



RESEARCH REPORT

An Interim Process and Outcome Evaluation of Oakland's Measure Z-Funded Services

The Department of Violence Prevention's Community Healing and Restoration Strategy, July 2022 to June 2024

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We are grateful for the contributions of personnel from the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention, the community-based organizations that operated the 2023 Town Nights events, the Measure Z Evaluation Community Advisory Board, and the Public Safety and Services Violence Prevention Oversight Commission. We could not have done this work without the contributions to the data collection of Urban Strategy Council's community fellows. We also appreciate the insights and perceptions shared by Oakland community members.

Executive Summary

This interim evaluation report presents descriptive, process, and outcome findings regarding the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention’s (DVP’s) community healing and restoration (CHR) strategy. Activities encompassed in this strategy are intended to help families affected by homicide and support neighborhoods and communities most impacted by group violence and gender-based violence. These services and activities help community members cope and heal in response to incidents of violence while strengthening social capital in neighborhoods as a protective factor against violence. The efforts under this strategy are reaching areas and populations most affected by violence while fostering community bonds.

Findings

Descriptive Analysis and Process Evaluation

Group and individual-level services included in the CHR violence prevention strategy have reached thousands of Oakland residents, many of whom have been personally affected by violence. Between July 2022 and June 2024, the DVP assisted 156 individuals through its family-support services, most commonly providing case management, financial support, relocation, and funeral/vigil planning services. Additionally, 76 people received therapeutic support services and 69 people received restorative services focused on supporting families affected by violence over the same two-year period.

CHR service providers helped organize hundreds of group events. Neighborhood and community teams alone held more than 400 community-building events. Mini grants were disbursed as part of the CHR strategy, funding community reinvestment and rejuvenation work, such as public art projects and restorative storytelling activities. A total of \$465,000 in local capacity-building mini grants were awarded.

Organized by local community-based organizations and supported by the DVP, Town Nights are the most publicly visible and resource-intensive Measure Z-funded CHR activity. Town Nights events are large community gatherings in multiple parks and community centers in Oakland on Friday nights during the summer. Selection of Town Nights locations is guided by data on where shootings are more

prevalent. In summer 2023, they occurred in nine locations over six consecutive weeks (54 total events) and in summer 2024, there were 31 events in eight locations. Each site was funded to host three events, and some hosted more either by stretching the DVP funding or supplementing it from other sources. In 2023 Town Nights events were attended by thousands of people, and they provided employment to an average of 185 young people each Friday.

To complement findings on the extent of CHR activities, we conducted surveys and interviews with attendees at weekly summer Town Nights events—community-building events held at parks and other public spaces—on six consecutive weekends during the summers of both 2023 and 2024. Most interview participants expressed enthusiasm and support for DVP events and shared how the events had built on previous years' efforts to strengthen local bonds and community cohesion. Almost all attendees at Town Nights events reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with the activities offered.

In addition to interviews with event attendees, we conducted semistructured interviews with service providers responsible for hosting and administering Town Nights activities who, along with hosting these events, use them to connect with people who might be interested in participating in services funded by the DVP. These providers see their events making meaningful contributions to community cohesion and safety, as evidenced by more resident presence outside and the community feeling safer. The ability to use Town Nights as an employment opportunity for many of their program participants was seen as a valuable contributor to keeping them safe and away from potentially risky activities. Interview respondents emphasized that Town Nights events require significant advanced planning, and that engagement from the DVP and the City on this planning is an important facilitator of success. Providers appreciated recent DVP enhancements in capacity to support Town Nights.

Outcome Analysis

In addition, using data on crimes and calls for service we received through a data-sharing agreement with the Oakland Police Department, we performed an impact evaluation to assess the localized effects of the CHR strategy's Town Nights events on local levels of violence and calls for police service. We employ a difference-in-differences model, combined with propensity score matching, to answer whether these Measure Z-funded Town Nights events affect violence at the community level. We did not detect any statistically significant effects of Town Nights events on outcomes around local violence and crime compared with similar neighborhoods, but we did observe that specific block groups where Town Nights events were held experienced higher rates of calls for service per capita

and more reported crimes than other block groups, suggesting that event organizers were reaching populations disproportionately affected by crime and violence. Given the small sample size of Town Nights events and the difficulty in disaggregating the effects of Town Nights activities from other local drivers and inhibitors to crime and safety outcomes, we were not able to detect any statistically significant effects of these events on crime in the neighborhoods surrounding the events.

Practice Recommendations

Create forums for different service providers to coordinate and communicate. A notable strength of the DVP service continuum is the comprehensive network of referral relationships between service providers evident in the data and the level of partnership indicated by providers we interviewed. While service providers appreciate the coordination and communication where it is happening, the extent of this coordination differs by service and provider. Community healing often occurs downstream of other structural realities of how issues of violence and safety manifest in schools and communities. Regular coordination can help providers address emerging trends in patterns of violence and participants' needs, and they can use information about the types of services people receive to better tailor community healing and restorative events and initiatives.

Deliver more cross-training for staff at different organizations. Relatedly, many providers appreciated the opportunities they had to attend trainings with peers from other organizations and in other specialties, and they felt the increased mutual understanding from those engagements improved operational collaboration in the field.

Recruit and retain multilingual staff. In a community as linguistically diverse as Oakland, multilingual staff are needed in all roles that involve active engagement with clients, particularly Spanish-speaking staff, given the many monolingual Spanish speakers in Oakland.

Sustainably resource the community-engagement aspects of the DVP's community healing and restoration strategy. The goals of increasing social cohesion and building healthy community relationships that underlie Town Nights in particular required long-term processes with consistency and sustainability. As the part of the DVP strategy that most broadly engages residents in Oakland neighborhoods of focus, Town Nights play an important role in seeding peace. Residents we surveyed and interviewed value these events and would like to see additional resources to support community-activation events throughout the year.

Assist providers with building their capacity. Community-based service providers who received DVP funding would like more assistance with building capacity from the DVP and from the City of Oakland generally. This could include finding ways to increase staffing and staff capacity to mitigate challenges resulting from staff turnover and vacancies; making the yearly grant process easier for grantees, who are often managing reporting requirements from multiple grants from multiple sources; and identifying additional funding sources for providers who are addressing complex needs and finding that available resources, though needed and appreciated, are insufficient for program participants' needs. By spending less time and money on administrative processes, providers would have more resources available to scale up events like Town Nights by boosting staffing and providing a broader scope of activities for attendees. It would also help lower the provider-to-client ratio.

Hold Town Nights more frequently and in more locations to reach more people. In 2023, Town Nights events were hosted for six consecutive weeks at nine locations across Oakland, hosting almost 18,500 attendees. In 2024, only one venue was able to host events on all six summer nights. Participants we interviewed at Town Nights events agreed that the events were positive community-building spaces, but they wanted for the program to expand. By ensuring all Town Nights locations can host the events each week the events occur, the DVP can provide community members with a more consistent space where they can reliably spend their time doing community healing and restorative activities. And by expanding Town Nights to new locations, the DVP can reach populations that were underrepresented at the 2023 and 2024 Town Nights events.

Evaluation Next Steps

The next steps in our evaluation will be to collect qualitative data from people who participated in community healing and restoration services to better understand their experiences with services, and to extend the quantitative analysis of the relationship of Town Nights events to safety measures, to include the events held in the summer of 2024.

Introduction

For decades, the city of Oakland has grappled with gun and gender-based violence, and for decades it has responded by making extensive investments in building capacity and mobilizing expertise to respond to existing violence and avert future violent victimization. This interim evaluation presents findings and insights regarding the work supported and the outcomes realized by one form of that investment: the initiatives and activities comprising the community healing and restoration (CHR). The group community healing and restoration strategy is overseen by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) and carried out by community-based organizations, whose work is funded through the Public Safety and Services Violence Prevention Act (popularly known as “Measure Z”). This evaluation work examining community healing and restoration is part of a larger process and impact evaluation of Measure Z-funded initiatives undertaken by Urban Institute in partnership with the Urban Strategies Council, over a three-year period from July 2022 to June 2025.

BOX 1

Measure Z and the Department of Violence Prevention

In 2014, Oakland voters passed Measure Z, the Public Safety and Services Violence Prevention Act. Measure Z built on lessons from the earlier Measure Y, the Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act of 2004. Measure Z provides approximately \$27 million in funding annually, with \$2 million designated for improving fire-response services, about \$15 million for violence-reduction efforts within the Oakland Police Department, and roughly \$10 million for violence prevention and intervention programs overseen, and in some cases directly provided, by the Department of Violence Prevention (DVP). Measure Z-funded DVP activities are grouped into four strategy areas: group violence response, gender-based violence response, community healing and restoration, and school violence intervention and prevention (VIP) teams that embed the other three strategy areas in select Oakland schools.

Established in 2017, the DVP has a mandate to reduce gun violence, intimate partner violence, and commercial sexual exploitation. Before the DVP was established, the community-led components of the City of Oakland’s violence-reduction work were housed in Oakland Unite. Oakland Unite was a division of the City’s human services department, and the DVP absorbed its functions, and staff were automatically transferred from Oakland Unite to the DVP. The roles and responsibilities of Oakland Unite were fully assumed by the DVP in 2020, and the DVP also took on new functions.

Source: *Department of Violence Prevention Strategic Spending Plan, 22-24* (City of Oakland, Department of Violence Prevention, 2021).

In presenting this most recent evaluation contribution to understanding Oakland’s investments in violence, we begin by detailing the scope of the DVP’s CHR activities, situating this evaluation and the DVP’s CHR initiatives in the complex context of Oakland’s violence prevention and intervention work and its history, including prior evaluations of services funded by Measure Z. We then provide an overview of the focus of this evaluation, what is included in this report, and what will come in the final evaluation report in 2025. We then share our findings, both qualitative and quantitative, relative to the CHR strategy. The report then provides analysis quantifying the impact of Measure Z-funded services on outcomes, and we conclude with strategy-specific summary recommendations from our evaluation work to date.

About the Community Healing and Restoration Strategy

Services funded through Oakland’s community healing and restoration strategy are intended for families affected by homicide and neighborhoods most affected by group violence and gender-based violence. The services collectively help community members cope and heal in response to incidents of violence. They are also intended to strengthen social capital in neighborhoods as a protective factor against violence. The Measure Z-funded activities in this strategy that have operated since July 2022 are Town Nights, healing and restorative activities, neighborhood and community teams, family support, and therapeutic support.

Town Nights is a series of large community events held in Oakland parks and community centers on Friday evenings during summer months to provide a safe space for community members of all ages to socialize and recreate. These events build community cohesion and employ community members in need of financial assistance. Locations are selected using data on where shootings are more prevalent.

Healing and restorative activities build unity and change norms around community violence in Oakland through healing circles, marches, vigils, and community dialogues and events. They also provide financial support to families who have lost loved ones to violence. These activities are delivered by Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth, and Urban Peace Movement, with additional services subcontracted through Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth, Urban Peace Movement, Adamika Village, Khadafy Washington Foundation, and No More Tears.

Neighborhood and community teams are groups of individuals who serve as credible messengers and visible ambassadors of the Department of Violence Prevention’s network of service providers in

the community. Team members develop and maintain relationships that can be leveraged to mediate group violence, host community events to build social cohesion and beautify neighborhoods, and connect community members to resources after shootings and homicides. Professional development workshops for staff at DVP-funded organizations on topics related to community healing, gender-based violence, group and gun violence, and restorative justice are also offered in this area.

Family support services are provided to family members of homicide victims. Services include support with completing victim-compensation applications, support with submitting relocation requests, referrals to helpful services, and payment of funeral expenses.

Therapeutic support services include individual psychotherapy, healing practices, and support groups for families, peers, and loved ones after homicides, as well as for survivors of community violence.

Together, the services that make up the DVP's CHR strategy fit into the department's broader approach to violence prevention. Community restoration efforts offer Oakland residents opportunities to come together and heal from the wounds that the DVP's three other strategies address: gender-based violence, group and gun violence, and school violence. Without this restorative approach, local victims and survivors, as well as those indirectly affected by crime and violence, would have little funding and infrastructure to help them rebuild. As such, in this report, we hope to highlight not only the impact of this strategy but how it fits into a more expansive violence prevention ecosystem.

Activities funded by Measure Z under the CHR strategy, along with the budget allocation for the strategy's activities, are shown in table 1.

TABLE 1

The Oakland Department of Violence Prevention’s Community Healing and Restoration Activities, 2022–2024

Providers		Budget amount 2022–24
Activity		
Town Nights	Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, Destiny Arts Center, East Oakland Boxing Association, Family Bridges, TRYBE, Adamika Village*, Khadafy Washington Foundation*, Hoover Foster Resident Action Council*, Homies Empowerment*, Oakland Raised Me*	2,180,000
Healing and restorative activities	Catholic Charities of the East Bay, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth, Urban Peace Movement, Adamika Village*, Khadafy Washington Foundation*, No More Tears*	2,250,000
Neighborhood and community teams	Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, Roots Community Mental Health Center, TRYBE, Adamika Village*, Khadafy Washington Foundation*, Hoover Foster Resident Action Council*	3,690,000
Family support	Youth ALIVE!	619,000
Therapeutic supports for families	Catholic Charities of the East Bay	276,000
Community capacity building & mini grants	Urban Strategies Council, Youth Leadership Institute	1,063,000

Source: Information on funding by activity from July 1, 2022, through September 30, 2024, provided by the Department of Violence Prevention.

Note: * indicates organization providing additional services via subcontract.

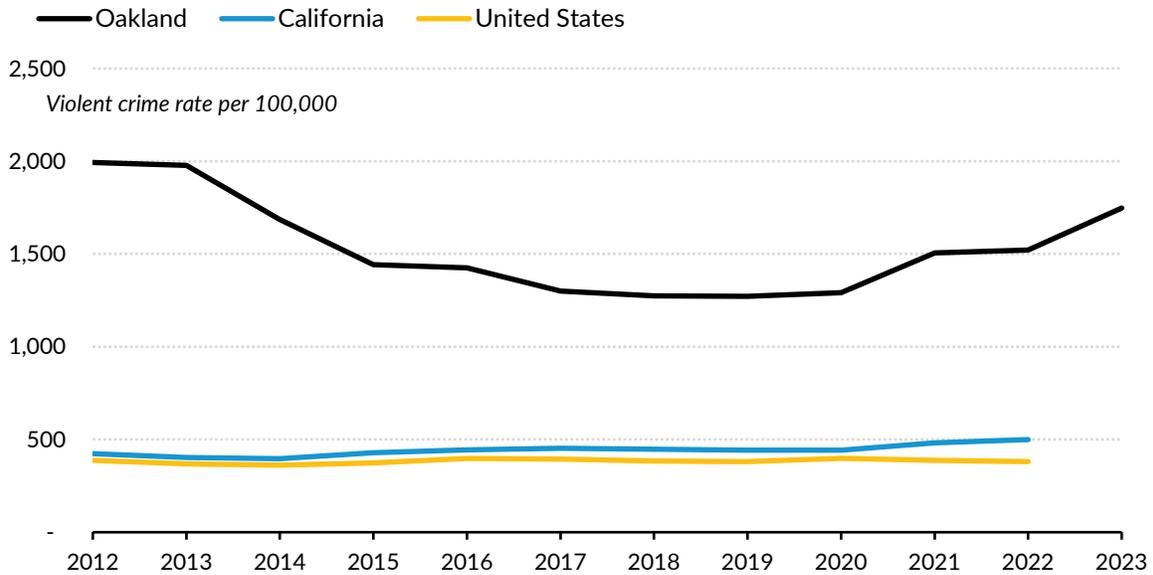
Recent Violence Trends in Oakland

The period covered by this evaluation report, from July 2022 through June 2024, was a difficult one in the city of Oakland’s history of violence prevention efforts. Though Oakland has a violent-crime rate well above the averages of both the United States and California, in the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic the prevalence of violence in Oakland declined significantly and consistently (figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Annual Violent Crime Rate per 100,000 People in Oakland, California, 2012–2023

Compared with state and national rates



Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer, accessed July 8, 2024, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/home>; Oakland Police Department citywide annual crime reports publicly available at <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/police-data>.

Notes: Violent crimes include murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Rates for 2021 and 2023 were calculated using the Oakland Police Department crime reports. Rates for 2023 for California and the United States will be released in late 2024.

This trend reversed sharply alongside the onset of the pandemic, and shootings in Oakland specifically increased sharply in 2020 (figure 2). Shootings peaked in 2021 but remained at levels much higher in 2022 and 2023 than from 2015 to 2019.

FIGURE 2

Annual Homicides and Shootings in Oakland, California, 2014–2023

■ Homicides ■ Shootings



Source: Oakland Police Department citywide annual crime reports, available at <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/police-data>.
Notes: Following the Uniform Crime Report hierarchy rule, the graph shows the number of crime incidents in which homicide or a shooting was the most serious offense. The number of shooting and homicide victims may be greater than the number of crime incidents, as a shooting with multiple victims would be counted as one incident.

The most recent available data on shootings and homicides indicate that the number of shootings and homicides in the first half of 2024 was lower than the trends from 2022 and 2023 but was still above pre-2020 levels. The final evaluation report will include whether this more hopeful trend bears out through the remainder of 2024.

The trend in domestic violence, which is one type of gender-based violence (GBV), suggests a more hopeful trajectory, and in a separate report on the DVP's gender-based violence strategy, we consider how the DVP's efforts aided victims and survivors of GBV. Here, we note that OPD incident report data indicates a reduction in reported domestic violence in the years since the onset of the pandemic, though it is important to note that domestic violence is often underreported.

Methodology

In 2022, the Urban Institute, in partnership with Urban Strategies Council, was selected by the City of Oakland to conduct a process and impact evaluation of Measure Z-funded initiatives for a three-year evaluation period from July 2022 to June 2025. The Measure Z services cover two primary components: (1) violence prevention and intervention strategies operated by the DVP, and (2)

geographic, special-victims, and community-policing services implemented by the Oakland Police Department.

This evaluation focuses only on strategies and activities implemented by community-based organizations with Measure Z funding. The evaluation does not cover services provided directly by DVP staff or the Ceasefire strategy, nor does it address the DVP's other three violence reduction strategies, though there is significant overlap in both the methods employed, and the expressed goals, of service providers operating under each strategy. **The evaluation has three components.**

First, the descriptive analysis presents data on the level and nature of activity undertaken by the DVP and its funded community partners. This includes addressing what we know about the characteristics of participants, incidents responded to, services provided, and outcomes recorded. This component draws from the DVP's Apricot data-management system. In addition to the analyses described in this report, the evaluation supported the development of public data dashboards. The dashboards can be accessed for further detailed information about the strategies and activities funded by Measure Z at <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/dvp-measure-z-funded-grantee-network-data-dashboard>. The following research questions are addressed in this component:

- How many people were served in each program? How many incidents were responded to? How many community activities occurred?
 - » What were the characteristics of these clients/incidents/activities?
- What was the dosage of the various Measure Z-funded DVP activities, at the client, family, and community levels?

Second, our process evaluation addresses questions about the implementation of the Measure Z-funded activities, going beyond the descriptive information about what activities were undertaken to understand how well they are working and identify implementation challenges and successes. The following research questions are addressed in this component:

- How were the Measure Z-funded DVP activities implemented?
- What are the facilitators of and barriers to success for each activity within the DVP community healing and restoration substrategy?
- How do the different Measure Z-funded components interact and relate to an overall approach to violence reduction?

Third, our impact evaluation assessed whether the Measure Z-funded activities are realizing intended outcome at the individual and community levels. The following research questions are addressed in this component:

- Do Measure Z-funded activities affect violence at the community level?
- Do people engaged by Measure Z-funded services fare better in terms of safety, well-being, and justice-system involvement than similarly situated people who are not engaged?

For the CHR strategy, we conducted an outcome analysis on community-level impacts for Town Nights, as one goal of Town Nights is to improve safety and the data supported a spatial analysis of impact. Individual-level impact analyses were not feasible for CHR services, as only 73 participants in services consented to sharing individual identifiers during the observation period, which was not a sufficient number to support outcome analysis.

Data Collection

Interviews

The Urban Institute and Urban Strategies Council conducted five interviews with five organizers of the DVP's Town Nights. These in-depth, semistructured interviews, which occurred virtually from August 2023 through July 2024, helped us better understand implementation experiences. Leadership and staff at the community-based organizations funded to host Town Nights events through Measure Z were informed of the interview opportunity via email using contact information provided by the DVP. Each potential interview began with an informed consent process in which staff could decide whether to proceed with the interview. The interview questions asked about their roles and responsibilities, how the activity was being implemented, referral sources, collaboration across agencies, community needs, perceived benefits of Town Nights, and implementation challenges and successes. At the Town Nights events, Urban Strategies Council conducted 41 semistructured 10-to-15-minute interviews with Town Nights attendees. Those interviews were intended to gather qualitative data on the facilitators of and barriers to the success of Town Nights to capture recommendations for improvement from the voices of participants. Every interviewee was compensated with a \$15 gift card for their time.

Surveys

The Urban Strategies council administered a community survey during the Town Nights events in 2023 and 2024. The survey asked about neighborhood conditions, safety, experiences with crime, familiarity with local services, including Town Nights, and experiences with OPD. The survey was completed by adult Oakland residents.

Observations of Town Nights

Researchers and community fellows from the Urban Strategies Council conducted systematic observations at the Town Nights events in 2024. The observations documented the activities and resources available, level of attendee engagement, and physical condition and accessibility of the Town Nights locations.

Administrative Data Sources and Analysis

The Urban Institute executed a data-sharing agreement with the City of Oakland to receive data from multiple sources from the Department of Violence Prevention and the Oakland Police Department. Table 2 lists the types of data received and analyzed in this report. The DVP provided data from its records-management system, called Apricot, which was launched in January 2023. Apricot contains data on individual participants and the services they received as well as on group services and incident responses. Although Apricot launched in 2023, the DVP was able to carry over data from 2022 that were collected through its previous system, Cityspan. As part of the grant requirements, the DVP-funded service providers report data in Apricot, allowing for more uniform data and consistent analysis across all providers.

Several OPD data sources support the evaluation of the DVP, including data on 911 calls for service and crime. The data on calls for service include all 911 calls referred to the OPD from January 2018 to September 2023. The data include information on the call date, time, location, type, priority, and disposition. We received data on all crimes reported to and recorded by the OPD from January 2012 to June 2024, including the date, time, location, and crime type.

TABLE 2

Sources of Data Used in This Interim Evaluation of Measure Z–Funded Services

Data source and type	Data coverage
<i>Oakland Department of Violence Prevention</i> Service provision and participation	July 2022–June 2024
<i>Oakland Police Department</i> Calls for service	January 2018–September 2023
Crime incidents	January 2012–June 2024

Limitations

Some important limitations should be considered when assessing the findings of this stage of the Measure Z evaluation. The first is the fact that Apricot, the DVP’s new data-entry and -management system, went live in January 2023. Adopting a new system like Apricot involves a learning curve and data-entry inconsistencies and quality-control issues frequently arise and need to be fixed. Urban worked closely with the DVP to mitigate the impact of this change on the evaluation, including obtaining Apricot data extracts as early as possible to become familiar with the data structure and begin asking questions well in advance of the delivery dates for evaluation analyses. Nonetheless, providers’ data-collection practices may have differed as they began using Apricot, which may be reflected in our data.

Community Healing and Restoration Descriptive Analysis

In this section, we share preliminary findings from the several data sources detailed in the previous section. In our descriptive analysis, we demonstrate the number of people who benefited from the Department of Violence Prevention’s community healing and restoration activities, focusing on who received which services, how many clients were served, and how people learned about and were connected to the DVP’s service network. We then summarize findings from interviews with service providers at Town Nights events.

Individual and Group Services Provided through Community Healing and Restoration Activities

In our descriptive analysis of services funded by the DVP, we provide an overview of the scale and reach of the department’s activities in the community healing and restoration strategy area, as well as findings from interviews with people connected to the family-support services.

Family Support Services

From July 2022 through June 2024, 156 people received family support services. As described by interviewees, after a homicide Khadafy Washington Project at Youth ALIVE! is notified of the victim’s name and next of kin. With this information it works to help next of kin with immediate needs, like applying for funeral/burial expenses and choosing a funeral home, and helps with some expenses, such as placing an obituary and obtaining flowers. Over the longer term it brokers assistance with mental health and case-management services.

In doing outreach to a family affected by violence, family services providers try to give the family some time before contacting them. They then meet face-to-face and let them know that the family-support team is there to help them get connected, that they will “be their advocates through the process,” as one provider put it. They share next steps and call the relevant victim compensation agency to set up an appointment. According to the stakeholder most familiar with this process, families’ receptiveness varies. Some are initially angry but reach back out later. Others find the Victim Compensation Board online and fill out an application themselves, but in such cases, the applications

go to the Sacramento office for processing rather than the Oakland office. Family support services offered by Youth ALIVE! then help connect them to the Oakland office and the application gets expedited.

After making initial contact, family support providers check on the family after one or two weeks because, as a stakeholder noted, “that’s when people go back to their lives and stop surrounding them with love, but the family’s life will never be the same.” This engagement is where the focus shifts to mental-health and case-management services. These providers offering family-support services work with Catholic Charities of the East Bay and Urban Peace Movement on mental-health services, but as one service provider explained, there is a “desperate need” for more capacity in this area.

Family support staff participate in the weekly review of shootings and homicides (discussed in the Group Violence Response section of this report), and partnerships with the other professionals who participate in that review help in several ways. Violence interrupters help connect family support to families that are hard to reach because they are transient or unhoused. They can also help identify whether a family might be at risk for retaliation. One stakeholder reported that in these partnerships, more clarity among the network partners about who is doing what and when with families would be helpful; it can be confusing to families when multiple people, including from the OPD, are reaching out to them.

Lastly, an interview respondent emphasized how important it is to provide these services so that something is available to support families who have lost someone to the violence. Though the goal of the DVP Measure Z-funded work is to avert violence, when the violence is not averted, families cannot be left to fend for themselves. “Somebody needs to be on the sad side of the end result of the violence that’s happening in the city,” they shared.

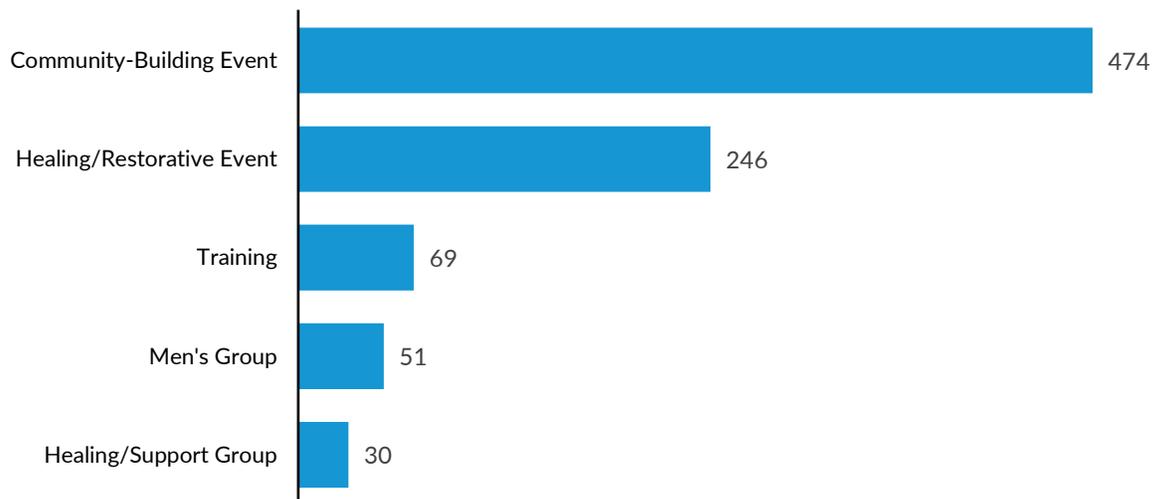
Other Community Healing and Restoration Activities

Community healing and restoration activities involved hosting group events and providing individual support. Figure 3 shows the types of group events undertaken within this activity. The most common group events were healing/restorative events, which are healing circles, vigils, or other gatherings held in direct response to a violent incident. The next most common were Men’s Groups (which are focused on cultural healing for young Black men impacted by the criminal legal system), and community-building events (events such as food or resource distribution, neighborhood gatherings and meals, and arts and cultural events that are meant to proactively build community and are not in response to a violent incident). Training events in this area are professional development workshops

for staff on topics related to community healing, gender-based violence, group and gun violence, and restorative justice.

FIGURE 3

Healing and Restorative Activities Group Events Conducted, July 2022 to June 2024



Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

People receiving community healing and restoration services mostly received therapeutic support and case management, and this activity also connected many of them to family support. Therapeutic support services include individual psychotherapy, healing practices, and support groups for families, peers, and loved ones after homicides, as well as for survivors of community violence. Therapeutic support services worked with 76 people over the two-year period starting in July 2022. The service types delivered were case management and therapeutic support, with the latter being more common. Healing and restorative activities include providing family support to families of homicide victims. Sixty-nine people participated in healing and restorative activities and the main service type was case management. Neighborhood and community teams largely focused on carrying out community-building events (table 3). In the first full grant year from October 2022 to September 2023, these teams conducted 261 community-building events with a total attendance of 23,214 people (which includes duplicate attendance when the same person attends multiple events). In the first nine months of the second grant year, they conducted 141 community-building events with a total attendance of 9,657 people, a count that includes duplicate attendees.

TABLE 3

Community-Building Events Conducted by Neighborhood and Community Teams

June 2022 to July 2024

	Events	Total attendance
Grant year		
2022	35	2,469
2023	261	23,214
2024	141	9,657
Total	437	35,340

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data, including event attendance, provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

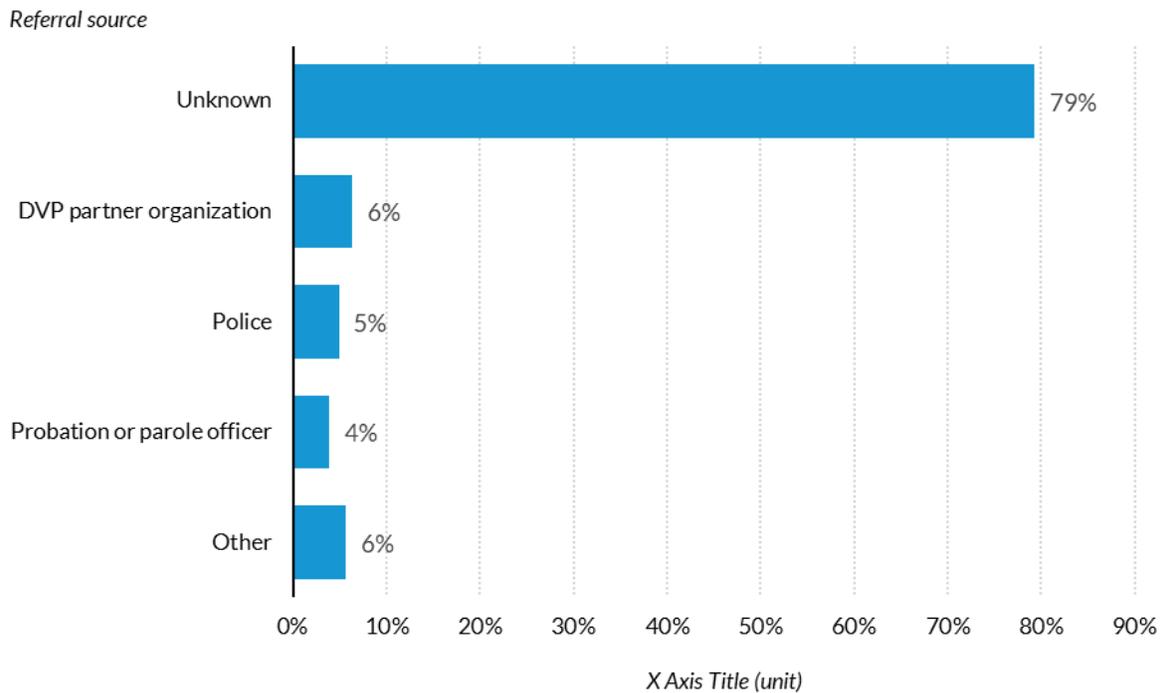
Note: People who attended events in multiple years are counted in each distinct annual total.

Referral Network

The DVP and its funded providers receive referrals for potential participants from disparate sources, including local criminal legal system agencies, other community-based organizations, and other local government agencies. In addition, many people hear about the programs from family and friends or simply walk in to request services without having received a formal referral. For CHR participants for whom referral sources were recorded, they were largely referred by DVP partner organizations, police, and probation or parole officers. We also note that the referral source was not recorded in the Apricot data system for most CHR participants. These referral sources show that many local agencies and organizations are not only aware of the services and providers funded by Measure Z, but also see them as potentially beneficial to participants.

FIGURE 4

How People Were Referred to Community Healing and Restoration Activities



Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Notes: “Other” includes referrals from the victim-of-crime office, hospitals, and self-referrals/walk-ins. “Unknown” indicates that no referral source was recorded for the participant.

Once a provider begins working with a participant, they can refer them to other services inside and outside of the DVP network that might benefit them. There were 75 external referrals made for CHR participants from July 2022 to June 2024. The most common external referrals for CHR participants were for victim-of-crime services, mental health, family support services, housing, and employment. Many of these services are supported with Measure Z funding, and providers then make referrals to other DVP partner organizations. These referrals to initial services and then on to further services reinforce the comprehensive service ecosystem the DVP seeks to create.

Mini Grants

Lastly, the Community Healing and Restoration strategy included provision of mini grants to community organizations to undertake activities consistent with the overall goals of this strategy area. These grants, up to \$15,000 for small organizations and up to \$5,000 for individuals, funded everything from community reinvestment and rejuvenation, such as public arts projects or restorative

storytelling activities. The scope of mini-grant activity is summarized in table 4. Over the funding period from July 2022 through September 2023, 55 mini grants were awarded totaling \$465,000.

TABLE 4

Mini Grants Dispersed through the Community Healing and Restoration Strategy, by Area of Oakland

	Grants	Amount awarded
Area served		
Central	11	\$105,000
Citywide	8	\$101,500
East	21	\$157,000
North/West	10	\$69,500
West	4	\$24,500
Unspecified	1	\$7,500
Total	55	\$465,000

Source: Information on mini grants funding from July 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023, provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Notes: Mini grants were awarded in fiscal year 2023 only.

Town Nights

Organized by local community-based organizations and supported by the DVP, Town Nights are the most publicly visible and resource-intensive Measure Z-funded DVP activity. Town Nights events are large community gatherings in multiple parks and community centers in Oakland on Friday nights during the summer. Selection of Town Nights locations is guided by data on where shootings are more prevalent.

In summer 2023, they occurred in nine locations over six consecutive weeks (54 total events) and in summer 2024, there were 31 events in eight locations. Each site was funded to host three events, and some hosted more either by stretching the DVP funding or supplementing it from other sources. In 2023 Town Nights events were attended by thousands of people, and they provided employment to an average of 185 young people each Friday.

Town Nights have multiple goals: to provide a safe space for recreation and socializing to community members of all ages, build community cohesion, and employ community members experiencing financial need. Town Night events incorporate four components: community outreach to encourage attendance, employment opportunities at events, recreational activities and food available to all attendees free of charge.

In this section we present findings on how Town Nights operated, the implementation experiences of the community organizations operating them, and how they are perceived by people attending them. Preliminary findings from an analysis of their impact on safety during their hours of operation are considered later in our report when we look at the relationship between Town Nights and short-term safety outcomes.

Town Nights Implementation

To better understand how Town Nights operated and were experienced by organizers and attendees, the evaluation team conducted structured observations of Town Nights events, surveyed attendees, and interviewed community-organization staff involved in planning and carrying out the events.

In 2023, Town Nights events occurred over six consecutive Fridays at nine locations. There were fewer Town Nights locations and events in 2024, with a more dispersed schedule (table 5).

TABLE 5
Town Nights Locations and Event Frequency, 2023 and 2024

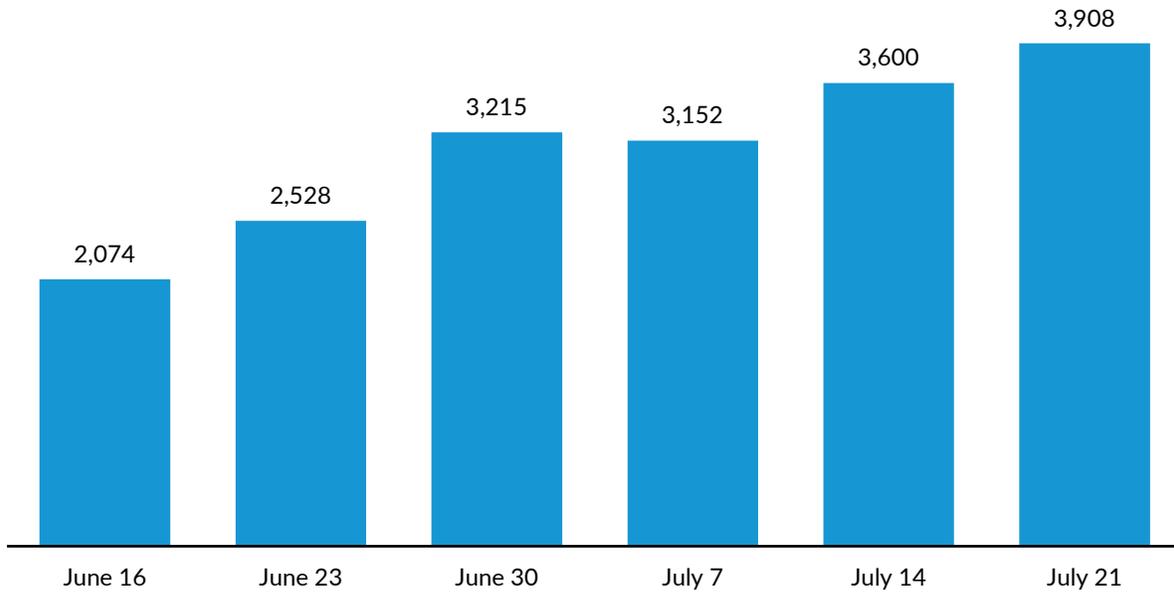
	2023 Town Nights events	2024 Town Nights events
Location		
Acorn Learning Center	6	4
Arroyo Viejo Park	6	4
Carter Gilmore Park	6	3
Elmhurst Park	6	6
Fruitvale Transit Village	None	3
Hoover Elementary School	None	5 (replaced the West Oakland Youth Center location)
Josie De La Cruz Park	6	None (replaced by Fruitvale Transit Village location)
Lincoln Park	6	None
San Antonio Park	6	3
Verdese Carter Park	6	3
West Oakland Youth Center	6	None

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Town Nights attendance data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

The Town Nights events bring hundreds of people together during summer evenings when there is an increased likelihood of violence. Town Nights attendance grew steadily over the course of the 2023 series of events (figure 5). Across all six weeks, the attendance at the 2023 Town Nights events was over 18,000. Names of attendees are not tracked, so this total includes duplicate individuals (people who attended more than one event). Data from Apricot for the period after June 2024 were

not yet available for analysis at the time of this interim report, and attendance data for 2024 Town Nights will be included in the final report.

FIGURE 5
2023 Town Nights Attendance by Date



Source: Urban Institute analysis of Town Nights attendance data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Process Evaluation Findings

Perceptions of Town Nights Attendees

Evaluation team members from Urban Strategies Council conducted structured observations of 2024 Town Nights events to assess implementation, efficiency, and community interactions, including activities, advertising, event organization, accessibility, attendance, and safety measures.

Of the 41 interview participants, 21 indicated they had attended Town Nights events in previous years and thus had a basis for comparison. When those respondents were asked to compare the 2024 events to those in previous years, several felt that the events had become better attended and better organized. Some respondents expressed disappointment with the reduction in the number of events. As one attendee stated, "Last year, it was every week. It was better for the youth. I'm sad this is the last day."

Town Nights events typically took place from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m., with peak attendance from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. All Town Night events were set up outdoors in parks, school facilities, transit plazas, or public streets. Every site was equipped with tables, chairs, canopies, and many activities. The locations were accessible to all community members, including those with disabilities. At most locations staff wore Town Nights T-shirts or other identification so community members could engage with them and ask questions. A few sites did not follow the same protocol regarding standard identification of Town Nights staff, however.

Engagement levels differed across sites and times, with some attendees actively participating in activities and others preferring to observe. Factors affecting engagement included the relevance and appeal of activities, the overall atmosphere, and the presence of friends and family. Advertising strategies to secure attendance included social media, flyers, a designated website (townnights.org), and word-of-mouth. Attendee interviews suggested the latter was critical—just over half the respondents had heard about the event from another community member. Many activities, particularly those with prizes, were highly successful at attracting a broad audience and keeping attendees engaged. The observed success of interactive and engaging activities like dialogues, sports, games, and wellness services suggest the community's preference for hands-on and immediate entertainment. The availability of free food was a major draw for attendees.

While most activities seemed to be targeted toward young children, Town Nights sites had a variety of approaches to engaging community members of all ages. As discussed below, providers we

interviewed raised the perceived difficulty in getting teens and young adults to the events. Activities like sports tournaments with prizes and video game consoles encouraged teens and young adults to attend Town Nights. A few sites used these activities to have community members engage in a dialogue about the importance of nonviolence, encouraging young adults to think of the consequences of their actions and learning from older community members about ways to deescalate situations that could become violent. At a few sites, someone facilitated interactive conversations about engaging in violent acts, ways of preventing involvement in such acts, and what tools audience members had for staying safe. Those conversations were well attended and appeared engaging for youth and young adults.

Not all Town Nights activities had this level of observed engagement. Families did not show much interest in the resource booths, with the lack of engagement often resulting in those booths being unattended by staff. Mural painting also struggled to attract participants. The low engagement with resource booths and mural painting suggests a disconnect between these activities and the interests of attendees.

Attendees we interviewed expressed very positive views of the events, with 95 percent satisfied or very satisfied with the activities offered. The same percentage had positive interactions with Town Nights staff, who they said treated them with respect and kindly offered help and explained available resources. Most attendees we interviewed 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. Eighty-three percent of interviewees said Town Nights were safe or extremely safe. Several said the events made locations safer outside of event hours. As one reported, "Ever since Town Nights started, the park has become more active. It has increased family activities at the community center. Crimes have decreased." Some participants said they had witnessed violence on the way to Town Night events and that they only felt safe once they arrived at the events because of the private security there. When asked what would make them feel safer, half said a greater police or security presence at the events.

Many respondents (41 percent) thought Town Nights events improve neighborhood safety because they bring people in the community together, encourage neighbors to meet one another, and foster a greater sense of community. However, some respondents were doubtful these effects would last. As one said, "For a while, for the next few days, things will be a bit calmer because it brings joy and a sense of community, but once that dies down in a few days, it'll go back to normal."

Perspectives of Town Nights Providers

Interviews with Town Nights providers indicated that providers see their events making meaningful contributions to community cohesion and safety, as evidenced by more resident presence outside and the community feeling safer. They also said that Town Nights events were a helpful place to meet and connect with potential clients who might benefit from their other services (such as life coaching), and that sharing opportunities for employment with attendees was a key success. Doing so provided participants with positive alternatives to things this high-risk population might otherwise be doing on summer nights. Providers noted that Town Nights require substantial advanced coordination and support. Engagement from the DVP and City on this planning is an important facilitator of success. Providers appreciated recent DVP enhancements in capacity to support Town Nights planning and operations and saw this as another important facilitator of success.

We want to reach the people at the center of violence—both victims and perpetrators of violence. That's hard to do. We can have activities with mediation and intervention happening right there. There might be bad blood going back years. We use the event as a way to organize around violence interruption/prevention. –Town Nights provider

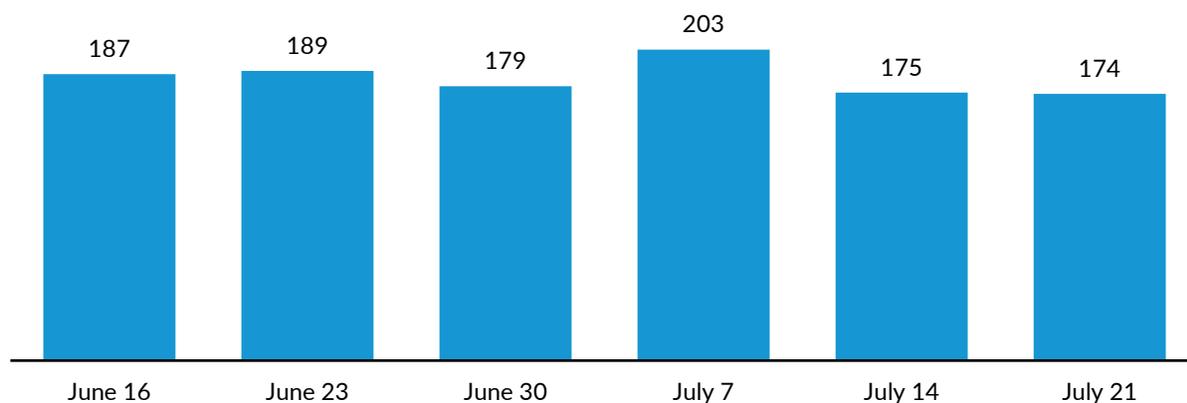
We also asked providers to describe how they understood the goals of Town Nights. Town Nights providers aim to bring people in the same community together under a common goal of promoting neighborhood peace. Providers want community members to experience a joyful and safe space that addresses people's concerns about violence and other needs. Providers seek to connect with community members culturally, using engaging activities for people of all ages. Providers recognize the differences that community members might have, including histories of violence that may cause people to be in conflict. One provider noted that at Town Nights, "we want to reach the people at the center of violence—both victims and perpetrators of violence. That's hard to do. We can have activities with mediation and intervention happening right there. There might be bad blood going back years. We use the event as a way to organize around violence interruption/prevention."

Planning for Town Nights events is a months-long process requiring substantial time and dedication from staff at community-based organizations, and this process only intensifies in the weeks leading up to the events. Some providers reported that their staff set up as early as 8:00 a.m. for

nighttime events, after which cleanup can last until midnight. Advance coordination is needed to determine which vendors will be providing food, what activities will be provided, and what logistics are necessary; determine the roles staff members should have around the event; and secure permits from the city for street closures and notify neighbors living nearby. Some Town Nights providers noted logistical challenges in planning for large community events over multiple consecutive weeks in a short period of time and suggested the events could be spread out over more months and be just as effective at meeting the community’s needs.

Organizations use Town Nights as an employment opportunity for many of their program participants, who are paid to assist with event operations. One provider described, “We have young people working with us. All 30 of our participants are life-coaching participants that are on probation, or they’re violence-interruption participants, or they’re community-outreach participants that are on our radar as being likely to be involved in violence, and we’re trying to get them involved in our programs. We can say that 80 percent of them would be doing some other sort of activity on that Friday night, and that’s the hardest story to tell, because you don’t know. It’s hard to describe preventable violence.” On average, nearly 200 people were employed each week across all six 2023 Town Nights events (figure 6).

FIGURE 6
2023 Town Nights Employment by Day



Source: Urban Institute analysis of Town Nights attendance data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.
Note: Individuals employed for multiple weeks are included in each week’s total.

Although Town Nights events are intended to engage and bring together Oakland residents of all ages, there is a focus on teens and young adults. Many Town Nights providers found it difficult to find the right activities to attract and engage teenagers and young adults attending Town Nights. Some

sites found a solution to this by providing activities that young people mentioned would interest them; these were often activities that had a competitive component, such as basketball or video game tournaments. The youth-employment-opportunities component of Town Nights also helped with youth engagement, with an interviewee noting that it led to young people demonstrating more empathy for other community members, particularly elders.

Safety concerns in the neighborhoods surrounding Town Nights locations were a challenge at some sites. One site was located near a busy street and a community member was hit by a car during a Town Nights event, highlighting the need for additional crossing guards monitoring the area to ensure safety. Another site had a shooting days before one Town Nights event, and the community was described as processing the incident and needing support at the event.

Town Nights providers noted that having more resources and support from the city would help create a smoother planning and implementation process. One provider said, “Since DVP has started to build their capacity around Town Nights in terms of planning and support, we’ve seen an improvement,” and went on to describe the difference as “night and day.” Specifically, this respondent appreciated the partnership with DVP-designated staff working on Town Nights to manage red tape and leverage different government agencies and the private sector. They further expressed the hope that the city in general would support the dedicated DVP staff on this and fully support the Town Nights efforts.

The evaluation team asked the Town Nights providers about what Town Nights impacts and successes they perceived. They noticed more people staying outside in their community, with stores and other merchants staying open later in order to meet demand. This led the community to feel safer, with more people out and about. More community members became aware of the violence prevention work done and resources provided by the organizations providing Town Nights. Town Nights attendees were happy that the city’s tax money was being spent on such events, which they felt benefited the community and allowed community members to come together despite cultural or other differences. The overall perspectives of certain neighborhoods changed according to some Town Nights providers. The community’s capacity to come together allowed others to understand that communities can contribute to revitalizing the city despite communities’ concerns about violence.

Outcome Analysis Findings

Town Nights are intended to provide safe and prosocial activities in neighborhoods with elevated levels of crime during hours when the risk of violence is higher. There are two primary mechanisms by which Town Nights might reduce the occurrence of violent incidents and community trauma. First, Town Nights mobilize community residents and organizations, thereby providing a heightened sense of vigilance and guardianship in high-risk neighborhoods during peak hours for street-level violence. Violence could therefore decrease, at least during those hours when Town Nights activities occur.

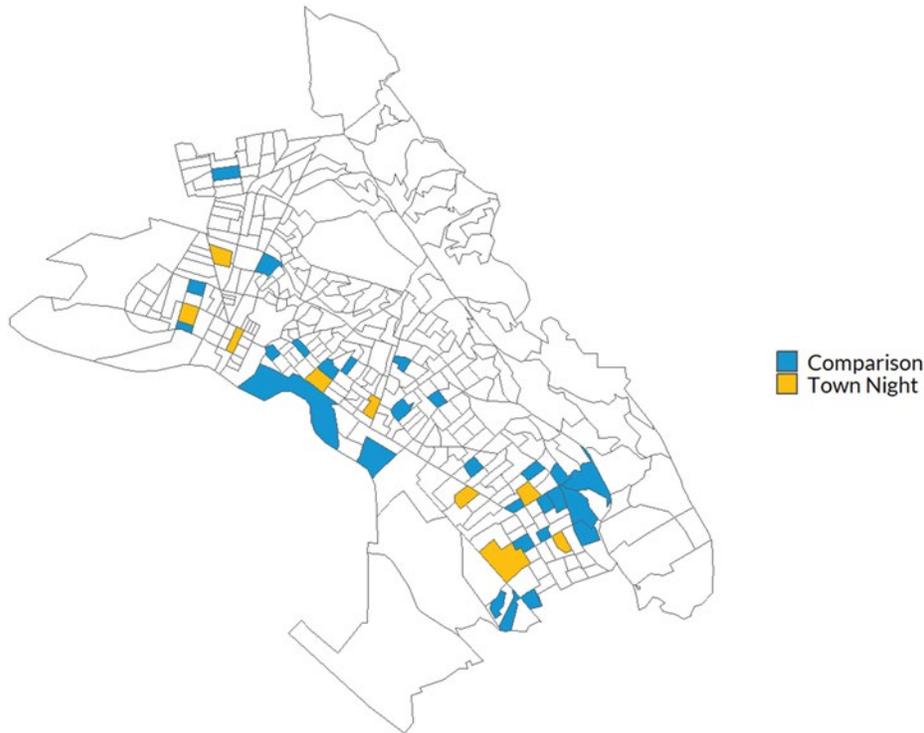
Second, through a variety of recreational activities and information-sharing, residents can interact with each other and converge to identify shared norms, concerns, and expectations for the well-being of their neighborhood, which could lead to increased awareness of street-level violence and collective engagement to address it. If people in a neighborhood know each other better, they may also be more likely to help or protect one another and less likely to be in conflict. In other words, Town Nights can strengthen informal social control among residents, which can be measured by their perceptions of violence and their willingness to report suspicious activity and crime to the police (i.e., calls for service).

We examine the impact of Town Nights in 2023 on crime and violence during the hours the events operated using a combination of difference-in-differences estimation and propensity score matching. This allows us to examine the immediate impact of Town Nights on crime by comparing the changes in outcomes (e.g., street-level violence and calls for service) over time between neighborhoods with Town Nights events and neighborhoods without Town Nights events that are otherwise similar in important ways, such as historical levels of violence, demographic composition, and socioeconomic characteristics. The analysis will be expanded to include 2024 events for Urban's final evaluation report.

We define neighborhoods as census block groups because those groups are standardized geographic units with readily available demographic and socioeconomic information. Further, Town Nights are most likely to affect immediately surrounding areas, making it potentially more likely to observe effects in those areas. In Oakland, there are 354 block groups with an average population of 1,236 people. The 2023 Town Nights events occurred in nine unique block groups. We used data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2021 five-year) for data on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Oakland block groups. Calls-for-service data and crime-incident

data were provided by the Oakland Police Department; these data were geocoded to assign the block groups.

FIGURE 7
Map of Town Nights Locations and Comparison Block Groups



Source: Urban Institute analysis of Town Nights data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

With these data, we used propensity score matching to identify block groups similar to the Town Nights block groups. We matched on the block groups' total households, racial heterogeneity (or diversity), concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage, rate of 911 calls for potential violent crimes in 2022, and violent crime rate in 2022 (table 6). Concentrated disadvantage is a composite metric of the rates of poverty, unemployment, female-headed households, public assistance, and population younger than 18. Prior research has shown that neighborhoods with higher levels of concentrated disadvantage as measured by these metrics experience lower levels of social cohesion and higher levels of crime (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). For each 2023 Town Nights location, we selected the three most similar block groups, for a total of 27 comparison block groups. This testing framework diminishes overreliance on specific neighborhoods and enhances statistical power.

TABLE 6

Characteristics of Town Nights Locations and Matched Control Block Groups

	Town Nights locations	Comparison locations
Characteristic		
Total households	479	447
Racial heterogeneity	2.66	2.93
Concentrated disadvantage	0.78	0.74
Rate of 911 calls for violence in 2022	0.07	0.07
Rate of violent crimes in 2022	0.06	0.06

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Town Nights data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

We examined trends in calls for service and crime in the Town Nights and comparison block groups in the six weeks preceding the six weeks during which the Town Nights series occurred. We examine trends during the hours of Town Nights events, defined as 5:00 p.m. to midnight on Friday nights, to understand any potential direct effects of the events. We also examine trends on the following Saturdays and Sundays to understand any delayed or sustained effects of the events. Accordingly, we have two primary units of analysis: block groups on Friday nights and block groups on Saturdays and Sundays. For more details on our model and how we estimated the effects of Town Nights events, see the technical appendix.

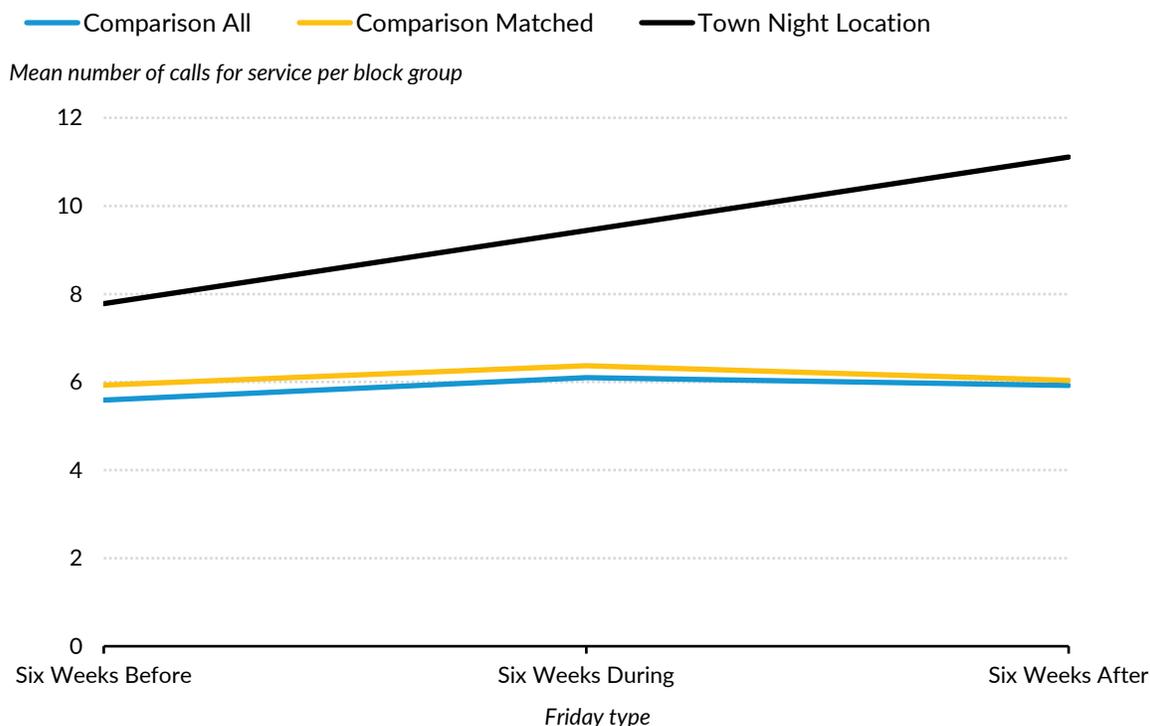
Findings

In general, the block groups where Town Nights occurred experienced more calls for service than the matched comparison block groups and the rest of Oakland overall. Figure 8 shows that across the six Friday nights during the 2023 Town Nights treatment period, the Town Nights block groups had an average of nine calls for service whereas the comparison block groups had six. The trend is similar for Saturdays and Sundays: Town Nights block groups had an average of 50 calls during the treatment period whereas the comparison block groups had 35 (data not shown). Most of the calls for service did not involve the specific types of violence that Town Nights are intended to address and generally were for things other than crime. Most calls were for fire and security alarms, ambulance requests, sounds of fireworks or gunshots, and unknown disturbances.

FIGURE 8

Town Nights Locations Had More 911 Calls Than Comparison Areas

Average number of 911 calls across six Friday nights before, during, and after Town Nights by block group type



Source: Urban Institute analysis of calls for service data provided by the Oakland Police Department.

Notes: Six weeks before = six Friday nights from May 5 to June 9, 2023. Six weeks during = 6 Friday nights with Town Nights events. Six weeks after = six Friday nights from July 28 to September 1, 2023.

Using a difference-in-differences design, we found no statistically significant effects of Town Nights events on calls for service (see table A.1 in the appendix). On Friday nights during the summer Town Nights series, the Town Nights locations had one more 911 call on average than the matched comparison block groups, but this difference was not statistically significant. We also found no effect on Saturdays and Sundays.

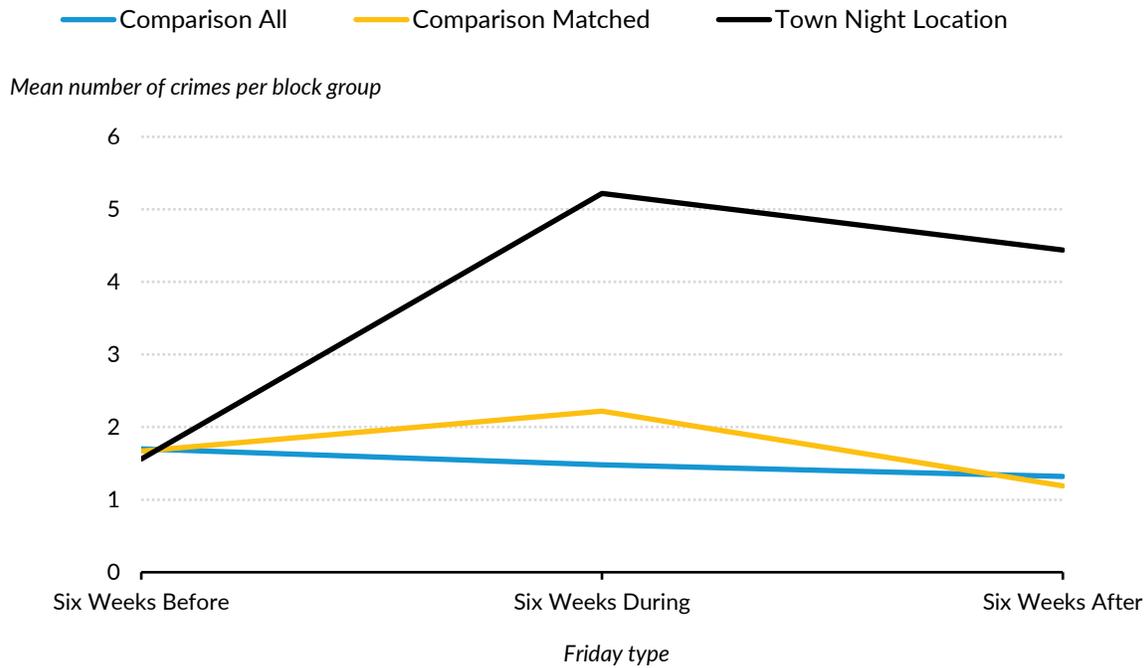
The period during which 2023 Town Nights were held was the peak for reported crimes during the summer for both the Town Nights locations and the comparison areas. On the six Friday nights before the Town Nights series, fewer than 2 crimes occurred on average in the Town Nights and comparison block groups (figure 9). On the six Fridays of the Town Nights series the Town Nights locations had 5 reported crimes on average while the matched comparison areas had 2. The trend was

similar on Saturdays and Sundays during the Town Nights series, when the Town Nights locations had 13 crimes on average and the matched comparison areas had 8 (data not shown).

FIGURE 9

Town Nights Locations Had More Reported Crimes Than Comparison Areas

Average number of crimes across six Friday nights before, during, and after Town Nights by block group type



Source: Urban Institute analysis of crime and incident report data provided by the Oakland Police Department.

Notes: Six weeks before = six Friday nights from May 5 to June 9, 2023. Six weeks during = six Friday nights with Town Nights events. Six weeks after = six Friday nights from July 28 to September 1, 2023.

The number of violent crimes was higher in the 2023 Town Nights locations during the Town Nights period than in the weeks before and in the matched control areas. When examining the incident-level crime data, the increased level of violent crime is primarily driven by assaults with a firearm. Table A.3 in the appendix breaks down the total number of crimes by crime type during the Friday nights with Town Nights events.

Similar to the analysis of calls for service, we found no effect on reported crimes in Town Nights locations compared with the matched control areas. On Friday nights during the summer Town Nights series, the average Town Nights location had three more crimes than the control areas, but this difference was not statistically significant (see table A.2 in the appendix). When compared with all other block groups in Oakland, the difference was statistically significant. The differential effect on

crime on Saturdays and Sundays was not significant. We also estimate the impact of Town Nights on violent crime specifically. Consistent with the main analysis, we found the events had no significant effects on levels of violent crime when comparing the Town Nights locations with the matched comparison block groups on both Friday nights and Saturdays and Sundays (see table A.4 in the appendix).

Though we find no conclusive evidence that Town Nights affected crime as measured by calls for service and reported crimes, it is important to balance these findings against a few limitations inherent in our analysis. First, the analysis could be underpowered given there were only nine “treatment” locations, such that if Town Nights are having meaningful effects, our test might not be able to identify them. In addition, because of our narrowly defined geographic unit of analysis, which is a result of Town Night’s limited geographic footprint, the volume of 911 calls and crimes in the block groups across those six weeks was fairly low, with fewer than 10 calls and 6 crimes in each block group on the Friday nights. The number of violent crimes, which are the focus of the Town Nights and Measure Z-funded work, was even lower. Second, this analysis focuses narrowly on the effects of Town Nights events on 911 calls and crimes in the areas surrounding Town Nights locations and during and soon after the events. The events might have other effects that are more difficult to quantify. For example, the events could create visibility and public support for the community-based organizations at the events, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of those organizations’ other violence-reduction activities.

Conclusion and Summary of Findings

In this interim report, we hoped to capture the full reach of the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention's community healing and restoration activities, placing those activities in the context of the DVP's broader approach to violence prevention in Oakland. Under the DVP's CHR strategy, the department and its grantees, through direct supports and larger community-based events, reached thousands of Oakland residents, many of whom have been affected by violence. The DVP connected with some 156 clients through its family support services alone, and, between the summers of 2022 and 2024, helped organize more than 300 group events where residents have received group therapeutic support and acquired important life skills. During this time, the DVP has also disbursed \$465,000 in capacity-building mini grants to local service providers reaching all areas of the city.

Most of the people we interviewed who attended the Town Nights events expressed enthusiasm and support for DVP events, discussing how the events had built on previous years' efforts to strengthen local bonds and community cohesion. Though some event activities were more successful than others, these findings will help event organizers meet residents' needs. That said, more than 95 percent of Town Nights attendees were satisfied or very satisfied with the activities offered. Of particular note are the 41 percent of attendees who felt the events positively affected safety attitudes and outcomes in local neighborhoods, highlighting the benefits such events can have on broader community-healing and violence prevention efforts. Town Nights events also offered employment opportunities to around 200 people each week, most of them people engaged in DVP-funded services.

Though we did not find statistically significant effects of Town Nights events on outcomes around local violence and crime compared with similar neighborhoods, our ability to detect statistically significant outcomes was limited by a small sample size. That said, we did find that the specific block groups where Town Nights events were held experienced higher rates of calls for service per capita and more reported crimes than other block groups, suggesting that event organizers were reaching populations disproportionately affected by crime and violence. Though these findings are preliminary, we look forward to updating our analyses and findings in a future report and encourage readers to consider how the DVP's CHR strategy complements the overall violence-reduction approach enabled by Measure Z funding.

Recommendations

Measure Z funding supports an impressively large and varied array of activities intended to collectively reduce serious violence in Oakland and to help people and communities heal from the violence that occurs. This work is done by a network of community organizations and dozens of committed and skilled professionals. The work directly touched thousands of Oakland residents over the period covered in this report, providing them with critical support of all kinds to help them be safer and contribute to a safer Oakland. This network of government agencies and community-based organizations represents a violence prevention and response infrastructure rare in American cities.

In this section, we recommend ways for practice and for improving data collection and data access to support evaluation work. These are synthesized from all our findings to date and focus on cross-cutting themes that affect all components and strategy areas of the DVP's violence prevention efforts. They complement the more strategy- and activity-specific recommendations in the previous sections. We then summarize the next steps for this stage of our evaluation, which we will cover in the final evaluation report to be delivered in mid-2025.

Practice Recommendations

Create forums for different service providers to coordinate and communicate. A notable strength of the DVP service continuum is the comprehensive network of referral relationships between service providers evident in the data and the level of partnership indicated by providers we interviewed. While service providers appreciate the coordination and communication where it is happening, the extent of this coordination differs by service and provider. Community healing often occurs downstream of other structural realities of how issues of violence and safety manifest in schools and communities. Regular coordination can help providers address emerging trends in patterns of violence and participants' needs, and they can use information about the types of services people receive to better tailor community healing and restorative events and initiatives.

Deliver more cross-training for staff at different organizations. Relatedly, many providers appreciated the opportunities they had to attend trainings with peers from other organizations and in other specialties, and they felt the increased mutual understanding from those engagements improved operational collaboration in the field.

Recruit and retain multilingual staff. In a community as linguistically diverse as Oakland, multilingual staff are needed in all roles that involve active engagement with clients, particularly Spanish-speaking staff, given the many monolingual Spanish speakers in Oakland.

Sustainably resource the community-engagement aspects of the DVP's community healing and restoration strategy. The goals of increasing social cohesion and building healthy community relationships that underlie Town Nights in particular required long-term processes with consistency and sustainability. As the part of the DVP strategy that most broadly engages residents in Oakland neighborhoods of focus, Town Nights play an important role in seeding peace. Residents we surveyed and interviewed value these events and would like to see additional resources to support community-activation events throughout the year.

Assist providers with building their capacity. Community-based service providers who received DVP funding would like more assistance with building capacity from the DVP and from the City of Oakland generally. This could include finding ways to increase staffing and staff capacity to mitigate challenges resulting from staff turnover and vacancies; making the yearly grant process easier for grantees, who are often managing reporting requirements from multiple grants from multiple sources; and identifying additional funding sources for providers who are addressing complex needs and finding that available resources, though needed and appreciated, are insufficient for program participants' needs. By spending less time and money on administrative processes, providers would have more resources available to scale up events like Town Nights by boosting staffing and providing a broader scope of activities for attendees. It would also help lower the provider-to-client ratio.

Hold Town Nights more frequently and in more locations to reach more people. In 2023, Town Nights events were hosted for six consecutive weeks at nine locations across Oakland, hosting almost 18,500 attendees. In 2024, only one venue was able to host events on all six summer nights. Participants we interviewed at Town Nights events agreed that the events were positive community-building spaces, but they wanted for the program to expand. By ensuring all Town Nights locations can host the events each week the events occur, the DVP can provide community members with a more consistent space where they can reliably spend their time doing community healing and restorative activities. And by expanding Town Nights to new locations, the DVP can reach populations that were underrepresented at the 2023 and 2024 Town Nights events.

Evaluation Next Steps

The next steps in our evaluation will be to collect qualitative data from people who participated in community healing and restoration services to better understand their experiences with services, and to extend the quantitative analysis of the relationship of Town Nights events to safety measures, to include the events held in the summer of 2024.

Appendix. Additional Information on Town Nights Analysis

To estimate the impact of Town Nights, we employ a difference-in-differences design. In this design, we compare the Town Nights and comparison block groups before and during the summer Town Nights series. The block groups with a Town Nights location are considered the “treatment” group and the comparison block groups are the “comparison” group. We use the following model:

$$Y_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TNLocation_i + \beta_2 PeriodDuring_t + \beta_3 TNLocation_i \times PeriodDuring_t + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

In this model, $Y_{i,t}$ is the outcome of block group i ; $TNLocation_i$ indicates whether the block group has a Town Nights location; $PeriodDuring_t$ indicates whether the period is during or before the Town Nights series; and β_3 is the effect of the Town Nights events on outcome $Y_{i,t}$. The period before is defined as the six weeks from May 5 to June 9, 2023, and the period during is defined as the six weeks of Town Nights events from June 16 to July 21, 2023. Note that during those periods, we look at outcomes (1) on all Friday nights from 5:00 p.m. to midnight combined, and (2) on Saturdays and Sundays combined. As a robustness check, we also examine the trends and estimate the difference-in-differences model using all other block groups in Oakland as the reference group. We also show the trends after the Town Nights series ended to examine whether any effects were sustained.

TABLE A.1

Effect of Town Nights on 911 Calls for Service

Ordinary least squares regression results on Friday nights and weekends, by comparison type

Variable	Friday Nights		Saturdays and Sundays	
	Compared with matched controls	Compared with all Oakland	Compared with matched controls	Compared with all Oakland
Town Nights location	1.85 (1.70)	2.19 (2.38)	19.48** (7.92)	21.01* (10.72)
Period during	0.44 (1.7)	0.51 (0.54)	1.70 (7.92)	1.33 (2.42)
Town Nights location x period during	1.22 (2.40)	1.15 (3.36)	-4.59 (11.20)	-4.21 (15.15)
Constant	5.93***(1.20)	5.591*** (0.38)	31.52***(5.60)	29.99*** (1.71)
Observations	72	708	72	708
Adjusted R-squared	0.03	0.001	0.09	0.005

Source: Urban Institute analysis of calls for service data provided by the Oakland Police Department.

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. The Town Nights effect row is bolded.

TABLE A.2

Effect of Town Nights on Crime

Ordinary least squares regression results by time frame and comparison type

Variable	Friday Nights		Saturdays and Sundays	
	Compared with matched controls	Compared with all Oakland	Compared with matched controls	Compared with all Oakland
Town Nights location	-0.11 (1.38)	-0.15 (1.10)	1.19 (2.83)	2.59 (3.15)
Period during	0.56 (1.7)	-0.22 (0.25)	-0.44 (2.83)	-0.33 (0.71)
Town Nights location x period during	3.11 (1.95)	3.89** (1.56)	4.22 (4.00)	4.10 (4.45)
Constant	1.67*(0.97)	1.70*** (0.18)	8.15***(2.00)	6.75*** (0.50)
Observations	72	708	72	708
Adjusted R-squared	0.08	0.01	0.02	0.003

Source: Urban Institute analysis of crime and incident report data provided by the Oakland Police Department.

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. The Town Nights effect row is bolded.

Table A.3 shows the total number of crimes across the six Friday nights during the summer Town Nights series in the Town Nights locations and matched comparison areas. The last column denotes the difference, after accounting for how there are nine Town Nights locations and 27 matched control areas.

TABLE A.3

Total Number of Crimes in Town Nights Areas and Matched Control Areas during Summer Town Nights Series

	Town Nights location (n=9)	Matched control (n=27)	Average difference per block group
Uniform Crime Report category			
All other offenses (except traffic)	0	1	-0.04
Assault - firearm	16	18	1.11
Assault - other assaults - simple, not aggravated	9	15	0.44
Assault - other dangerous weapon	2	10	-0.15
Burglary - forcible entry	0	1	-0.04
Disorderly conduct	0	1	-0.04
Larceny theft (except motor vehicle theft)	1	5	-0.07
Motor vehicle theft - autos	4	8	0.15
Robbery - firearm	3	1	0.30
Sex offenses	2	0	0.22
Vandalism	6	0	0.67
Weapons - carrying, possessing, etc.	4	0	0.44
Total	47	60	3.00

Source: Urban Institute analysis of crime and incident report data provided by the Oakland Police Department.

Note: Violent crimes include assault, homicide, rape, robbery, and sex offenses.

We also estimate the impact of Town Nights on violent crime. Similar to the main analysis, we find the events had no significant effects on levels of violent crime when comparing the Town Nights locations with the matched comparison block groups on both Friday nights and Saturdays and Sundays.

TABLE A.4

Effects of Town Nights on Violent Crime

Ordinary least squares regression results on Friday nights and weekends, by comparison type

	Friday Nights		Saturdays and Sundays	
	Compared with matched controls	Compared with all Oakland	Compared with matched controls	Compared with all Oakland
Town Nights location	-0.52 (1.21)	-0.20 (0.73)	1.78 (1.29)	2.39 (1.35)
Period during	0.56 (1.21)	-0.15 (0.17)	-0.11 (1.29)	-0.62 (0.31)
Town Nights location x period during	2.44 (1.71)	3.15*** (1.03)	1.78 (1.83)	2.28 (1.91)
Constant	1.07(0.86)	0.75*** (0.12)	3.33***(0.91)	2.72*** (0.22)
Observations	72	708	72	708
Adjusted R-squared	0.05	0.02	0.09	0.02

Source: Urban Institute analysis of crime and incident report data provided by the Oakland Police Department.

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. The Town Nights effects row is bolded.

As an additional robustness check, we replicate the analysis with census tracts as the unit of analysis, which are larger than block groups. We compare the 9 census tracts with Town Nights

locations with the 107 other census tracts in Oakland. On average, the census tracts with Town Nights had more calls for service and crimes than the other census tracts in Oakland. However, the Town Nights events had no statistically significant effects on calls for service, crime, or violent crime.

Consent Rates

The rate at which participants consented to their data being shared for the purposes of evaluation differed by strategy and activity. Table A.5 shows the consent rates for all community healing and restoration activities from July 2022 to June 2024.

TABLE A.5
Consent Rates for CHR Service Recipients

	Consent form never presented	Consent not granted	Consent form not complete yet	Consent granted	Missing	Total	Consent rate
Strategy							
Community healing and restoration	4	48	76	73	70	271	27%
Activity							
Family support	2	31	41	15	67	156	10%
Healing/restorative activities	1	12	27	26	3	69	38%
Therapeutic supports for families	1	9	25	40	1	76	53%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Reference

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* 277 (5328): 918–24.

About the Authors

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