

SALEM CITY, NEW JERSEY

Community Violence Collective Impact Project

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS REPORT

September 2024

Prepared by
 Social Contract



Acknowledgements

This landscape analysis report was made possible by the cooperation of numerous individuals and organizations from Salem City's community violence prevention ecosystem. Social Contract extends its gratitude to the following:

Mayor Jody Veler
Salem City Council
Charles Mathew Bailey

The Young Men from the Junior Huddle

Cameron Hudson
Cequence Parsons
Haley Triolo
Councilman Jamal Long
Jermaine P. Key
John Fuqua
Jonathan Cummings
Joyce Johnson
Kina Nichols
Marsha Burrell
Michael Brooks
Paul DiLorenzo
Sharen Cline
Sonita Johnson
Steven Torres
Councilman Tim Gregory
Wadiya K. Davenport
Willie Forman

Note that the views expressed herein are those of Social Contract and do not necessarily reflect those of the City of Salem, Salem City Council, or individual community members who contributed their time by participating in a key informant interview or focus group.

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Executive Summary

Background and Introduction

In recent years, Salem City has seen significant increases in violent crime rates, including homicides and Part 1 crimes. In response, the City of Salem launched a project to reduce community violence using a Collective Impact model. In 2023, the Delaware-based consulting firm Social Contract was selected to coordinate the project on behalf of the Office of the Mayor and City Council. The project is organized into four phases: Initiation, Discovery, Design, and Implementation, with the current report concluding the Discovery Phase.

Methodology

Social Contract conducted a landscape analysis using qualitative methods, including a Theory of Change session with the Mayor's Office, key informant interviews, and a youth focus group. Although limited by a small sample size, the insights gathered through thematic analysis of interviews and focus group discussions provided valuable perspectives.

Landscape Analysis Findings

The findings from the landscape analysis offer insights into the drivers of violence, perception of safety, existing efforts to address violence, and challenges in the ecosystem.

Drivers of Violence

The analysis revealed several key themes regarding the drivers of violence in Salem, including:

- **Culture of Violence and Easy Access to Guns.** Many interviewees highlighted a culture of violence exacerbated by easy access to illegal guns and the influence of violent video games and music as a primary driver of violence.
- **Lack of Offender Accountability.** Interviewees expressed deep frustration with the criminal legal system, citing a lack of offender accountability, minimal consequences for crimes, and community reluctance to report, all of which contribute ongoing violence.
- **Cycles of Violence.** Stakeholders highlighted a pervasive cycle of violence where criminal behavior, influenced by family members and the allure of quick money, traps individuals and families in a pattern that's difficult to escape.
- **Economic Decline.** Every adult interviewed identified economic decline, driven by the departure of key industries, as a major factor contributing to violence in Salem City, where widespread unemployment and poverty have fueled crime.
- **Lack of Opportunities for Youth.** A recurring theme from interviews is that violence is exacerbated by the lack of opportunities and programs for youth, which leads to idleness and frustration that can drive disruptive behaviors.



- **Influence of Gangs and Older Adults.** Interviews revealed a divide on the role of gangs in Salem City's violence, with some attributing it to organized gangs and others to informal networks of friends and family. Older adults were frequently identified as key drivers of violence, either directly or by influencing youth.
- **Regional Dynamics.** Stakeholders noted that Salem City's proximity to major urban centers and neighboring counties contributes to its violence, highlighting a need for better strategic coordination between the city and surrounding jurisdictions.

Perception of Safety

Perceptions of safety were a key theme in the landscape analysis. Increasing community violence in Salem City has led to widespread unease and a reduced sense of safety among residents. While some have become desensitized to frequent incidents, seeing violence as a normalized part of daily life—which affects crime reporting and undermines trust in law enforcement—others continue to feel genuine fear and anxiety.

Existing Efforts to Address Violence

Three existing efforts to address community violence in Salem City were identified, including:

- **Prevention Programs.** Salem City hosts numerous youth prevention programs and grassroots initiatives that provide mentorship, life skills, and vital resources, creating safe spaces and fostering community connections.
- **Curfew.** Opinions on curfews as a method to curb violence in the city are divided, with some seeing them as a way to reduce violence, while others argue they may lead to unnecessary harassment and exacerbate tensions between youth and law enforcement.
- **Law Enforcement.** Law enforcement plays a prominent role in addressing community violence in Salem City, but diverse viewpoints exist regarding their effectiveness, with some highlighting resource limitations and lack of community connection as barriers, while others see potential for improvement under Acting Chief Brooks' leadership.

Gaps in the Ecosystem

A major gap in Salem City's efforts to combat violence is the lack of targeted programs for adults over 18 who are actively involved in violent activities, leaving this critical demographic underserved. Despite their significant role in driving violence, existing resources focus primarily on youth, neglecting the needs of young adults who have aged out of youth programs.

Challenges in the Ecosystem

The key challenges identified include:

- **A lack of dedicated local leadership for violence reduction.** Participants in the landscape analysis praised Mayor Veler and the City of Salem for their efforts to address community violence but highlighted the need for a neutral, full-time leader to coordinate and unify local efforts.



- **Poor collaboration among stakeholders.** A significant lack of collaboration among key stakeholders has severely hindered progress in addressing community violence, leading to fragmented efforts and wasted resources, though there is growing recognition of the need for more effective coordination.
- **Inadequate funding for sustainable programs.** The weak funding landscape in Salem City limits resources for sustainable programs and interventions, with disparities in funding compared to larger cities and inefficiencies in resource distribution, leading to obstacles in developing impactful initiatives and a lack of awareness about available resources.
- **Frustration and apathy.** The increasing violence in Salem City has caused widespread insecurity and frustration among residents, who feel that despite ongoing discussions and external consultations, meaningful progress is lacking and resources are not effectively utilized, leading to a perception that the crisis is being exploited rather than addressed.

Initial Recommendations

The report proposes several recommendations to guide the City of Salem and its partners in developing a comprehensive violence reduction plan:

1. **Invest in Targeted Strategies:** Focus on evidence-based interventions for individuals actively contributing to violence, particularly older adults.
2. **Engage Youth in Planning:** Involve youth in the planning process to create relevant and sustainable solutions, providing incentives for their participation.
3. **Coordinate Regionally:** Engage regional stakeholders to address local violence and pursue joint funding for multi-jurisdictional collaboration.
4. **Strategic Use of Consultants:** Engage consultants strategically for specialized expertise while leveraging local knowledge to build sustainable solutions.

Conclusion

Despite the rising violence and challenges, there remains a strong sense of pride in Salem City. This pride, coupled with strategic planning and collaborative efforts, can serve as a powerful catalyst for change. The next phase of the project will involve establishing a Steering Committee to co-design a comprehensive community violence reduction plan, ensuring that the strategies developed are holistic, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs of the community.



Background

In 2023, the City of Salem, by and through the Office of the Mayor and City Council, released a Requests for Bids for a lead agency or consultant to coordinate and implement a Collective Impact model for the prevention of violence in the City of Salem. The City sought an applicant that would focus and coordinate outside agency efforts to break the cycle of violence by working to develop a common agenda among agencies, establish shared measurements, foster mutually reinforcing activities, and encourage continuous communication between agencies and the City of Salem.

Social Contract, a Delaware-based women- and minority-owned social and collective impact consulting firm, responded to the bid and was ultimately selected by the City to serve as the Coordinator of the project. Social Contract has seven years of experience managing projects related to community violence with a portfolio that spans Delaware, Pennsylvania, and through this project, New Jersey.

Social Contract proposed a four phase project plan that would span from September 2023 to December 2024. Key activities to be completed during each phase are summarized below.

Phase One: Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Launch with City of Salem • Reach Agreement on Scope of Work • Project Kick Off with Community
Phase Two: Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Existing Relevant Materials • Best Practice Research • Key Informant Interviews • Youth Focus Group • Landscape Analysis Report
Phase Three: Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Steering Committee • Co-Design a Violence Reduction Plan Using a Collective Impact Framework
Phase Four: Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Implementation of the Plan

This report will conclude the Discovery Phase. The remaining phases of work will be described in greater detail in the "Conclusion and Project Next Steps" section of this report.

This project is funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars allocated to Salem City. The project targets economically disadvantaged areas of the City Qualified Census Tract where the primary intended participants live. The project is intended to coordinate economic and public health impacts of COVID-19 and efforts to contain impacts on the community, residents and businesses and to reduce and respond to increased violence due to the pandemic.



Introduction

This landscape analysis report focuses on community violence in Salem City, New Jersey. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), community violence “happens between unrelated individuals, who may or may not know each other, generally outside of the home. Examples include assaults or fights among groups and shootings in public places.”¹

Black communities are disproportionately impacted by community violence. Indeed, a report from the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions analyzing 2021 CDC data found that Black people in the United States were nearly 14 times more likely to die by gun homicide than their White counterparts². While Black males ages 15 to 34 represent only two percent of the total United States population, they accounted for 36 percent of all gun homicides in 2021.³

In addition to those directly impacted by community violence, the broader population is affected in different ways, such as losing a loved one to violence, having a loved one incarcerated for a crime, or living in a community with ongoing exposure to violence. These indirect experiences have lasting impacts on the health and well-being of both individuals and communities.

In recent years, Salem City has experienced significant increases in violent crime rates including both homicide and part 1 crimes. Many of Salem City’s most economically disenfranchised residents live in neighborhoods that continue to suffer the direct effects of repeated trauma and the indirect effects of unhealed past trauma. They continue to experience a disproportionate burden of violence and its corollary effects.

The City of Salem is committed to reducing its rates of community violence. As such, the City seeks to implement an evidence-based violence reduction program to help reach that goal. To make informed decisions and work collaboratively with the community in developing solutions to this preventable public health problem, Social Contract conducted a systematic analysis of Salem City’s community violence reduction ecosystem. The resulting report is intended to better understand the current state of the ecosystem, including its strengths and opportunities for growth, and make initial recommendations on strategies for the City to consider when developing its Violence Reduction Plan.

¹ CDC. (2024, May 16). About Community Violence. U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/community-violence/about/index.html>

² Davis, A., Kim, R., Crifasi, C., Geller, L., Villarreal, S., & Carey, T. (2023). U.S. Gun Violence in 2021: An Accounting of a Public Health Crisis (pp. 1–45).

Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-01/2023-june-cqvs-u-s-gun-violence-in-2021-v3.pdf>

³ Davis, A., Kim, R., Crifasi, C., Geller, L., Villarreal, S., & Carey, T. (2023). U.S. Gun Violence in 2021: An Accounting of a Public Health Crisis (pp. 1–45). Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-01/2023-june-cqvs-u-s-gun-violence-in-2021-v3.pdf>



Firearms are the leading cause of death for American children and teens.⁴

54%

of gun deaths in New Jersey are by gun homicide.⁵

Black people in New Jersey are 34 times more likely than White people to die by gun homicide.⁶

Gun homicides, assaults, and shootings by police cost New Jersey \$2.7 billion each year. That equates to \$304 per resident.⁷

⁴ Firearms are the leading cause of death for American children and teens. (2022). Everytown Research & Policy. <https://everytownresearch.org/graph/firearms-are-the-leading-cause-of-death-for-american-children-and-teens/>
⁵ Everytown Research - EveryStat. (2024, May). EveryStat.org. <https://everystat.org/#NewJersey>
⁶ Everytown Research - EveryStat. (2024, May). EveryStat.org. <https://everystat.org/#NewJersey>
⁷ Everytown Research - EveryStat. (2024, May). EveryStat.org. <https://everystat.org/#NewJersey>



Methodology

Social Contract utilized a qualitative method approach to conduct the landscape analysis. Specifically, Social Contract: 1) facilitated a Theory of Change session; 2) conducted key informant interviews; and 3) facilitated a youth focus group. A summary of the approach taken is provided in the following sections.

Theory of Change

Social Contract started the Discovery Phase by facilitating a Theory of Change session with the Office of the Mayor. A Theory of Change describes and illustrates how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. In this case, Social Contract aimed to understand the desired changes expected for the City of Salem from the perspective of the Mayor's Office. Through this process, it was determined that the City desired to see a significant reduction in community violence and to achieve this goal there would be a focus on providing positive opportunities to youth so that they get, and stay on, a productive path toward adulthood.

Key Informant Interviews

The Theory of Change session with the Office of the Mayor informed the research framework that was used during the key informant interviews. The interviews sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the key problem that the initiative needs to solve?
2. What is the current state of actors and programs dedicated to addressing the problem?
3. What is the current state of resources, potential and real, committed and needed, to address the problem?
4. What is the current state of community relationships and cohesion?
5. What successful initiatives and programs exist in other places that address the key problem?

To gain deeper insights, each research question was further broken down into sub-questions, allowing for a more detailed exploration of the topic. A full list of the questions asked during the key informant interviews can be found in the appendices.

An initial list of stakeholders to interview was provided by the Office of the Mayor. Social Contract applied the snowball method during each interview, which involves asking the interviewee to identify who else should be interviewed. This approach was taken until a point of saturation was reached, meaning enough data had been collected to draw necessary conclusions.

Social Contract aimed to gather diverse perspectives by engaging as many community stakeholders as possible during the Discovery Phase, ensuring a well-rounded landscape analysis report. In total, thirty-one individuals were identified as potential candidates to be interviewed. Ultimately, 17 interviews took place. Approximately 30% of individuals either did not respond to outreach or failed to attend their scheduled interviews. This lack



of response led to delays in completing key informant interviews, extending the timeline for this phase of the project.

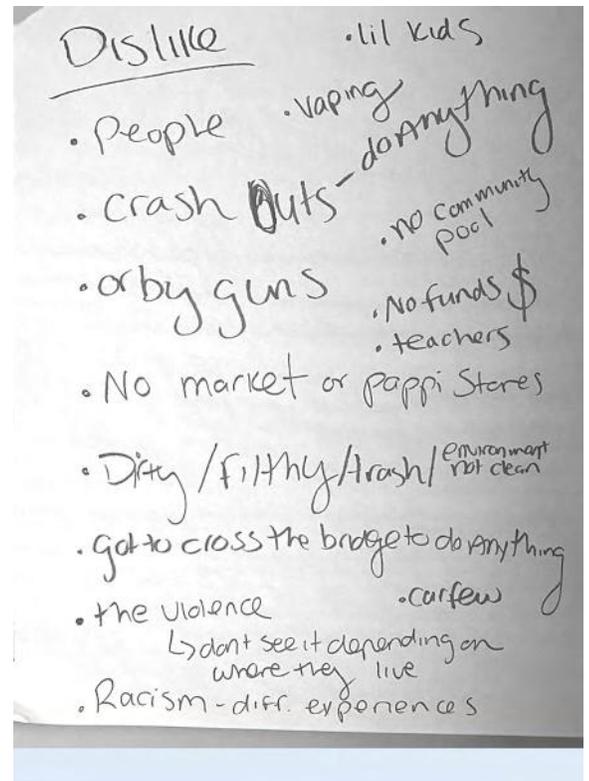
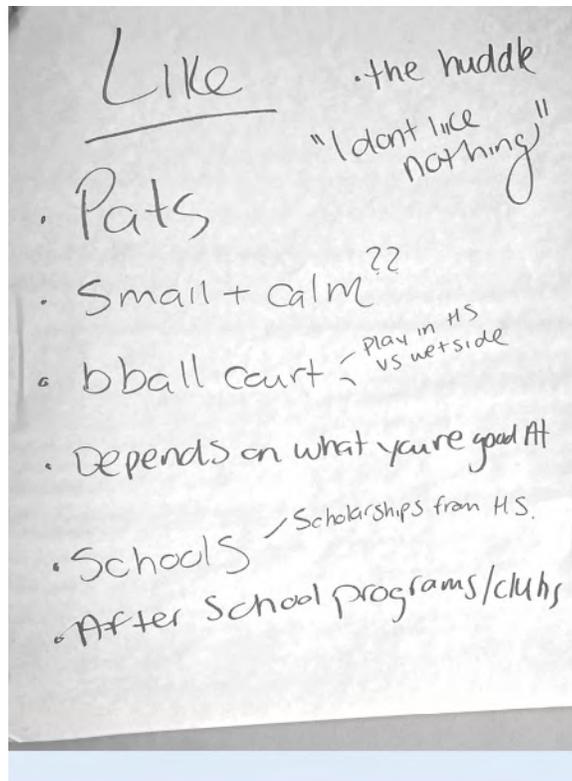
Key informant interviews took place over Zoom. Each interview was recorded, with permission from the participant, and then the audio was transcribed by a qualitative research tool. Social Contract conducted a thematic analysis of the transcripts, which involves systematically reviewing data to identify common themes, such as topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. This process involved: 1) familiarizing oneself with the full data set; 2) identifying initial codes, or patterns that emerged in the initial data review; 3) collating or grouping the data with the codes; and 4) sorting codes into key themes.

Youth Focus Group

Social Contract also facilitated a youth focus group with boys who are members of the Junior Huddle. In total, five boys participated in the focus group. Their ages ranged from 11 to 16.

The following questions were asked during the focus group:

- What do you like and dislike about Salem City?
- What is causing the violence in Salem City?
- What can be done to prevent violence from happening in Salem City?





In addition to these questions, each participant was asked to complete an art activity. They were provided a piece of paper with the prompt: "If I ruled the world..." and were asked to draw a picture of one thing they would do to stop violence if they had total control to ensure that one thing would happen. Each participant described what they drew and why to provide additional context.

The focus group took place in-person at the Huddle's program space. The focus group was recorded, with permission from the participants, and then the audio was transcribed manually. Social Contract conducted a thematic analysis of the transcripts from the focus groups using the same approach described in the "Key Informant Interviews" section of this report.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge limitations of the methodology used to conduct the landscape analysis. Such limitations are summarized below.

One limitation of the methodological approach taken was that no demographic questions were collected during the key informant interviews and focus groups. Therefore, it is not possible to draw conclusions on people's perspectives based on demographics such as race, gender, residency, etc. In the future, such information should be collected to help determine what influence, if any, such characteristics have on responses.

Another limitation was the small sample size. Although data saturation was reached, the findings of this report are conclusive of a relatively small sample size and, therefore, should not be considered representative of the entire community.

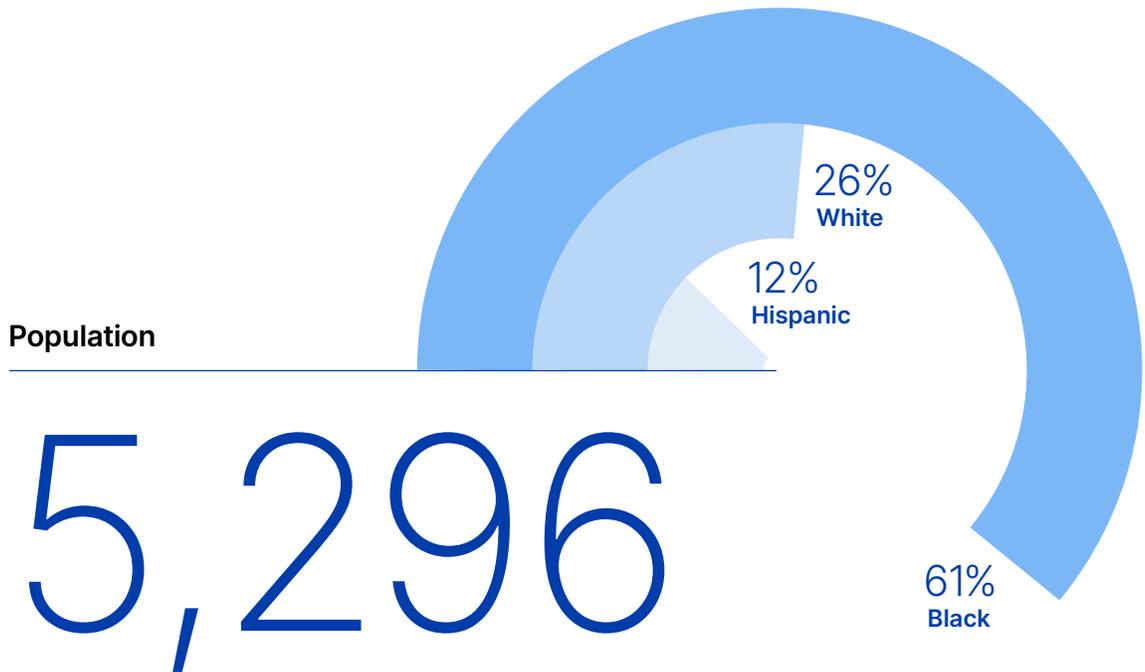
Lastly, the key informant interviews and focus group findings reflect the perspectives, opinions, and feelings of people who participated at a point in time. The findings presented in this report reflect the viewpoints of participants, not necessarily objective facts. Despite this, it is important to consider that one's perception is often reflective of their reality. So even if the findings are not objective facts, they are still a representation of the respondent's individual experiences.

Despite these limitations, the key informant interviews and focus groups still yielded valuable information. The insights gathered provided a deeper understanding of the key issues Salem City is experiencing with respect to community violence, highlighting both challenges and opportunities within the ecosystem. The perspectives offered will be instrumental in shaping strategies as the project moves into the Design Phase.



Profile of Salem City

This profile aims to provide context for Salem City’s experience with community violence by sharing key data about the environment where the violence is occurring. The demographic, economic, and social indicators highlighted provide a foundation for analyzing the various factors contributing to community violence. By establishing this context, one can better appreciate the complexities, strengths, and opportunities that will be discussed further throughout this report.



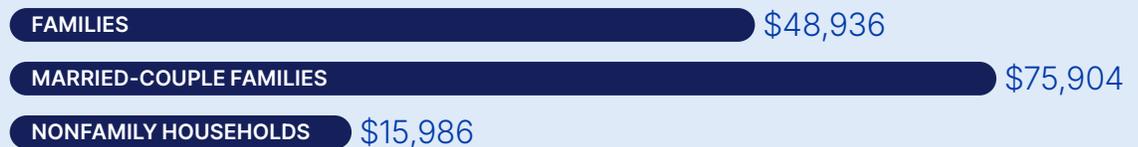
Income and Earnings

\$35,143 ± \$9,793
 Median Household Income In Salem city, New Jersey

\$96,346 ± \$1,114
 Median Household Income in New Jersey

Median Income by Types of Families

In Salem city, New Jersey





Educational Attainment

11.3% ± 3.7%

Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Salem city, New Jersey

43.5% ± 0.4%

Bachelor's Degree or Higher in New Jersey

Educational Attainment (Population 25 Years and Older)

In Salem city, New Jersey

HIGH SCHOOL OR EQUIVALENT DEGREE 46.2%

SOME COLLEGE, NO DEGREE 17.3%

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE 5.9%

BACHELOR'S DEGREE 7.1%

4.2% GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE

Employment and Labor Force Status

47.6% ± 6.0%

Employment Rate in Salem city, New Jersey

62.7% ± 0.3%

Employment Rate in New Jersey

Poverty

31.6% ± 9.7%

Poverty, All people in Salem city, New Jersey

9.7% ± 0.4%

Poverty, All people in New Jersey

Poverty by Age

In Salem city, New Jersey

UNDER 18 YEARS 39.5%

18 TO 64 YEARS 32.5%

65 YEARS AND OVER 14.4%

Homeownership Rate

33.8% ± 7.0%

Homeownership Rate in Salem city, New Jersey

64.6% ± 0.4%

Homeownership Rate in New Jersey

Vacancy

374

Vacant Housing Units in Salem city, New Jersey

Source

U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Salem City, New Jersey profile. U.S. Census Bureau.

Retrieved August 28, 2024, from https://data.census.gov/profile/Salem_city,_New_Jersey?q=160XX00US3465490



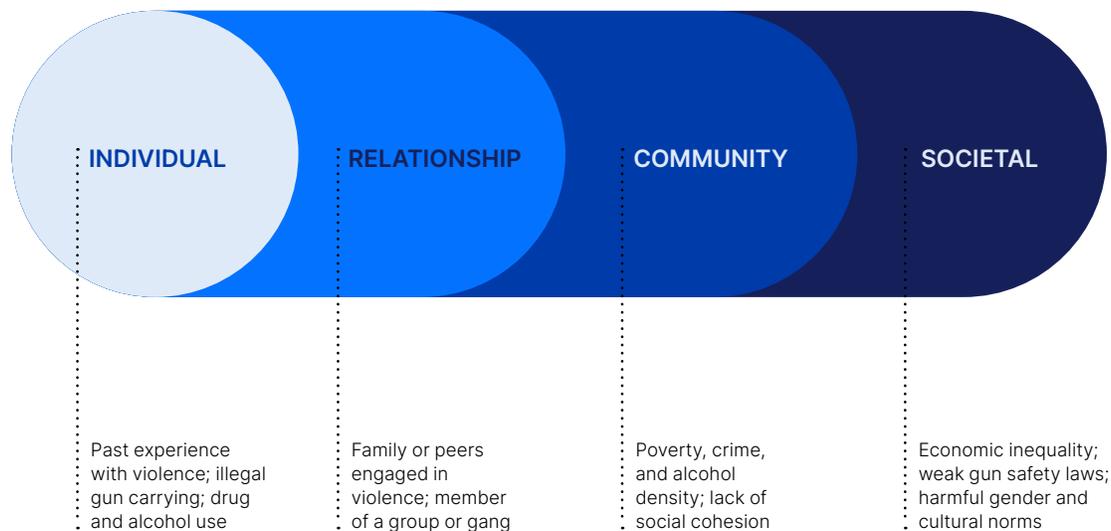
Landscape Analysis Findings

The following findings are based on a landscape analysis of Salem City’s ecosystem, providing insights into the community’s perceptions of the drivers of violence and public safety. This section also includes an analysis of the ecosystem, reviewing existing efforts to address violence and identifying gaps. The findings conclude with an overview of the challenges that the ecosystem must overcome.

Drivers of Violence

In Salem City, there are many ideas about what is driving the rise in violence. Some of these ideas may be based on perceptions, while others are grounded in more objective facts. However, it’s important to recognize that there isn’t a single cause of violence; rather, it is the result of multiple factors that intersect across the social ecological model.

The social ecological model is a framework that helps us understand how various layers of influence contribute to behaviors like violence. The graphic below provides examples of individual, relationship, community, and societal level risk factors that contribute to violence. Understanding that violence is driven by a complex interplay of these factors is essential for developing effective strategies to reduce violence.

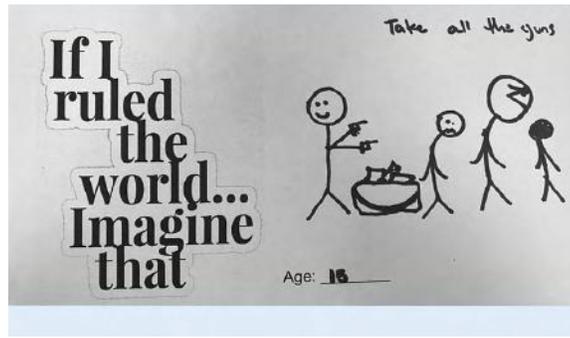


The stakeholder interviews conducted in Salem City revealed several key themes regarding the drivers of violence. These include a pervasive culture of violence coupled with easy access to guns, a lack of offender accountability, and entrenched cycles of violence. Economic decline, limited opportunities for youth, the influence of groups and gangs, and adults impacting youth behavior also emerged as significant factors. Additionally, regional dynamics play a crucial role in shaping these issues. Each of these themes is explored in detail in the following sections.



Culture of Violence and Easy Access to Guns

Many of the people interviewed acknowledge that there is a prevailing culture of violence that is significantly influencing violence in Salem City. This issue is dangerously compounded by easy access to illegal guns. When speaking with youth, they explained that it is very easy to get a gun. One young man said, **"I feel like everybody has one."**



Some interviewees expressed concerns that people are emulating the behaviors they see in video games, particularly when it comes to violence. One person remarked, **"It's all of the music... the young kids just go around shooting everybody like they're playing Call of Duty for real,"** drawing a direct connection between the actions of youth and the influence of violent video games.

Others pointed to the impact of violent music on this culture, suggesting that it also plays a significant role. Supporting this view, a recent documentary released on YouTube delves into the history of gun violence in Salem City. The documentary highlights key figures involved in recent violent incidents and shows how their music, including drill videos and diss tracks, has been a significant factor in fueling the ongoing violence.

This connection between entertainment media and real-world violence underscores the complex cultural influences at play in the community.

Lack of Offender Accountability

Another theme that emerged was a deep frustration with the current state of the criminal legal system, particularly the perceived lack of offender accountability. Many interviewees expressed a strong belief that individuals feel emboldened to commit crimes because they face minimal consequences. Comments like, **"I think people feel as though they could get away with crime here and there's no repercussions,"** and **"They're arrested and then they're released,"** reflect this sentiment. The perceived inefficiency of the criminal legal system, further complicated by legislative changes and bail reform, has weakened law enforcement's ability to effectively prosecute offenders. Additionally, the absence of a detention center for juvenile offenders exacerbates the issue, leaving a critical gap in the system's ability to hold young offenders accountable and rehabilitate them. This sense of impunity contributes to the ongoing cycle of violence, as individuals may feel there are few, if any, barriers to criminal behavior.

Additionally, the reluctance of community members to come forward with information due to fears of being labeled as "snitches" has contributed to a cycle where crimes go unreported or are inadequately prosecuted, resulting in light sentences that fail to serve as a deterrent. One community member said, **"They feel like they're snitching or whatever. So, because nobody speaks up, these people are taking our children's lives and getting off with five years."** These challenges have created an environment where crime persists, and the community's trust in the criminal legal system continues to erode.



Cycles of Violence

Many stakeholders interviewed during the landscape analysis spoke about a pervasive cycle of violence that traps individuals and families. This cycle often begins when an individual commits a crime, resulting in a criminal record that severely limits future opportunities. The resulting social and economic challenges can drive the individual back into criminal behavior, as they struggle to find legitimate pathways to stability and success.

Moreover, the influence of family members involved in criminal activity can profoundly impact younger relatives. For instance, when a father or older sibling engages in crime, it can create a legacy that younger family members feel compelled to follow. As one interviewee noted, **"I think the older kids emulate their older counterparts."** Another remarked, **"They're falling into the hands of their cousins and their uncles and their aunts who are all wanting to be in that life. And, you know, they see the glamor of the money and the clothes and the shoes and, you know, getting fresh cuts..."** This generational cycle not only perpetuates violence but also makes it extremely challenging for affected individuals and families to escape their circumstances and build a safer, more stable future. The allure of quick money and material gains, often glamorized by those involved in crime, further entraps the younger generation, making it difficult to break free from this cycle of violence.

Economic Decline

Every adult who participated in the landscape analysis identified economic decline as a major contributing factor to violence in Salem City. The departure of key industries has triggered this decline, creating conditions where violence emerges as a symptom of broader social issues. As businesses have left, they've taken with them vital jobs and economic opportunities, resulting in widespread unemployment and poverty. Interviewees made comments such as:

"I think when the industries left Salem... it began to take its turn because people weren't able to find sustainable employment."

"When people aren't employed, they can't make a living, they can't take care of their families, there's nothing to do in the city. I think you see the number of crimes increase."

"I suspect that Salem City has a long history of generational trauma, generational poverty, generational racism. Those kinds of things definitely impact the kind of future pathway for young men in particular. There probably aren't as many opportunities for kids who've graduated from high school, but now when you go to work there aren't quite as many well paying jobs or jobs that have a future to them. You can probably get a minimum wage job or a fast food job, but the extent to which you get a job that has a career path— like a trade or a manufacturing company —.... a lot of those jobs have left Salem County, not just Salem City."



This economic downturn has destabilized communities, eroding social cohesion and leaving residents with limited resources and few pathways to upward mobility. The resulting desperation and lack of opportunity have fueled cycles of violence, as individuals, particularly youth, turn to crime as a means of survival or expression of frustration.

This cycle of economic decline and rising violence has also created a challenging environment where potential employers are hesitant to bring new jobs to Salem City. Indeed, one person said, "**Businesses are hesitant to come there because of the crime.**" This reluctance to invest in the community exacerbates the existing economic challenges, as the lack of new job opportunities further entrenches poverty and social instability. The absence of stable employment options perpetuates the cycle of violence, as residents, particularly the youth, remain trapped in an environment where crime can seem like the only viable path. This cycle makes it increasingly difficult for the city to attract the kind of economic revitalization needed to break free from the conditions that contribute to ongoing violence.

Lack of Opportunity for Youth

Another persistent theme that emerged was that violence is driven by the lack of opportunities for youth in the city. Many argued that the absence of programs for young people leaves them with few outlets for their energy and creativity. This lack of activities can lead to increased idleness and frustration, which, combined with insufficient supervision, may drive some youths toward disruptive or violent behaviors. Indeed, one person said, "**If there's nowhere for our kids to go, they're gonna hang on the streets. And we know that idle time is the devil's playground.**" This situation underscores the critical need for accessible programs and spaces that can provide constructive engagement and prevent the escalation of violence among youth.

Participants acknowledged that while existing programs in the city are valuable, there is still an opportunity to more intentionally expose youth to a broader range of experiences. For instance, some participants mentioned taking youth to a pre-military program where they can learn to scuba dive, while others took youth to see horses through a 4H club. As one participant said, "**Kids need to be able to have hope, right? So they've gotta be able to see possibilities, they've gotta see opportunities both as kids and also in terms of their trajectory as young adults.**"

Many people interviewed in Salem City expressed deep concern about the negative impact of the community center's closure. One person recounted, "**Our recreational center that we had for years when I was growing up, it was an amazing place that you could go to. It had a daycare, it had a gym, it had a basketball court, you know, all these different things. It held programs, lots of different programs that helped the city on every single level that I can think of. You know, it had conference rooms and now it is a boarded up empty space...now it's a shadow of what it used to be.**"

The community emphasized that the center is crucial in providing opportunities for youth, in particular, and the community more generally. The community center could offer youth a safe and constructive space to engage in activities and deter their engagement in crime. Additionally, the community center could serve as a vital gathering place where residents could come together, fostering social interaction and a sense of belonging. This



loss has been perceived as a blow to social cohesion, as the center could play a key role in strengthening community ties and promoting mutual support among residents.

Groups and Gangs

There was disagreement regarding the role of gangs in driving violence in Salem City. Some of the people interviewed believe that organized gangs are the primary drivers of violence, pointing to structured groups with defined hierarchies and activities.



Conversely, others argue that the violence is fueled more by loose networks of close friends or family members who are connected through personal relationships rather than formal gang affiliations. When asked who is driving violence in the City, one stakeholder said: **"They're all people that know each other and they're related to each other, like everyone's related here or know each other."** Another said, **"There's really no gangs. It's just neighborhood sections."** While these informal groups may engage in violent behavior, they do not operate with the same organization and cohesion as traditional gangs.

Adults Influencing Youth

Notably, the individuals driving violence in Salem City are well-known within the community. Despite the strong focus on youth within the ecosystem, stakeholders consistently identify older adults as the primary drivers of violence when asked. One interviewee described the situation, saying:

"There's a group of men, probably I would say 24 to 36. I think the bulk of the violence kind of comes from them. They're the ones that are on the streets. They're the ones that are selling the drugs and doing all the different activities, you know, and they're camped out. I mean, you drive through Salem and... you'll see them in different neighborhoods. They're right outside on the block I guess, as you would say."

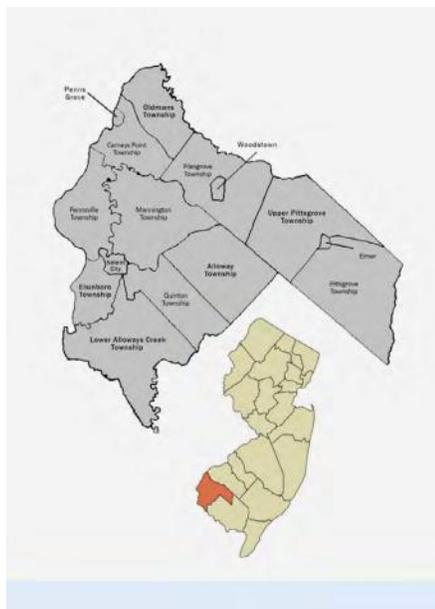
Many interviewees emphasized that these adults either actively exploit youth to commit crimes on their behalf or serve as "negative" role models, influencing young people through their behavior and attitudes. One person noted, **"The older ones get the younger ones to do their bidding. They [the younger ones] may not even have issues with some of these people. They [the older ones] send these kids to do it [commit violence]. A lot of times it's not the older people that are doing it [the crime], it's the younger ones that are killing some of the older guys."** This dynamic not only perpetuates the cycle of violence but also undermines efforts to promote positive youth development and safety within the community. The involvement of older adults in these activities creates a challenging environment where young people are drawn into criminal behavior, often at the direction of their older counterparts.



Regional Dynamics

Numerous stakeholders emphasized Salem City's proximity to surrounding counties and major urban centers like Camden, Philadelphia, and Wilmington as contributors to violence in Salem. Indeed, one person recounted **"There were juveniles coming over, stealing cars, and then getting in high speed chases, and heading back over to Delaware."**

This geographic closeness facilitates the movement of individuals who come from outside the city to commit crimes, creating a dynamic where violence is not solely generated within Salem but is influenced by external actors. Additionally, conflicts often arise between residents of Salem City and individuals from neighboring areas, further exacerbating the violence.



There is a pressing opportunity for strategic coordination at the county level to ensure that the challenges of Salem City are not overlooked. Participants emphasized the need for Salem County to take a more active and integrated approach in addressing the issues facing the city. As one participant starkly put it, **"Salem City has, has basically been abandoned by Salem County. You know, it's, it's kind of like, you know, there's Salem County and then there's Salem City, you know, because it's a bunch of poor black people who no one cares about."** This sentiment reflects a broader concern that Salem City has been marginalized and disconnected from broader county efforts. To reverse this trend, there must be intentional collaboration between the county and city, as well as with other jurisdictions, to pool resources and collaboratively address community violence.

Perception of Safety

Community violence has been on the rise in Salem City. As incidents of violence become more frequent, many residents have had direct or indirect experiences with it, contributing to a pervasive feeling of unease. Indeed, one participant said, **"in the past 10 years, I've had 11 of my former students die from gun violence."** This heightened exposure to violence has, for some, diminished the sense of safety, connection, and community pride that once characterized the city, leaving residents increasingly concerned about their safety, well-being and the future of the city and its most vulnerable residents: the youth. One community leader said:

"There's a fear of leaving your house. There's a fear of doing things during the day. Historically, the violence used to be an evening, late night, early morning hour problem. Now, I think because it's so normal to see these issues during the day that it has directly, you know, impacted the community because people don't know what's going to happen at any given time."



In Salem City, the community is divided in its perception of violence. Some people feel that there has been a desensitization to violence, with frequent incidents becoming so normalized that they no longer evoke the same level of concern or urgency. For example, one youth said **"It doesn't phase me just because I grew up around it."** Another adult explained a time when they asked how many youth knew someone who had been shot. This person said: **"Every single one those kids from Salem said they had. It's just part of daily life. I think that's the hard thing about this. They've almost become used to it. It's almost expected."** For these individuals, the constant exposure to violence has numbed the community making it seem like an inevitable part of life.

This desensitization to violence can have an impact on crime reporting. As violence becomes more normalized, many residents are less likely to report crimes to the police, viewing such incidents as just another part of everyday life. Law enforcement confirmed that they rarely receive calls regarding gunshots and now receive notices from shot spotter technology in the city. They said, **"The only time you would get the call that there were gunshots is when someone was actually hit. It became normal hearing guns go off."** Over time, this reluctance to involve law enforcement further erodes trust between the community and authorities, creating a cycle where crime goes unreported and unresolved, perpetuating the sense of helplessness and insecurity.



While most felt as if residents were desensitized to violence, there were others in the community that strongly disagreed, believing that the impact of violence is still deeply felt and that the fear and anxiety it generates remain very real. One community leader said, **"I don't think that the community wants things to happen. No. They just, they're probably just afraid to speak up. But nobody wants violence."** This divide highlights

the varying ways people process and respond to the ongoing violence, reflecting the complexity of the issue within the community.

Existing Efforts to Address Violence

Prevention Programs

Salem City is home to numerous youth prevention programs that connect youth with positive adult role models, building essential life skills, and exposing them to new opportunities. These programs create safe spaces where youth can grow, learn, and thrive, helping them to envision a future beyond the challenges they face. Indeed, one youth said the Junior huddle is a **"type of sanctuary,"** and another said the program allows you to get a **"break from home."** By fostering relationships with supportive adults, these initiatives provide guidance and mentorship, which are critical in helping young people navigate their environment.

In addition, there are grassroots efforts dedicated to connecting residents with vital resources. One notable initiative is the Youth Ambassador Program. These efforts are crucial for reaching individuals who might otherwise be overlooked, ensuring their basic needs are met and fostering a sense of community in the city. Driven by local leaders who understand the unique challenges of Salem City, these grassroots initiatives play an essential role in the broader strategy to reduce violence.



Curfew

Curfew was also identified as another method being used in attempts to curb violence in the city. However, opinions on the effectiveness of curfews are divided. Some believe that curfews can help reduce violence by limiting the time young people spend on the streets.

Others argue that curfews may be more about control than safety, potentially leading to unnecessary harassment of youth, particularly in marginalized communities. When asked if curfew helps to stop violence, youth collectively said, **"Not at all."** One elaborated, stating: **"The cops can't control nobody from doing anything. So they're still gonna do it. That's not stopping them from doing that. I'm sorry if I'm being honest."**

Critics suggest that curfews can exacerbate tensions between young people and law enforcement, creating an environment of distrust rather than addressing the root causes of violence. The debate highlights the need for a more nuanced approach that considers both the potential benefits and the unintended consequences of such measures.

Law Enforcement

Apart from these programs and policies, the most prominent sector addressing community violence is law enforcement. There are diverse viewpoints regarding the role of law enforcement in addressing community violence.

Some believe that the city's limited resources make it challenging for law enforcement to effectively carry out their duties, acknowledging that financial constraints and inadequate support can hinder their efforts. This reality creates a situation where there are fewer police officers available to be present in the community while also managing other demands. However, without this context, the community only perceives the absence of local police. For example, one participant noted, **"You see the sheriff's department or the Prosecutor's Office, but you never see the local police department."** This disconnect highlights the need for better communication about resource limitations and efforts to address them, as understanding the constraints faced by law enforcement can help bridge the gap between police presence and community expectations.

Others expressed frustration with officers who may lack genuine connections to the community or fail to empathize with residents' experiences of violence, feeling that this disconnect exacerbates tensions and undermines trust. One participant expressed a stark and troubling perspective on the perceived inaction regarding community violence, saying, **"It's like they're just letting them just kill off each other and hopefully it'll just dissolve and go out the window after they get done, taking each other out, and then it'll be done."** This statement reflects a deep frustration with what is seen as a lack of effective intervention and support, suggesting that the violence is being ignored rather than actively addressed. It underscores the urgent need for a more proactive and engaged approach to combatting violence and supporting affected communities.

Despite these differing perspectives, there is a significant opportunity for both sides to engage in dialogue, understand each other's challenges, and identify common ground. By fostering mutual understanding and collaboration, law enforcement and community members can build stronger relationships, enhance trust, and work together as allies



in the fight to reduce violence and improve community safety. Many participants identified Acting Chief Brooks as a valuable asset in efforts to rebuild trust in law enforcement. His deep roots in Salem City and active engagement within the community set him apart, as he is seen as someone who genuinely understands and relates to the local context. One participant said, "**Chief Brooks really cares. And that's**

important. It's one thing to have somebody sitting in a position who is just sitting in a position and it's another thing to see action with it." His leadership is viewed as a promising opportunity to transform the department, given his commitment to addressing community concerns and fostering stronger relationships between law enforcement and residents. Under his guidance, there is optimism that the department can shift towards a more empathetic and responsive approach, ultimately enhancing trust and collaboration with the community.

Gaps in the Ecosystem

The most glaring gap in Salem City's efforts to address community violence is the absence of targeted programs for adults over 18 who are actively involved in violent activities. Despite young adults being identified as the primary drivers of violence, this demographic remains underserved by existing programs, which often focus on youth. Without adequate resources and support to address the needs and behaviors of these adults, efforts to reduce violence will likely be less effective. Those interviewed made comments like:

"I don't think there's any resources for the older generation. I feel like people just look at them like they're older. So you know, what they do is on them. I do believe that something like that is necessary."

"I think a lot of people are trying to reach back to the youth to stop them from going in that path, but I don't think anyone's concentrated on stopping the actual violence."

"The adults really need services and they're really getting ignored."

"I think everybody targets the kids, but what about those adults that are actually doing [the crime] and participating in a lot of the illegal activities."



Many adults engaged in crime in Salem City are often individuals who aged out of youth programs without sufficient support or guidance as they transitioned into adulthood. One participant said, "**...and I think that's where the disconnect came from with the older**



groups. Like they had the center, the zombie Campbell Center, they had the church leads, they had the football teams, the cheerleading. But it's like once you turn 18 and you go out, you are just left right there."

This highlights the need for extending opportunities and resources to young people beyond the age of 18, recognizing that they are still in a critical stage of development as young adults. By continuing to engage and support them during this period, we can help them build the skills and resilience needed to avoid negative paths and contribute positively to the community.

Challenges in the Ecosystem

The most consistent themes that emerged regarding the challenges in the ecosystem were: 1) a lack of dedicated local leadership focused specifically on violence reduction, which impedes the development and implementation of targeted strategies; 2) a lack of willingness to collaborate among various stakeholders, hindering the potential for unified and coordinated efforts; 3) a weak funding landscape that limits resources for sustainable programs and interventions; and 4) a sense of frustration and apathy particularly regarding the persistent use of consultants.

Local Leadership

Participants in the landscape analysis praised Mayor Veler and the City of Salem for their dedication to addressing community violence. However, they recognized that tackling this issue cannot rest solely on the shoulders of the Mayor or the City alone.

People acknowledged that there is a need for a neutral convener to unite the ecosystem. One person said, "**There has to be somebody that emerges from the ranks in Salem, you know, maybe one of the next generation who can provide strong leadership.**"

According to one person, this convenor role should be a full-time responsibility of a person or agency. They said, "**What I don't see is full-time, intentional effort to make sure that all of these various things work and that there's some kind of coherence to it.**" As one participant put it:

"There are resources going in and those resources aren't coordinated. There isn't a clear, coherent plan or somebody who's riding shotgun on that, making sure that, you know, on a regular basis, you're bringing people together, reinforcing the common threads and the common goals, and that we're measuring outcomes and on a regular basis, doing some self-evaluation to see are the programs and the approach is working."



Such a leader could galvanize community support, foster collaboration, and drive a comprehensive approach to violence reduction, ensuring that all stakeholders are actively engaged and working towards common goals.

Some participants expressed concern about the lack of local leadership in program implementation, particularly noting that many organizations seem to come to Salem City solely to secure grants without reinvesting in the community. Examples of this sentiment include:

"We have some nonprofits that move in and just grant chase. They're just in it for the wrong reasons."

"I think it's a lot of people chasing money and not trying to actually, you know, be a solution to the problem."

"Certain people come in, they take money, they're corrupt, and you know, we again lose the resources that we had... And until people come in that are really trustworthy and that really have the best interest of Salem in mind, and not just themselves, not just money, we're gonna continue being in these vicious cycles."

These participants worried that external groups often arrive with the primary goal of obtaining funding but fail to build lasting relationships or contribute to the community's long-term development. This approach leaves Salem without the sustained local leadership and commitment needed to drive meaningful change and ensure that resources truly benefit the residents.

Stakeholders did note that some external groups, while well-intentioned, may lack the deep connections and understanding of the community that local residents possess. This disconnect can lead to initiatives that don't fully resonate with or address the unique needs of Salem's population. Participants stressed the importance of investing in local leadership, as those who are from and live in Salem are more likely to have the relationships and insights necessary to create meaningful, lasting change.

Despite these concerns, participants acknowledged that there are some outside groups, like Revive South Jersey, that have been intentional in their efforts to support Salem's local leaders. While not originally based in Salem, Revive South Jersey has actively secured funding with the purpose of supporting and collaborating with local residents, ensuring that resources are used to strengthen the community from within. This approach was recognized as a positive example of how external organizations can make a meaningful impact by prioritizing local leadership and long-term investment in Salem.

Collaboration

Another prominent theme that emerged was the significant lack of collaboration among key stakeholders, which has severely hindered progress in addressing community violence. One person stated, **"I feel like we do work in silos. If we all played in the same field, we could probably be more effective."**



The absence of coordinated efforts and mutual support among various organizations, agencies, and community leaders has created fragmented approaches and diluted the impact of existing initiatives. Without a unified strategy and shared vision, resources are often duplicated or wasted, and opportunities for leveraging collective expertise and influence are lost. This disjointed effort not only impedes the effectiveness of violence reduction strategies but also prevents the establishment of a cohesive, community-wide response that is crucial for meaningful and sustainable progress.

One promising theme that emerged was a growing recognition of the need for more effective collaboration. Indeed, one person said **"I think everyone sees the need is necessary right now."** Another said, **"Maybe with coordination... we can bring it together."**

Funding Landscape

Another theme that emerged focused on the challenges posed by a weak funding landscape, which significantly limits the availability of resources for sustainable programs and interventions. Participants emphasized that **"little money comes to Salem City,"** highlighting the disparity in funding allocation compared to larger cities. They noted that in these larger areas, **"money is being poured into all the time to fix stuff,"** creating a stark contrast in the ability to address local needs and implement long-term solutions in smaller communities like Salem City.

This sentiment reflects a broader concern about the inequities in resource distribution, where smaller cities are often left behind in the competition for funding. As a result, Salem City faces considerable obstacles in developing and maintaining initiatives that could have a lasting positive impact on the community. Participants suggested that this lack of investment not only hampers current efforts but also perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment, making it difficult for the city to attract future funding and support.

Alternatively, some participants offered a contrasting viewpoint, suggesting that the issue in Salem City is not solely about a lack of resources but rather the inefficiencies in how these resources are coordinated and distributed. They acknowledged that funding does exist, but it often fails to reach all segments of the community, leading to uneven access. According to this perspective, the challenge lies in the way resources are managed and allocated, with a lack of cohesive strategy and communication among different organizations and stakeholders. This lack of coordination results in missed opportunities for collaboration and prevents the community from fully benefiting from the resources that are available.

Moreover, some participants highlighted that existing funding and resources are not always accessible to everyone, particularly grassroot groups that are most proximate to community violence but may not have the same connections or knowledge needed to tap into these opportunities. For example, reimbursable grant funding is inaccessible to organizations that cannot front their expenses upfront. Indeed, one person said, **"We have to front that money first and then wait to get reimbursed."** This has created a situation where resources are present but remain out of reach for those who need them most.

Several participants concluded that a significant barrier is simply a lack of awareness about the funding opportunities that do exist. Stakeholders made comments like:



"I don't know that anybody really fully understands what resources are available."

"I don't know what all the resources are in the city. I can't tell if they exist or not or if people are even using them."

Many people are unaware of what resources are available or how to access them, which exacerbates the challenges of securing support for community programs and initiatives. This gap in knowledge means that even when funding is present, it often goes untapped, leaving potential projects underfunded and community needs unmet.

Frustration and Apathy

The rise in violence in Salem City has not only led to widespread insecurity and feelings of unsafety but has also fostered a sense of frustration and apathy among residents and actors in the ecosystem who are working to address violence. As violence becomes more common, many people feel that little is being done to address the issue. Indeed, one participant said, "We talk about the same thing and nothing's changed. Nothing gets implemented. Or we talk about implementing something and then for whatever reason it gets detoured."

There is also a growing sentiment that efforts to address the issue are either ineffective or insincere. Some people feel that individuals or organizations are taking advantage of the situation, exploiting the crisis to secure resources or funding without genuinely committing to reducing violence. This perception of opportunism deepens the community's sense of disappointment and diverts scarce resources away from effective, homegrown interventions.

There is also frustration in the ecosystem of the persistent use of outside consultants to study and develop plans for addressing violence, particularly when there is a lack of investment and commitment to implementing these plans. The following quotes from leaders in the ecosystem underscore this sentiment:

"You're like the fifth or sixth group of people who have come through just asking questions of the community."

"I love that we're doing this study but our people in Salem have heard discovery and research. [We plan and] never get to the solutions. We need some of those solutions now to address these issues. I can show you research. I can pull you research that has been done over the years in our area. What the issues? We can name those issues. Our people know the issues and they're just tired of not having any solutions."

"I think there's a lot of conversation, observation, questioning, but there's not a lot of follow up on it. And I think when that begins to happen, you feel somewhat marginalized and you feel like you're almost like a lab rat for the experiments by a bunch of privileged people."



Residents feel that funding spent on external consultants could be better utilized to build and support local programs and leaders who are deeply invested in their community. The reliance on outside experts without a clear strategy for follow-through undermines trust and prevents the allocation of resources to initiatives that could have a more immediate and tangible impact. By investing in homegrown solutions and empowering local leaders, the community could see more meaningful progress and a stronger commitment to addressing violence effectively.

Initial Recommendations

The findings from the landscape analysis are intended to guide the City of Salem and its partners in developing a community violence reduction plan. Social Contract proposes the following recommendations to be considered during the Design Phase.

I. Invest in strategies that prioritize the population actively contributing to violence in Salem City.

According to the National Network for Safe Communities, less than 1% of a city's population is linked to approximately 50% of its violence. In Salem City, with its current population size, this amounts to just over 50 people. Recognizing that a small minority is actively driving this violence presents opportunities to provide targeted support to this group and hold accountable those who continue to engage in violent behavior.

The forthcoming violence reduction plan should prioritize evidence-based and evidence-informed intervention programs that support those at the highest risk. This includes Acenda's hospital violence intervention program and the Life Worth Living Credible Messenger program. These programs should receive the necessary resources to implement their initiatives with fidelity and given Salem City's small size, it is crucial that these programs are aligned and coordinated to reduce service duplication and ensure that individuals at the highest risk of violence receive the appropriate support to prevent their involvement in violence.

These programs should focus on the individuals that are actively engaged in violence, particularly the older adults who have no existing programs available to them. They should also prioritize hiring individuals who possess trust, credibility, social capital, and respect within Salem City. Those who are most proximate to violence are often best equipped to engage with individuals currently involved in violent activities. By employing community members who are deeply rooted in the city and have established relationships, these programs can more effectively reach and influence those at the highest risk. Their unique insights and connections make them invaluable assets in the effort to reduce violence and build a safer community.

II. Authentically engage youth in the planning and design process.

Engaging youth in the planning process for violence reduction strategies is crucial for creating solutions that are both effective and sustainable. Young people often have firsthand experience with the issues that contribute to violence in their communities,



making their perspectives invaluable. One person stated, **“Adults are always making decisions for young people as if they’re not intelligent enough to contribute to that decision making process. We will continue to criticize and condemn the youth for being who they are, but we are not giving them any, any resources with which to work with.”**

By involving them in the planning process, Salem City can ensure that the strategies developed are relevant to their lived realities and resonate with their peers. Moreover, youth engagement fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, empowering them to become active participants in building safer environments. Creating these opportunities not only enriches the planning process but also helps develop future leaders who are invested in the well-being of their communities.

The young men from the Junior Huddle expressed a strong interest in continuing their involvement in the planning process, recognizing the value of their contributions. To sustain their engagement, it’s essential to explore opportunities that not only encourage their participation but also offer tangible incentives. This could involve compensating them for their time and expertise, acknowledging the critical insights they bring to the table. By providing appropriate compensation, we not only honor their contributions but also reinforce the importance of their role in shaping impactful strategies.

III. Coordinate with regional stakeholders.

The movement of individuals and conflicts between different regions necessitate a broader, regional approach to effectively address violence in Salem City. To manage and mitigate the impact of violence, the forthcoming violence reduction plan should incorporate a strategy to identify and engage with key regional stakeholders. Building strong relationships with these stakeholders will promote strategic coordination and enable a more comprehensive and unified effort to tackle violence across the broader area.

For example, Acenda’s hospital violence intervention program should establish a partnership with ChristianaCare’s hospital violence intervention program, as gunshot wound victims from Salem City are sometimes treated at the Delaware-based hospital. Such collaboration would ensure a seamless approach to intervention and support for these victims. Similarly, law enforcement agencies should coordinate their responses when crimes cross jurisdictional boundaries, enhancing their ability to manage and address violence effectively across different areas.

Additionally, there are opportunities to bring together local mayors to coordinate a regional response to violence and pursue joint funding for a multi-jurisdictional collaboration. Convening these leaders could help unify efforts across different jurisdictions and leverage collective resources to address violence more effectively. As one interviewee suggested, this approach could **“demonstrate to the powers that be who have political will that there’s collaboration and partnership,”** thereby garnering greater support and resources from higher levels of government. By working together, regional leaders can create a more integrated strategy that addresses the root causes of violence and fosters a safer environment for all.



IV. Strategically engage consultants in the future.

In the future, consultants should be strategically engaged by balancing their objective point of view with existing local data and research. While third-party consultants bring valuable expertise and an independent perspective, it is crucial to also harness the knowledge and experience of local leaders who are deeply familiar with the community's needs.

Consultants should be engaged for specialized subject matter expertise or when independent evaluations are necessary. For example, Salem City lacks programs specifically focused on community violence intervention targeting those at the highest risk. Engaging a consultant to help build this infrastructure would be appropriate. However, it would be less suitable to hire a consultant for Social Emotional Learning, as there are already numerous stakeholders within the ecosystem who possess this expertise.

Additionally, the creation of a backbone organization through this project can effectively fulfill the role that outside consultants once played, especially in the absence of a dedicated leader. This approach ensures that resources are used efficiently, integrating external expertise with local insights to design and implement more impactful and sustainable solutions.

Conclusion and Project Next Steps

Despite the rising violence and the accompanying frustration and apathy, there remains a profound sense of pride within Salem City. This pride, rooted in the city's rich history and resilient spirit, can serve as a powerful catalyst for change. By harnessing this collective pride, leaders can unite in their efforts to build a safer community. The shared commitment to the city's wellbeing provides a strong foundation for collaborative initiatives, enabling the community to come together to address violence and create lasting, positive change. Embracing this sense of pride and channeling it into real action offers a promising path forward for Salem City.



To that end, the next phase of this project will involve establishing a Steering Committee tasked with co-designing a comprehensive community violence reduction plan using the collective impact framework. The committee will unite diverse individuals to collaboratively create and

execute strategies for addressing violence in a coordinated and effective way. This will involve agreeing on a structure for a backbone organization that will align and coordinate stakeholders, ensuring the effective implementation of the developed plan. By leveraging the collective impact framework, the Steering Committee will ensure that the plan is holistic, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs of the community, fostering greater collaboration and alignment among all involved parties.



Appendices

1. Salem City Ecosystem Map
2. Key Informant Interview Questions
3. Glossary of Key Terms
4. About Social Contract



Salem City Ecosystem Map

In its simplest form, an ecosystem map is a visual representation of key stakeholders and organizations working together to address a common issue.

The map provided on the following page was developed based on insights gained from the key informant interviews and focus groups. It is not intended to be a comprehensive or exhaustive list of all the key stakeholders or organizations in the ecosystem. Rather, the map represents a point in time snapshot based on the available information and the perspectives of those who participated in the Discovery Phase. To that end, there may be unintentional omissions or inaccuracies, particularly because individual perceptions of the ecosystem can vary based on one’s lived experience and position within the ecosystem.

The ecosystem map identifies key stakeholders and organizations by sector type, including:

- Youth/Community Serving Organization
- Government
- Law Enforcement
- Community Asset (including existing and desired assets)
- Health Sector
- Education Sector

Stakeholders, organizations, and assets are displayed as “nodes,” or circles surrounding a sector (the colored circles). Some nodes may have additional nodes attached to it. They are displayed as hexagons. This represents a subset of the base node on the ecosystem map. For example, a school that is part of a school district.

The following guidance is provided to assist in interpreting the map:

	Map Indicator
Key stakeholder or organization’s primary focus is community violence reduction	Dashed line
Youth/Community Serving organization is based in Salem City	Thicker line
Community assets does not currently exist , but is desired by those who participated in the Discovery Phase	A node that is colored in

To foster continued collaboration within the ecosystem, Social Contract created a planning tool to accompany the map, allowing for deeper analysis of the connections, dynamics, and contributions of individual actors within the ecosystem. This tool can be utilized by the City of Salem, Violence Reduction Plan Steering Committee that will be established, and/or the Backbone organization that will be identified during the Design Phase of this project.



Salem City Ecosystem Map

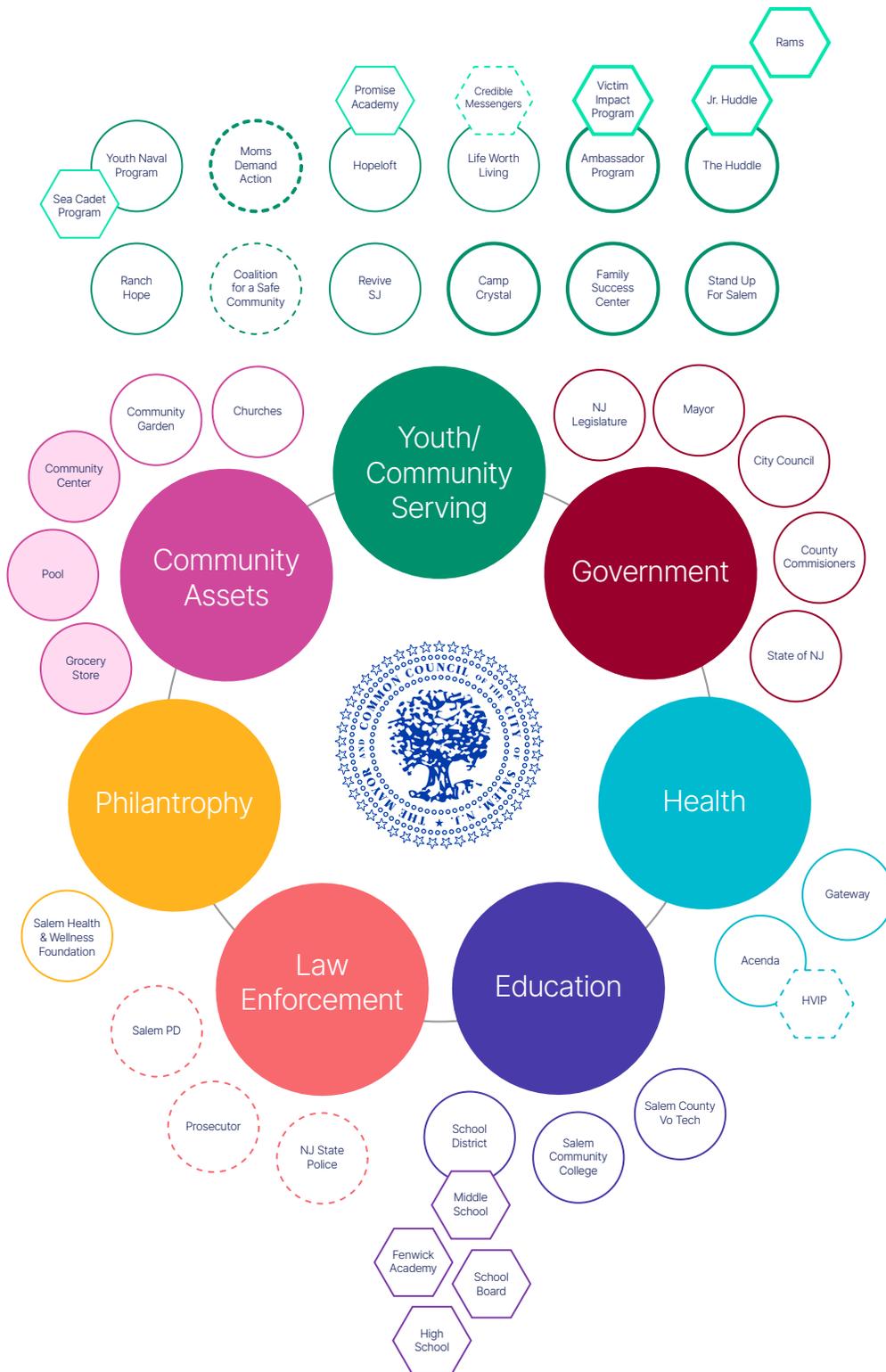
Primary focus is community violence reduction



Based in Salem City



Asset does not currently exist but is desired





Key Informant Interview Questions

Research Question	Key Discovery Questions
What is the key problem that the initiative needs to solve?	What is the extent of violence in Salem?
	What are the drivers of violence in Salem?
	What evidence exists that supports this?
	What are the impacts of violence on Salem?
	What evidence exists that supports this?
	Who are the perpetrators of violence in Salem?
	Who are the perpetrators of violence in Salem?
What is the current state of actors and programs dedicated to addressing the key problem?	What programs currently address violence and the underlying contributors in Salem?
	How do these programs engage with the community?
	What have the outcomes of those programs been?
	What challenges have existing programs faced in their outreach and efforts?
	What successes have existing programs experienced?
	How do existing programs coordinate or collaborate with other programs/institutions/systems?
	What is the current state of justice and law enforcement with regards to community violence in Salem?
	What is the level of interest and willingness of different stakeholders for collaboration?
	Who are the key influencers on young people in Salem?
	What role do they play in preventing violence?
	What role do they play in perpetrating violence?
	What role could they play in the future for violence prevention?



Research Question	Key Discovery Questions
<p>What is the current state of resources, potential and real, committed and needed, to address the key problem?</p>	<p>What resources are available to address violence and the underlying issues in Salem?</p>
	<p>How are those resources currently distributed across the ecosystem?</p>
	<p>What resources are currently not being leveraged to address these issues?</p>
<p>What is the current state of community relationships and cohesion?</p>	<p>What is the level of community cohesion?</p>
	<p>What are the barriers to increased community cohesion?</p>
	<p>Is violence considered "acceptable" by members of the community?</p>
	<p>What is the current relationship between community members and law enforcement?</p>
	<p>What is the level of interest of young people and families in participating in extracurricular activities?</p>
<p>What successful initiatives and programs exist in other places that address the same key problem?</p>	<p>What violence prevention models and approaches have worked in similar contexts?</p>
	<p>What makes us believe these approaches and models might be appropriate in Salem?</p>
	<p>What are some of the limitations or risks related to these approaches and models?</p>
	<p>What violence intervention approaches might be appropriate in Salem?</p>
	<p>What are best or promising practices for reducing community violence?</p>
	<p>Who is responsible for leading those activities?</p>
	<p>What must be true for these practices to be successful?</p>



Glossary of Key Terms

Actors	The individuals or organizations that play active roles in addressing, preventing, or managing violence, such as law enforcement, community leaders, non-profits, and service providers.
Collective Impact	The Collective Impact model coordinates a network of community members, organizations, and institutions who advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems level change.
Community Violence	Refers to the intentional use of physical force or power, either threatened or actual, by individuals or groups within a community that results in harm, injury, or death and disrupts social cohesion.
Desensitization	Refers to a process by which an individual's emotional or physiological response to a stimulus is reduced over time due to repeated exposure to that stimulus.
Drill Videos	Refers to music videos associated with the drill music genre, which is known for its gritty and often violent lyrical content. Drill music features aggressive beats and raw, unfiltered lyrics that often address themes of street life and conflict.
Diss Tracks	Are songs specifically created to criticize or insult another individual or group, often within the context of a feud or rivalry. Common in various music genres, diss tracks are particularly prominent in hip-hop and rap culture.
Ecosystem	Refers to the complex network of interconnected organizations, programs, stakeholders, and resources working together to address and reduce violence within a community.
Ecosystem Map	Is a visual representation that illustrates the various organizations, programs, stakeholders, and relationships involved in addressing and managing violence within a community.
Focus Group	A research method where a small, diverse group of participants discusses a specific topic under the guidance of a moderator to gather in-depth insights and opinions.
Gangs	Organized groups of individuals who come together to pursue common interests, often characterized by a shared identity, goals, and activities. They are typically distinguished by their involvement in illegal or illicit activities, though not all gangs are criminal in nature.
Grassroots	Refers to efforts, organizations, or movements that originate from and are led by local community members rather than being imposed by external entities. These grassroots initiatives are typically driven by individuals or groups who are directly affected by or involved in the issues of community violence.
Groups	Informal networks of close friends or family members who are connected through personal relationships rather than formal gang affiliations. Although these informal groups may engage in violent behavior, they lack the structured organization and cohesion typical of traditional gangs. May or may not have a name, common symbols, signs or tags, an identifiable hierarchy, or other shared identifiers.



Key Informant	An individual with specialized knowledge, experience, or insights about a particular subject or community, who provides valuable information and perspectives to inform research or decision-making processes.
Landscape Analysis	A comprehensive assessment of a particular field or area, examining its key elements, trends, stakeholders, and dynamics to understand the current state and identify opportunities or challenges.
Qualitative Method	A research approach focuses on understanding people’s experiences, perspectives, and behaviors through detailed, non-numerical data like interviews and observations.
Risk Factors	Characteristics or conditions that increase the likelihood of a negative outcome or event occurring. In various contexts, risk factors are used to identify potential hazards and predict the probability of certain adverse events.
Saturation	Refers to the point at which no new information or themes are emerging from data collection, indicating that the data set is complete and further research is unlikely to yield additional insights.
Social Cohesion	Refers to the degree to which members of a society or community are connected, unified, and able to work together harmoniously. It involves the strength of relationships and the sense of belonging among individuals within a group, as well as the overall stability and functionality of the society.
Social Ecological Model	A framework used to understand the multiple levels of influence on individual behavior and health outcomes. It emphasizes that behavior is influenced by a complex interplay of individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and societal factors. The model provides a comprehensive view of how various layers of influence interact and impact behavior and well-being.
Snowball Method	A recruitment technique in which existing study participants refer new participants, creating a “snowball” effect that expands the sample size over time.
Thematic Analysis	A method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data to understand and interpret the underlying meanings and insights.
Theory of Change	A framework that outlines how specific actions and interventions will lead to desired outcomes and long-term goals, including the necessary conditions and assumptions for achieving these results.
Upward Mobility	Refers to the ability of individuals or groups to improve their socioeconomic status or social position over time. This concept is often discussed in terms of economic advancement, but it can also encompass improvements in education, occupation, and overall quality of life. Upward mobility signifies progress from a lower to a higher status within the social or economic hierarchy.



About Social Contract



Founded in 2017, **Social Contract, LLC** is a women and minority-owned social and Collective Impact consulting firm with offices in Wilmington, Delaware and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Social Contract partners with government agencies, nonprofits, impact-driven businesses, foundations, and inspired leaders to solve complex social problems. We have extensive expertise implementing the Collective Impact model across several subject matter areas including community violence, workforce development, reentry, housing, and education and public health. We are a diverse group of project managers, researchers, evaluators, facilitators, policy experts, and program designers dedicated to elevating and supporting lasting social change.

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SALEM CITY, NEW JERSEY

Community Violence Collective Impact Project

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS REPORT

Prepared by
 Social Contract