

ROC

AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE COALITION

2023 Solutions Action Plan

EDUCATE - ADVOCATE - ERADICATE

#THINKABOUTIT



City of Rochester, NY
Rochester City Council

Councilmember Willie J. Lightfoot
Chair, ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition



City of Rochester, NY
Rochester City Council

City Hall Room 301A • 30 Church Street • Rochester, New York 14614-1290

Willie J. Lightfoot, Sr., Councilmember At-Large

Gun violence in Rochester, just as in many cities across the country, has reached an unacceptable peak in the years following the pandemic. Too many lives have been taken from our City, and too many of our families have been left to deal with the unimaginable.

Until we reach the root of the gun violence epidemic and heal the source of our community's most dire threat, we will continue to see gun violence persist in Rochester.

That's why, during my first term in 2018, I created the ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition. Through the Coalition, I and countless other members of our community have worked tirelessly to find true solutions to the gun violence epidemic in Rochester.

In 2018, we launched the "Think About It" campaign, focusing on our mission to educate, advocate and eradicate gun violence in the City of Rochester. Soon after, we submitted an action plan to the Mayor, City Council and the citizens of Rochester, through which we began much of the successful human resources work — including the Crisis Intervention Team, Trauma Response Unit and Homicide Response Team — being delivered to our citizens today.

Most recently, we spearheaded the effort to produce a groundbreaking gun trace data report. Through the report, we learned there are no legal gun dealers in the City of Rochester, and that most of the guns used in crimes in our City come from other places in Monroe County.

But, as I look back at the work we've done over the past five years, I realize that we will never solve this problem alone. And today, I present you with a new action plan — one that I pray will guide our City through the coming years, and keep violence prevention at the forefront of City policy long after I have left my chair on City Council.

In the 2023 ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition Solutions Action Plan, you'll see the source of violence in our community, you'll hear the voices of violence prevention leaders from across the country and you'll learn what we need to help keep this work moving forward into the future.

The first and most important item on that final list is you, my fellow citizens of the City of Rochester. So, as you read this action plan and take in all the information we've gathered over the last five years, I ask that you remember who is most affected by gun violence in our community — our own friends, our own families and our own neighbors.

I look forward to working with my friends in City government, the leaders of our business community and most of all, you, the citizens of Rochester, to realize the policies, practices, procedures and ideas outlined in this plan.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Let's continue the work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Willie J. Lightfoot, Sr.".

Willie J. Lightfoot, Sr.
City Councilmember At-Large



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Introduction

It is no secret that, in recent times, gun violence has consistently plagued the City of Rochester. Residents across our city have been impacted by these fatal and non-fatal shootings, which have impacted our Black and Brown citizens at a highly disproportionate rate. We have heard from our community, and the resounding response is clear— we have had enough. The time to act is now, and the ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition is here to put change in motion by the people of Rochester, for the people of Rochester.

Background

Origins of RAGVC

The ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition (RAGVC) was founded in 2018, when in February of that year, Councilmember Lightfoot first conceptualized the idea for the “Think About It” campaign in response to the rampant gun violence that Rochester was facing at the time. He went on to become the Chair of the RAGVC, which held its first organizational meeting in June of 2018, and the “Think About It” campaign launched the following month. “Think About It” involved a widespread media campaign that featured flyers, radio ads, and even billboards displayed across Rochester, and the central purpose of this initiative was to emphasize the long-lasting impact of gun violence on city residents. The Coalition built on its momentum by continuing its practice of direct community engagement through actions such as hosting a meeting at the Monroe County Crime Victim Center in August of 2018. The following months, the RAGVC Committees were formed, the first full Coalition meeting was held at the David F. Gantt R-Center, and the third Coalition meeting was held at the Honorable Willie Walker Lightfoot R-Center.

The work of the RAGVC was culminated in the submission of an action plan—the predecessor to this action plan— to the Mayor, City Council, and the citizens of Rochester. It featured recommendations that resulted in the development of some of the vital services programs that the City of Rochester provides today, including the Crisis Intervention Team, Trauma Response Unit, and Homicide Response Team. It also paved the way for the unprecedented Gun Trace Data Report that was released in June of this year and provided crucial information regarding where precisely the guns used to conduct crimes in our city come from, as well as other key data that will be used in the fight against Rochester’s gun violence.

RAGVC Mission Statement

The ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition will be a unified voice to improve the quality of life in our community by supporting efforts that educate and assist with both eradicating gun violence, and providing safe neighborhoods and trauma care for individuals in the city of Rochester.

RAGVC Purpose Statement

The ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition will educate youth and the community at large of the dangers and collateral effects of gun violence, and will encourage individuals to engage in diversion programs that lead to positive outcomes for their families and neighborhoods.

People of RAGVC

The following charts outline who makes up the RAGVC, including which people and organizations comprise the leadership, who chairs the various committees, and which community organizations are actively partnering with the Coalition:

Leadership

Position	Name
Chairperson	Councilmember Willie Lightfoot
Vice Chairperson	RCSD Board Commissioner Jacqueline Griffin
Co-Secretaries	Kathy Richardson Dassy Kemedjio Andre Gulley
Treasurer	Septimus Scott

Committee Chairs

Committee	Chair
Advocacy	Council President Miguel Meléndez
Education	Tanios Sarkis
Eradication	RCSD Board Commissioner Jacqueline Griffin
Media	Councilmember LaShay Harris
Resources	Crisis Intervention Coordinator Alia Henton-Williams
Youth	Ruth Reeves

Coalition Partners

- American Medical Response Rochester
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- Center For Dispute Settlement
- Crime Stoppers
- Department of Recreation and Human Services
- Faith Leaders Roundtable of Rochester
- In Control
- Moms Demand Action
- Monroe County Sheriff's Office

- NAACP – Rochester Branch (#2172)
- Office of Violence Prevention
- Pathways To Peace
- Project Exile
- Rise Up Rochester
- Roc The Peace
- Rochester Youth Violence Partnership
- Strong Memorial Hospital’s Kessler Trauma Center
- Teen Empowerment
- The Rochester Police Department
- United Christian Leadership Ministry, Inc.
- University Rochester Medical Center Department of Psychiatry
- Youth Voice, One Vision

RAGVC Committees

The following descriptions detail the work of each of the Coalition’s committees, which includes the four previously-established Advocacy, Eradication, Education, and Media Committees, as well as the two newly-created Resources and Youth Committees, which were created directly as a result of feedback from the community received during our public brainstorming sessions (which will be discussed in greater detail later in this document):

Committee	Committee Description
Advocacy	The Advocacy Committee will create new legislation supportive of the RAGVC mission and coordinate efforts to support existing laws that work towards reducing and eliminating gun violence.
Eradication	The Eradication Committee will recruit volunteers, mobilize RAGVC’s awareness, prevention, and assistance teams, as well as coordinate with existing agencies that address gun violence.
Education	The Education Committee will identify existing programs within the City of Rochester (i.e. R-Centers, RCSD) to assist with efforts to inform individuals and groups about the effects of gun violence in communities. The Education Committee will also use data to create new curriculum or programming that will align with the mission of RAGVC.
Media	The Media Committee will manage RAGVC’s social media platforms, organize press events, oversee public messaging and create a calendar of events with ongoing updates. The Media Committee will coordinate with Rochester City Council’s Communications Team,

	as well as the City of Rochester’s Communications Department.
Resources	The Resources Committee will organize, promote, and distribute existing resources related to the wellbeing of city residents, including both material resources and support services. The Resources Committee will also research resources that can support our community partners.
Youth	The Youth Committee will focus on the social, physical, mental, and emotional development of city youth, which will include connecting youth to resources, empowering our youth to succeed, and engaging with youth that have been impacted by gun violence.

Data Sources

It is critical that any plan the RAGVC undertakes is data-driven, and this Solutions Action Plan is no different. The following list specifies which primary data sources the Coalition will be drawing from to develop our anti-gun violence strategies (*Note: As more sources come to light, the Coalition will certainly continue to expand our scope of data sources so that we are basing our work on the most current and holistic information available.*):

Primary Data Sources

- Brady Gun Trace Data Report
- Rochester Police Department’s Open Data Portal (ODP)
- RIT’s Center for Public Safety Initiatives (CPSI) – various violence and crime-related data sources
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) – various firearms databases

Statistical Profile of Gun Violence Issues

In order to contextualize Rochester’s gun violence issue, it is imperative to refer to the data to comprehend the reality of our situation to the fullest extent. The following is a snapshot of the current shootings statistics in the City of Rochester.

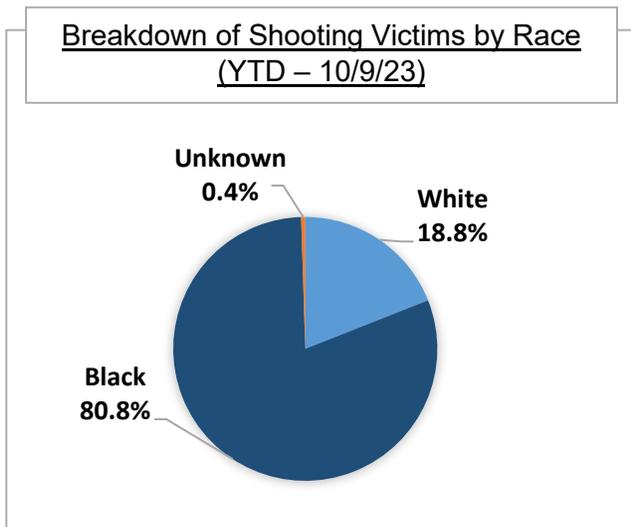
According to the Rochester Police Department’s Open Data Portal, year to date (as of October 9, 2023):

- There have been **205** shootings.
- There have been **25** shootings with multiple victims.
- There have been **240** shooting victims.
- There have been **35** fatal shooting victims – in other words, **35 people have been killed as a result of gun violence so far this year.**

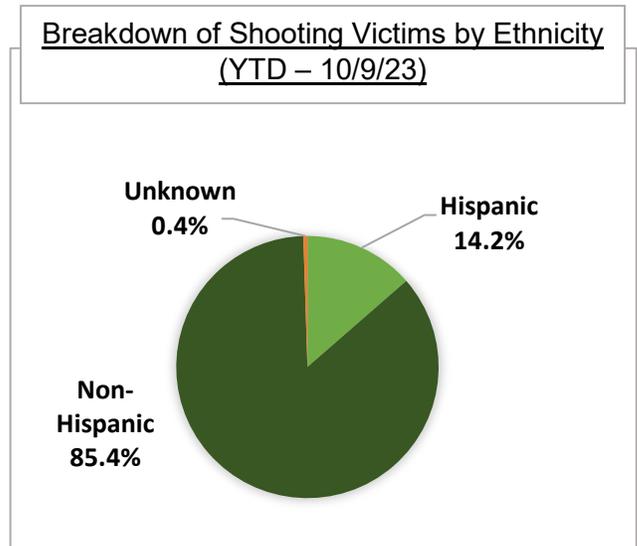
- The median age of shooting victims is **26 years old**.

While gun violence impacts all Rochester residents, it is evident that historically marginalized racial groups make up a disproportionately higher percentage of those victimized by gun violence—and the data backs this up. Below are year to date (as of October 9, 2023) breakdowns of shooting victims in Rochester by race, ethnicity, and gender, as well as a map indicating where shootings have occurred throughout the City of Rochester:

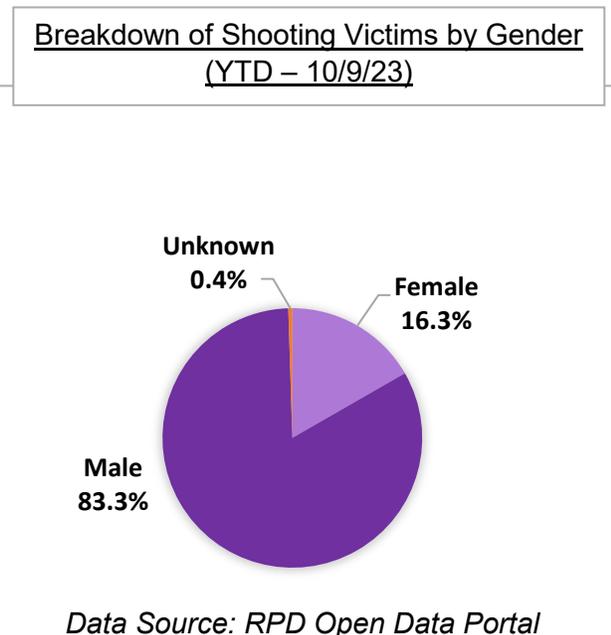
Shooting Victim Breakdowns by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Location



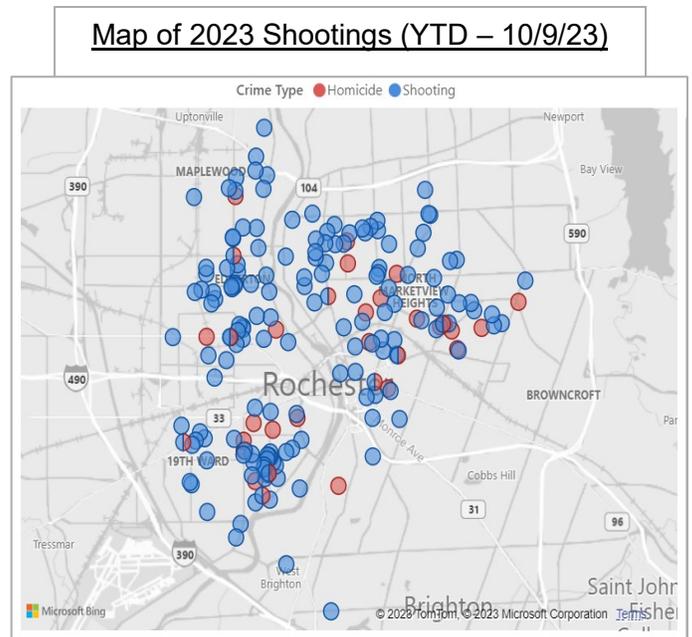
Data Source: RPD Open Data Portal



Data Source: RPD Open Data Portal



Data Source: RPD Open Data Portal



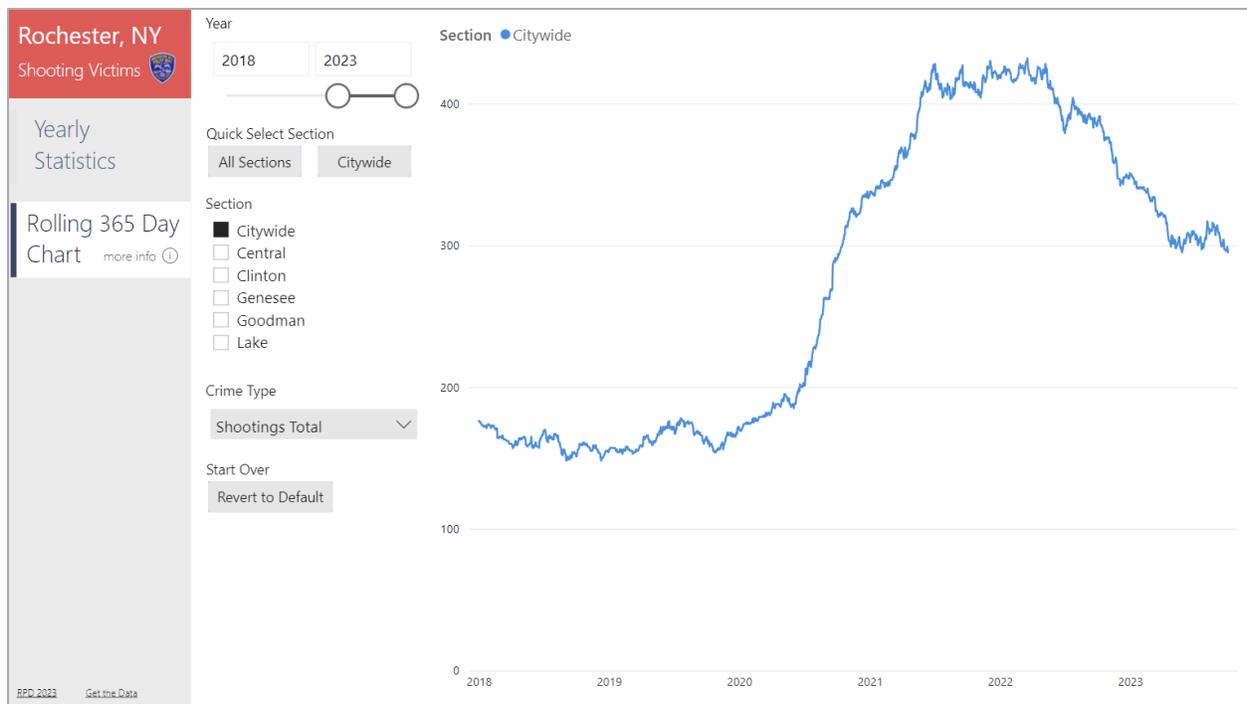
For context, Black and Brown communities in our city are being killed by guns at a disproportionately higher rate, and the data bears this out. The following chart details the racial and ethnic breakdown of Rochester’s population:

Race and Hispanic Origin	Percentage of Population
Black	38%
White	33%
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	19.8%
Mixed or Other	5.1%
Asian	3.9%
Native American/Pacific Islander	0.2%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 U.S. Census

Finally, it’s important that we understand the big picture when it comes to the varying increases and decreases in shootings over the past few years. The chart below depicts the trend of the total number of shootings in the City of Rochester in the past five years, from 2018 up to now (year to date, as of October 9, 2023):

Total Number of Shootings: 2018-2023



Data Source: RPD Open Data Portal

While the number of total shootings is still significantly higher this year than it was in 2018, it’s helpful to understand the bigger picture of shootings in our city. Understanding the patterns and trends of gun violence, both temporally and spatially, is one piece of

the puzzle in understanding, and ultimately, eradicating the scourge of gun violence on our community.

Recommendations

The development of this Solutions Action Plan was centered on the community. The RAGVC held hybrid community meetings that focused on brainstorming various solutions to address the ever-present issue of gun violence in the City of Rochester. Over the course of the past few months, hundreds of community members came out both in-person and on Zoom to not only voice their concerns about gun violence, but also to recommend how they envisioned fixing the problem. People from all backgrounds — including nonprofit workers, academics, government officials, and everyday city residents — provided the solutions that are imbedded in this plan. Evidently, this Solutions Action Plan could not have been possible without the citizens of Rochester, and implementing the action items listed below will also require the help of city residents. In fact, one of the Coalition’s central objectives is to include even more citizens in this crucial work.

Methodology

Our methodology was straightforward in developing this plan, following the three-step approach of “**Categorize, Prioritize, and Actualize**”:

1. **Categorize** the various solutions collected from the RAGVC public meetings held for the development of this plan, and designate them by which entity has the power to implement these solutions; and
2. **Prioritize** which goals the Coalition will focus on in the short-term versus the long-term, based on the amount of time, effort, and personnel required to complete each solution; and finally
3. **Actualize** the solutions and implement them in our community, then evaluate the successes of each implementation and adjust the implementation as needed.

The Coalition also divided the list of responding entities into separate categories so it was clear under whose scope each solution fell under. It is important to note that certain solutions that include overlapping parts may fall under the purview of multiple entities:

- CBOs (Community-Based Organizations)
- Courts
- Faith-based Groups (Churches, Temples, Mosques, etc.)
- Families
- Government Entities (Federal, State, County, City)
- Rochester City School District

RAGVC Solutions

Below are a list of community-generated solutions developed by the Coalition, which we recommend as necessary steps to be taken in the fight against gun violence in our city. This list is not static, and it will evolve to fit the needs of the community as needed:

Solution #1: Develop a plan to organize resources for various community needs (e.g. food, housing, clothing, cash, medicine, employment, etc.) in one centralized location (physical and/or digital) and to share them with the community via readily-accessible platforms.

- **Timeline:** 6 months – 1 year
- **Committee:** Education

Solution #2: Analyze existing accountability measures (e.g. laws, community-based alternatives to the legal system, etc.) and develop new accountability measures for perpetrators of gun violence across all areas, including the justice system (with an emphasis on the juvenile justice system) as well as community-based accountability measures. This includes providing comprehensive support services to families, especially for parents of young children, which promote familial stability, educate parents, and engage families of all backgrounds.

- **Timeline:** 6 months – 1 year
- **Committee:** Advocacy, Eradication

Solution #3: Support existing organizations that are already working in the anti-violence space, community-based vigilance organizations, and local mutual aid organizations. Place an emphasis on organizations who are “boots on the ground” and engaging with people, especially youth, who are directly involved with gun violence (i.e. perpetrators and victims of gun violence).

- **Timeline:** 6 months – 1 year
- **Committee:** Eradication

Solution #4: Invest in mental and behavioral health resources for the community, with an emphasis on youth mental health, including developing new methods to holistically address mental health and promoting existing organizations that are already doing work in this space. Place an emphasis on a culturally-responsive approach that treats gun violence as a public health crisis, and looks into community-based alternatives to law enforcement. This includes convening major health institutions to assess how they can contribute their services to addressing gun violence in the community; organizing a system in which professionals (e.g. psychologists, social workers, crisis counselors, mental health professionals, etc.) can volunteer their time to provide trauma-informed care to community members in various capacities, especially trauma-informed professionals who work with survivors of gun violence; developing and/or supporting programs that addresses community trauma in high-impact areas; implementing a nurse

visitation program for shooting victims; and providing trauma support for families of violence victims.

- **Timeline:** 1-2 years
- **Committee:** Resources, Education

Solution #5: Invest in and promote youth-focused services, including free and/or subsidized activities for youth to participate in, opportunities for youth employment, safe spaces for youth to access, and other youth-centric resources. This includes promoting community-based intervention strategies for vulnerable youth, such as teaching youth financial literacy, college and career readiness, and other essential life skills.

- **Timeline:** 1-2 years
- **Committee:** Youth, Resources

Solution #6: Monitor and/audit funding that is going towards existing anti-violence initiatives to ensure that it is being spent in a way that aligns with the needs of the community, and also to confirm that this data is being collected and reviewed to determine the effectiveness of existing anti-violence initiatives.

- **Timeline:** 1-2 years
- **Committee:** Resources, Advocacy

Solution #7: Support the spiritual engagement of the community, including the implementation of programming for the spiritual development of youth, engagement with clergy and/or community faith leaders, and the promotion of spiritually-focused community activities, such as prayer walks.

- **Timeline:** 6 months – 1 year
- **Committee:** All Committees

Solution #8: Support the establishment of procurements for a safer Rochester. Procurements are agreements between government and supply source entities for goods, services, or other works, often with the use of a competitive bidding process. Rochester City Government, Monroe County, and New York State officials all engage in procurement in order to provide needed, critical equipment, services, goods for the management and execution of government in order to provide services to the public. These procurements include purchase of firearms, ammunition supply, and other equipment used by law enforcement when carrying out their duties at local and state government. Procurement funds come from public taxes, so the government must become aware of data to insure that no public funds are ever being used to purchase products, services, contracts with gun industry entities that are engaged in reckless, dangerous practices that are impacting our public health and safety through gun violence.

- **Timeline:** 1-2 years
- **Committee:** All Committees

Solution #9: Implement the following strategies regarding federal and state government:

- a) Identify specific actions and non-compliance inspection remedies being implemented by ATF and New York State Police (NYSP) regarding the top crime gun suppliers to Rochester, with a focus on guns that are being trafficked.
- b) Call on federal, state, and local law enforcement to use trace data to inform enforcement and oversight strategies for sources of crime guns. This includes supporting gun violence-focused legislation that is based on gun trace data.
- c) Develop an Analysis of Crime and Locations Report that looks into what types of gun crimes are trending and where the gun crimes are occurring.
- d) Call on the ATF and NYSP to increase the number of inspectors, and to implement rapid inspections of firearms.
 - **Timeline:** 3+ years
 - **Committee:** All Committees

Solution #10: Implement the following strategies regarding local government:

- a) Call on local government to adopt Brady's Gun Dealer Code of Conduct (GDCC) Standards for all gun dealers operating within Monroe County (with the goal to eventually expand standards to include New York State).
- b) Advocate for City government to pass a local ordinance to require the reporting of lost and stolen guns (with the goal to eventually expand standards to include New York State).
- c) Call on local government to designate gun violence as a public health crisis.
- d) Call on City government to mandate an annual firearms trace data report from the Rochester Police Department, in conjunction with Brady.
- e) Advocate for City government to develop a policy requiring better quality trace data from the ATF.
- f) Advocate for local government to develop an inspection program for local firearms dealers.
- g) Call on local government and/or law enforcement to address the ShotSpotter data gaps.
- h) Advocate for the development of a County-led violence reduction lab to pilot community-based violence reduction strategies.
- i) Call on City Council to incorporate the work of this Coalition under the scope of its Public Safety Committee.
 - **Timeline:** 3+ years
 - **Committee:** All Committees

Solution #11: Empower researchers and journalists to analyze gun trafficking patterns and gun violence trends in order to better inform the community, lawmakers, and law enforcement on methods to address gun violence.

- **Timeline:** 1-2 years
- **Committee:** All Committees

Solution #12: Implement a media strategy that is cohesive, interactive, and widespread that has a clear message and targets community members who are most vulnerable to gun violence.

- **Timeline:** 1-2 years
- **Committee:** Media

These twelve listed solutions are only a starting point for the Coalition, and they will be revised, expanded upon, combined, and otherwise evolved as the community's needs also evolve.

Evaluation

Upon categorizing and designating these solutions to the appropriate committee, the Coalition will establish robust reporting mechanisms so that the community remains informed on the work that is actively being done to eliminate gun violence in Rochester. To start, the RAGVC will follow the following criteria when considering how to evaluate its solutions:

Criteria for Evaluation

1. **Relevance:** Is the Solutions Action Plan addressing the right things?
2. **Coherence:** How well does the Solutions Action Plan fit the short and long-term needs of the community? How does it fit into the landscape of gun violence eradication in Rochester?
3. **Effectiveness:** Is the Solutions Action Plan achieving its objectives?
4. **Efficiency:** How well are resources being used?
5. **Impact:** What difference does the Solutions Action Plan make?
6. **Sustainability:** Will the benefits last? What is the plan for continuity of these initiatives? What will the succession planning look like?

From there, the Coalition will establish realistic timelines for each action item and constantly re-evaluate these timelines to ensure that they are both time-sensitive and suitable for the given goal. The timeline categories are detailed below:

Timelines

- **Short-term Goals:** 30 days – 6 months
- **Mid-term Goals:** 1-2 years
- **Long-term Goals:** 3+ years

With these established timelines, the Coalition will develop accountability mechanisms to not only ensure that the necessary work is being completed within an appropriate timeframe, but also to ensure that the work is successful and having a meaningful impact on the community.

Accountability Mechanisms

1. Ensure that the RAGVC is consistently reporting the Solutions Action Plan progress to the community.
2. Regarding the Solutions Action Plan as a living document and regularly updating/refining the plan as needed.
3. Developing a website and/or social media page that displays all information related to timelines, which stakeholder is directly responsible for/involved with each initiative, and includes contact information for the relevant stakeholder.
4. Developing a mechanism for perpetual public input on the Solutions Action Plan (e.g. a virtual suggestion box/feedback element).

Finally, the Coalition will use various platforms and mediums to report its progress to the community:

Reporting Methods

1. Progress dashboard
2. Monthly/quarterly/bi-annual/annual reports
3. Media campaigns
4. Collaboration with community partners to share information

This Solutions Action Plan will be an ongoing process, but it is critical that public accountability is central to our work at every stage because of how essential this work is for the community.

Conclusion

Throughout this process, the Coalition faced a dual assignment — first, to create solutions focused on combatting gun violence, and second, to reinvigorate the work of the RAGVC in the current post-pandemic setting. With the implementation of this Solutions Action Plan, the Coalition hopes to build out this vital work for future generations. That is why one of the chief recommendations is to advocate for this work to eventually be overseen by the Public Safety Committee, so that it is permanently embedded in the work of our City Council. Additionally, the Coalition will continue to expand its evidence-based solutions model by researching national best practices in the anti-violence space, and learning from cities who are effectively dealing with violence.

Though the future of our City is uncertain, we are hopeful that the Coalition's work will promote wide-ranging change throughout the community. However, one thing is for certain — this is only the beginning. Now the real work begins.