantly action.

In essence, a gun violence memorial goes beyond just commemorating the past; it becomes a tool for engaging individuals in conversations about prevention, and policy, while educating the public about the ongoing need for change in our approach to gun violence. A permanent memorial for victims of gun violence will be an important step in recognizing the devastating impact of gun violence on the community and offering a space for healing and education.

Recommendation

The Administration respectfully requests that the City Council provide clear guidance on whether staff should proceed with exploring potential next steps and a budget for this project.

Further analysis is needed in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and Engineering, Department of City Planning and Engagement and Cincinnati Police Department. Through careful planning, community involvement, and collaboration with key partners, the memorial can leave a lasting legacy of hope and healing for future generations in Cincinnati.