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# Op/Ed: Gun violence is decreasing in Indianapolis. Yes, you read that correctly.

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As with all large cities in the country right now, Indianapolis is grappling with gun violence caused by a proliferation of illegal weapons, root causes going back generations and the second-order effects of the pandemic. But as we recognize the current challenge, we must also acknowledge the incredible progress and remarkable efforts being made by community members, service providers, law enforcement and others to reduce shootings in the city.

While enormous attention is paid to the shootings that occur, not nearly enough recognition is given to the reductions in gun violence Indianapolis has experienced in the past year and a half and the large amount of resources that have been put into continuing to drive the violence down.

In 2022, the city of Indianapolis made significant progress in reducing shootings and homicides through its Gun Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS). GVRS is a strategy that identifies individuals who are at very high risk of being involved in gun violence and employs intensive interventions with those individuals to prevent retaliatory shootings.

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At the beginning of 2022, GVRS stakeholders — including Mayor Joe Hogsett, the Office of Public Health and Safety (OPHS), the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD), and the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform — agreed on a series of goals and objectives, including the ultimate outcome of at least a 10% year-over-year reduction in murders and non-fatal injury shootings.

By the end of the year, Indianapolis had exceeded its goal and achieved a 16% reduction in murders and a 14% reduction in non-fatal, injury shootings. This represents the largest year-over-year-reduction since the incorporation of IMPD.

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Mayor Hogsett committed more than \$150 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds toward achieving these ambitious goals, one of the largest per capita investments of ARPA funds in the country.

With this funding, the Hogsett administration took a series of steps to ensure a successful implementation of GVRS. The city hired a full time GVRS director (deputy director of OPHS) and partnering with the Indianapolis Public Safety Foundation, hired 50 front line violence intervention workers, including: outreach workers, violence interrupters and life coaches. These workers joined more than 80 IMPD officers detailed to two new units focused solely on reducing gun violence and the dozens of community organizations funded by the \$45 million Elevation Grant program through a partnership with the Indianapolis Foundation.

Today, when staff become aware of someone who is posting threats on social media that they are going to retaliate for the murder of their friend, an outreach worker is assigned to locate and engage that person, eventually handing them off to a life coach who will work with them intensely over 18 months to ensure they don't become involved in violence. There are also violence interrupters who mediate conflicts in neighborhoods and schools. Coordination with IMPD allows officers to prioritize the disruption of violent conflicts, investigate shootings with high likelihood of retaliation and effectively trace and recover crime guns.

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These efforts have paid off. Not only did the city experience a 16% reduction in murders in 2022, but according to IMPD, through July 17, the city has seen an additional 14% year-to-date reduction in murders. This means there has been nearly a 30% reduction in murders since the implementation of GVRS.

There is much more work to do. Too many residents still need guidance on the path to peace. But the continued progress should be acknowledged and appreciated by all.

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