PEGASUS INSTITUTE

LIVE

The Louisville Initiative
for Violence Eradication

LIVE

The Louisville Initiative for Violence Eradication (LIVE) is a comprehensive violent crime reduction program spearheaded by Pegasus Institute in 2017. LIVE seeks to address the social, cultural, and environmental conditions that lead to increases in violent crime.

The prime drivers of this violence are a small number of repeat offenders with gang or street group ties. Our policies must reflect this reality.

Focused deterrence policing:
- Metro Police must identify Louisville's most dangerous individuals and groups.
- Metro Police must then target these groups for increased police and community engagement, communicate to these groups that streets are not theirs anymore, provide resources for those who want to exit gang life.
- The remaining individuals/groups should be targeted for additional scrutiny. Individuals may commit a violent crime, but the group dynamic promotes violence.
- The ultimate goal is to remove these violent individuals from the community using all lawful measures.
- Focused deterrence policing strategies have reduced gang related murder in cities by as much as 63% and average reductions above 30%.

Urban core revitalization:
- Research has shown that blocks with abandoned buildings have twice the crime rate as comparable blocks without abandoned buildings.
- We will overlay abandoned building maps with crime data maps to identify priority buildings for tear down.
- Metro-owned structures, identified as crime attractors, should be torn down in favor of vacant lots. Vacant lots, while not ideal, do not have the same crime attraction as abandoned buildings.
- We will work with Metro government to establish a second path in abandoned property demolition requests that considers crime.

Shining a light on our neighborhoods:
- Crime lurks in the dark, we plan to work with LG&E to address street light outages and areas with inadequate lighting.
- We will again overlay outage and "dark spot" data with crime maps to determine the areas most in need of new lighting.
- Improved lighting has shown to reduce (1) fear of crime in the affected area; (2) overall crime in the affected area and; (3) property crime in the affected area.

Gang Enhancements:
- Recognizing that most of the violence in Louisville is perpetuated by gangs, the Kentucky State Legislature must pass a gang enhancement law. We will work with Legislators to narrowly tailor the law to appropriately address the violent population within criminal street gangs.
- Research shows that appropriately tailored enhancements can have a deterrent effect that reduces the related violence by approximately 5%

# Homicide in Louisville in 2016: An Overview

Jordan Harris

In 2016, Louisville set an all time record for homicides. As others have noted, this has not been a gradual increase, but has instead been a dramatic spike over the course of two years. With the city on pace to eclipse this total again in 2017, this overview is an effort to unpack and illustrate the homicide total from a year ago and be coupled with the LIVE Initiative - our policy recommendation directed at reducing homicides. This information is a record of our analysis of publicly available crime data, supplied by the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD).

Inside the Watterson Expressway[i]

There is an extent to which Louisville's numbers have been insulated by the relatively large area of the city, while the overwhelming majority of homicides have actually taken place "inside the Watterson Expressway." In 2016, 71.18% (84 of 118) of all homicides investigated by LMPD took place in zip codes that are either wholly or partially inside the Watterson.[ii] Approximately 56% of all crime investigated by LMPD took place in this area, showing a disproportionate concentration of

29%   2016   71%
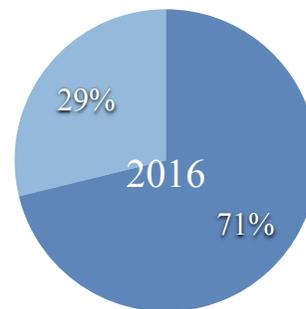
● Inside of I-264   ● Outside of I-264

homicides.[iii] This is a lower percentage of overall homicides than 2015, when 81.25% (65 of 80) of all murders investigated by LMPD took place inside the analyzed area, but an overall increase from 65 to 84 (29.2%)

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[i] For our purpose, the Western barrier of the area analyzed is the Ohio River, rather than i-265 itself. The interstate is considered as the Southern and Eastern border of the analyzed area, but would make an unnatural cut off on Louisville's West End. The river, by contrast, is a more natural barrier.

[ii] It is worth noting, that the interstate runs through some zip codes, such as 40211(Parkland and Shawnee Neighborhood), which extends to the Ohio River, however the zip code in its entirety is, for our purpose, considered "inside the Watterson Expressway."

[iii] Louisville is 398 square miles in total, with on 53.6 square miles, or 13%, falling inside the Watterson. Our analyzed area, which extends west from I-264 to the Ohio River includes an additional 10.7 square miles making the total area analyzed 64.3 square miles, or 16.2% of the city.

year over year. Using a conservative estimate , the population inside the Watterson Expressway is just under 275,000 residents, meaning that with 84 total murders in 2016, this area had a murder rate of 30.5 per 100,000.[iv] If considered in isolation, this would be the 8th most dangerous major city in America, edging out Chicago, Illinois, which has a murder rate of 27.7 per 100,000.

In total, 16 zipcodes are wholly or partially inside of the Watterson, with 15 considered as part of our analysis.[v] The majority of homicides in 2016 took place in five individual zip codes (listed in order of total); 40211, 40203, 40210, 40212, and 40215. These five areas accounted for just over 77% (65 of 84) of the murders inside the Watterson Expressway, 55% of murders investigated by LMPD (65 of 118), and 52.4% (65 of 124) of all murders in Jefferson County. Four of these five zip codes had an increase in homicides in 2016, helping to push the city-wide total to an all-time high.

- The 40211 zip code, which includes the Parkland and Shawnee neighborhoods, accounted for the highest numbers of homicides overall with 20. This area saw a 67% year over year increase, increasing from 12 homicides in 2015, to 20 in 2016.

- The 40203 zip code, which makes up part of Old Louisville and stretches around the Central Business District into Portland, had the second highest number of murders overall with 16. This is a 14.3% increase from 2015, when this area experienced had 14 homicides investigated by LMPD. Even aside from homicides, this area has the highest number of total crimes in the city (6,746 in 2016), and the highest number per

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iv Population estimate based on census projections and 2015 University of Louisville study on growth projection in Louisville. Because out-migration is higher than anticipated, the population of the measured area may be closer to 250,000, which would be a murder rate of 33.6 per 100,000, higher than Memphis.
v Because only a tiny portion of 40214 falls within the Watterson, it was not considered as part of our analysis. Population for this portion is however taken into consideration for measuring murder rate.

resident (0.3 crimes per resident) of any area.[vi] This area has a murder rate of 76.36 per 100,000, making it the second highest murder rate in the city of Louisville. With these factor combine, this area is arguably the most dangerous in the city.

- The deadliest area of Louisville is the 40210 zip code, which includes the Russell, California, and Park Hill neighborhoods. There were 13 homicides investigated by LMPD in this zip code, giving it the third most overall. This was an increase from the 2015 total of 8, a 62.5% increase. The murder rate in this area though, is a city-high at 85.43 per 100,000.

- The 40215 zip code experienced seven murders in 2016, up from five the previous year. Because of its sizable population, the area had a murder rate only slightly higher (33.5) than the average for inside the

Watterson, but more than double the city-wide rate of 16.5 per 100,000.

A Historic Spike

It is reasonable to say that Louisville has never experienced a homicide surge like the one that it is currently going through. This includes the tumultuous period of the 1970s, when crime increased nationwide. Before 2016, Louisville's highest numbers of homicides in a single year occurred in 1970, when 104 murders occurred, 1971, when 110 murder occurred (the previous record high), and 1976 when 103 murders occurred.

From 1980 through 2014, Louisville averaged approximately 52.8 murders per year. The high during that 35 year period was in 1996, when police investigated 75 murders. In 2015, LMPD investigated 80 murders, a 42% increase year over year and the highest


[vi] Numbers for the Central Business District (40202) are excluded from this metric, despite having a higher rate of crime per resident. A significant number of people work in, or visit, this area, but relatively few live in it. This causes an inflation in these numbers, making it more appropriate to exclude them.

overall total since 1979. A similar leap occurred between 1969 and 1970 when the total number of murders increased from 76 to 104 a jump of 36%. A few years later, a more significant jump occurred from 1975 to 1976, with homicides rising to 103, from 74 the previous year. This increase of 39.1% was the highest year over year jump in record keeping before the increase from 50 to 75 in 1996, a 50% increase (the all-time high). Following the 1996 increase, homicides declined, eclipsing 60 only one time in the following decade.

A more important measure is to consider a two-year increase, which would help demonstrate a trend. Between 1969 and 1971 (the year with the all-time high prior to

2016), homicide increased from 76 to 110, a 44.7% shift, and the highest in Louisville's history prior to the 2014 to 2016 period. A similar increase occurred between 1966 and 1968, an increase from 35 to 63, or 44.4%.[vii] The jump from 56 LMPD homicide investigation in 2014 to 118 in 2016, a 110% increase, is by far the largest jump in Louisville's history.
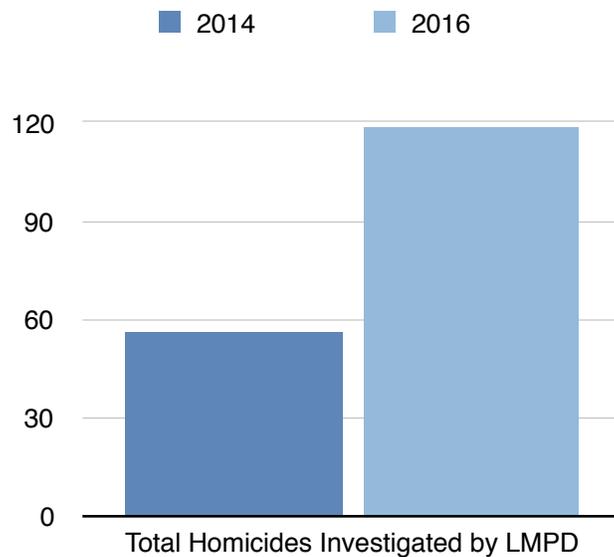
Murder Rate in Comparable Size Metro Areas to Louisville

Comparing Louisville's data to other cities is not perfectly straightforward. By total area, Louisville is the 20th largest city in the United States. By metro population though, the city is only 44th. This allows for a unique

Total Homicides Investigated by LMPD

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vii Jefferson County Data

distribution of residents as compared to similar cities. It remains worthwhile to look at cities with similar size metro populations to Louisville, when considering the full extent of Louisville's homicide spike. The two US cities just larger than Louisville are Memphis, Tennessee and Raleigh, North Carolina. The two cities just smaller than Louisville are Richmond, Virginia and New Orleans, Louisiana. When looking at these cities, it is evident that similar sized cities are dealing with similar problems, with homicides increasing in each one between 2014 and 2016. What remains unclear, is why Louisville's spike, as a year over year increase, is dramatically higher than similar sized cities.

- *Memphis* has long been one of the most violent places in America. In 2016, Memphis experienced 228 homicides, an all

time high.[viii] The murder rate for the city (estimated population 655,770), was 32.5 per 100,000, settling at seventh highest nationally.[ix] The land area of Memphis is 320 square miles making it relatively similar in size to Louisville, with a slightly larger percentage of the population living in the city proper. Last year was the highest murder rate in Memphis since 1993. Though previously trending downward, Memphis is like Louisville in that a spike has taken place. Unlike Louisville, the spike occurred only in 2016, after murders actually decreased between 2014 and 2015. The size of the spike between 2014 and 2016 is significantly smaller for Memphis than the one Louisville has experienced.

- *Raleigh*, despite increases in population, the city decreased its number of murders from 34 in 2008, to only 8 in 2014, even while

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[viii] 19 of Memphis' murders were classified as justifiable homicides. See following footnote.
[ix] Homicides investigated as "justifiable" homicides are not included among FBI murder rates, causing this number to be lower than a simple calculation would otherwise yield.

other violent crimes stagnated or increased. Both Raleigh and Durham have experienced increases in homicides since 2014. In Durham County overall, homicides have increased from 22 in 2014, to 43 in 2016, a 95% increase. This increase is the closest to Louisville's dramatic 110% increase among similar sized cities.

- *Richmond* has had relative stability in the size of its population, but experienced historic homicide decreases in the late 1990s. The city's all time high came in 1994, with 160 homicides. Two decades later, the city had reduced this number by nearly 75%, with only 43 homicides in 2014. Much like the other similarly sized cities, Richmond has seen an increase in homicides, with 60 victims in 2016. Like Memphis, the city saw a decrease in homicide in 2015 (41), followed by a significant jump in 2016. The city's murder rate in 2016 was approximately 27.2 per

100,000, up from 19.5 per 100,000 a year earlier placing it among the most dangerous cities in America.

- *New Orleans*, like Memphis, has long been one of America's most violent cities, routinely registering a top five murder rate. The city registered a rate of 41.7 per 100,000 in 2015, and an even higher 44.5 per 100,000 in 2016. Prior to the upticks in those years, the city had experienced a period of decrease. In 2014, New Orleans had 150 homicides, down from 193 in 2012. In 2016, the city had 175 murders, the most since 2012, up from 164 in 2015. While these totals are nowhere near the highs set before Hurricane Katrina, it is worth noting that over 105,000 fewer residents live in the city today, than in 1994 when the all-time record of 424 homicides was set.

About the Author

Jordan is the Founder and Co-Executive Director of Pegasus Institute

Gangs, Not Drugs, Must Be Law Enforcement Focus in Addressing Homicide Problem

Joshua Crawford

In 2006, Louisville was named one of the top ten least violent cities with a population over 500,000 residents.i Ten short years later, Louisville recorded 124 criminal homicides, the most in city history.ii The trend hasn't been gradual though; while Louisville had 50 murders in 2006, it had just 58 in 2014.iii In the two years since we've seen those numbers more than doubled.iv The sharp and u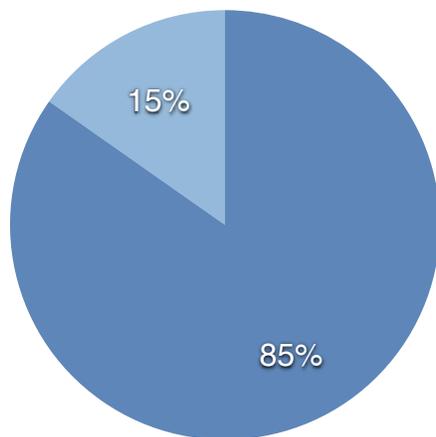nprecedented rise in homicide specifically, and violent crime generally, has taken Louisville from being one of the safest cities in America to being one of the least safe.

Unfortunately, over that same time period, Kentucky has been ravaged by the opioid epidemic.v Data from the Louisville coroner's office shows that 324 individuals died from an accidental drug overdose in 2016.vi According to the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy, that is a 47 percent increase from the 220 fatal overdoses in 2015,vii which itself was a 31 percent increase from 2014.viii Despite dramatic increases in drug overdoses, driven almost entirely by heroin overdoses, data show no marked increase in the arrest of street-level dealers in Louisville.

- LMPD Gang Related Homicide Investigations, 2016
- LMPD Non-Gang Related Homicide Investigations, 2016

85%

15%

While the opioid epidemic and the spike in violence have occurred in the same sphere, our research indicates fighting the heroin crisis will not directly reduce violence and murder. Gangs and gang culture, not drugs, have been the main cause of our violent crime epidemic. Of the 124 homicides in Louisville in 2016, 118 were investigated by the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD). Of those, 100 were gang related and often driven by issues of respect and reputation. No reliable information about drug related murders was available at the time of this report.

THE ILLICIT DRUG MARKET, GANGS, AND HONOR CULTURE

The illicit drug market, by its very nature, lacks access to legitimate, legal ways to mediate disputes. Despite this, the illegal drug market is generally peaceful.[ix] Despite an estimated $100 billion is spent on illegal drugs in the United States every year, the overwhelming majority of illegal drug transactions occur without violence.[x] However, violence within the illicit drug market is naturally more prevalent than legitimate businesses, but varies greatly from locality to locality.[xi] Boston, Providence, and Cincinnati, cities also in the midst of the opioid crisis, are among the one-third of American cities that had murders stagnate or drop in 2016.[xii]

Attributing the increase in violence to the drug market, to drug dealing, or to drug use would be a mistake. A 2003 report by The Sentencing Project found that participation in the drug market is very fluid, and most dealers' careers are very short.[xiii] Additionally, only 25% of those involved in the illicit drug trade had been arrested for a violent offense and only about one-sixth had been convicted of a violent offense.[xiv]

By contrast, the FBI's 2011 National Gang Threat Assessment report found that

gang activity accounts for an average of 48% of the violence in most jurisdictions.xv According to that report, street gangs had about 1.4 million members during that period. That was approximately 0.5% of the total U.S. population, committing nearly 50% of the violence.

Not all gang members engage in drug dealing. In 2012, a study by Mathew Phillips, a research analyst with the Rochester Youth Development Study at the State University of New York at Albany, examined a panel of delinquent youth and found that the drug dealers within a gang are actually less likely to use weapons or commit certain violent acts than their non-drug dealing fellow gang members.xvi Intuitively, this should make sense. The illicit drug market requires relative secrecy and individual drug dealers do not want any additional police attention. In many instances, gangs attempt to discourage this

kind of violence among their members because it doesn't make business sense.xvii

However, this economic calculation goes out the window when the violence is personal. Other factors, including underlying issues of respect and reputation drive much of the urban violence associated with the illegal

Gang Population

- Overall Population
- Estimated Gang Population
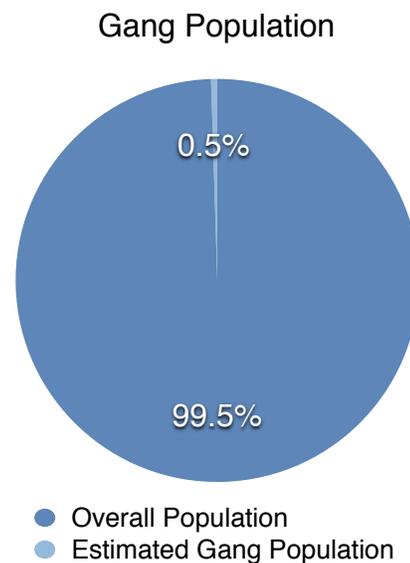
drug market and the gang subculture.xviii Gang membership is often driven by youth looking

for respect.xix So when disrespect is shown once they become gang affiliated, violence follows suit.xx In street gang research, the "Three Rs; Respect, Reputation, and Retaliation" are both a primary function of gang membership and the impetus of much of the violence.xxi Gang subculture is an honor based subculture, and like similar honor based cultures, it sanctions violence after insult or other perceived mistreatment.xxii

This is why interventions aimed at disrupting the illicit drug markets, even when effective at doing so, have not meaningfully reduced violent crime in the target areas.

THE NASHVILLE EXPERIMENT

Attempts to isolate and to disrupt the illicit drug market are typically a high priority amongst urban police departments. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, as of 2013 nearly every police department serving more than 100,000 residents participated in a drug-specific task force.xxiii So do approximately

8 in 10 departments serving 25,000 to 99,999 residents and 7 in 10 departments serving 10,000 to 24,999 residents.xxiv

A highly successful drug market disruption attempt occurred in East Nashville, TN. The program was a focused deterrence policing model designed to target the drug market rather than violent and gang affiliated individuals.xxv The goal of the intervention was not to just disrupt, but shut down open air drug markets.xxvi Officers first identified well know dealers and then used a combination of informal social controls, social service organizations, clearly outlined sanctions and direct law enforcement contact to disrupt the market.xxvii The results were revealing. Researchers found the program resulted in a 55% reduction in illegal drug possession offenses, a 37% reduction in drug equipment offenses, and a 28% reduction in property crime.xxviii However, despite suppressing the illicit drug market in East Nashville, Corsaro

and McGarrell found no corresponding reduction in violent crime.xxix

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT

LOUISVILLE

Using the FBI's Preliminary Uniform Crime Report data for the first half of 2016, Louisville is now the 22nd most violent city in the United States.xxx As some community leaders and law enforcement have acknowledged, gang violence has overwhelmingly been the largest contributor to this upward trend. According to Louisville Metro Councilman David James, Louisville has a "gang problem." xxxi Louisville Police Chief Steve Conrad estimates there are between 20 and 30 active gangs operating within the city.xxxii According to the FBI Special Agent in Charge for Louisville, these gangs are less affiliated with national gangs and more localized by neighborhood and blocks.xxxiii Chief Conrad also noted in an interview on WDRB that contrary to popular

understanding, many of Louisville's gang members are willing to cooperate in their criminal endeavors if there is money to be made.xxxiv

This suggests that the economic incentives in the illicit drug market in Louisville outweigh gang loyalty. Drug dealing, heroin trafficking in particular, is among the many streams of revenue generated within Louisville gangs.xxxv
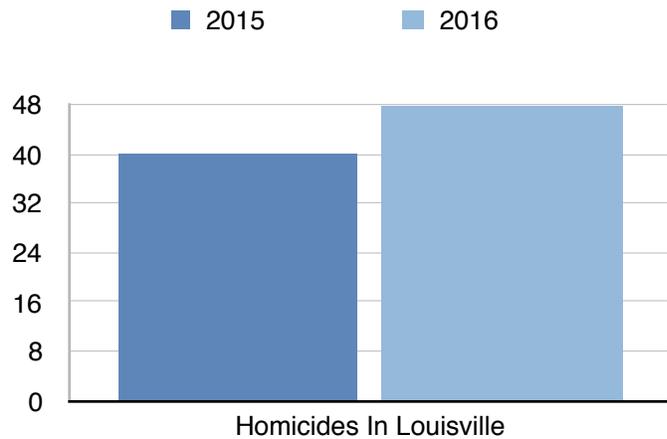
Personal violence and feuding however, seems to outweigh any potential economic codependence.xxxvi While carrying guns is often seen as a necessary tool of the drug trade, gang affiliates often do, "in case they run into people they have problems

with."[xxxvii] Sources inside Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) confirm that, while official numbers are not kept, the majority of the 2016 homicides were motivated by one of the "Three Rs."

Much like the intervention in Nashville, Louisville Metro Police have made significant attempts and progress in disruption and suppression of the illicit drug market. From 2015-2016, LMPD seizures of cocaine were up 80%, as were seizures of methamphetamine, and seizures of heroin were up 30%. Additionally, LMPD's reorganized narcotics unit has made more than 480 felony arrests, removed 250 guns from the street, and has made more than $1 million in seizures.[xxxviii]

Predictably, property crime is down as a result of these efforts.[xxxix] The nexus between property crime and drugs is well documented, and drug-related property crime typically occurs within a short radius around the drug supply.[xl] Disrupting the drug market thus expectantly reduces property crime. Despite there often being an expectation that the similar efforts would reduce homicides and violence, this is not the case. Homicides, by contrast, are up in the first five months of this year.[xli]

About the Author

Josh Crawford is the co-Executive Director of Pegasus Institute. He holds a bachelors degree from Penn State University, and a juris doctorate from Suffolk University Law School.

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Center for Justice

The Center for Justice works to defend the Aristotelian notion of justice, meaning that a just society must have a fair framework in which citizens can pursue their individual values and that each person must be afforded what they deserve. A system that is universally just is the minimum threshold for a civilized society.

Policy Advisors
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