



CONVENING AGENDA

12TH ANNUAL CONVENING
LEADING THE WAY: HIGHLIGHTING WHAT'S WORKING

CITIESUNITED.ORG

PUBLIC SAFETY REDEFINED: SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE



CITIESUNITED.ORG

10 YEARS AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to Cities United's 12th Annual Convening Leading the Way: Highlighting What's Working

Every year, we gather in a new partner jurisdiction to learn, to build, and honor the work. But this year... you're here in my hometown.

In the streets that raised me. The neighborhoods that shaped my purpose. The city that taught me what it means to advocate for something bigger than yourself.

You're here in Louisville, KY - the home of Muhammad Ali. A place where **greatness was born not just in the ring, but in the streets, in the struggle, and in the stand he took for justice, peace, and for Black lives.**

This year also marks 10 years since I became Executive Director of Cities United.

Ten years of holding space with mayors and mothers and fathers, credible messengers and city administrators, young leaders and elders all committed to the same vision: that Black boys and young men deserve to live in safe, healthy & hopeful communities.

In that time, I've learned a lot.

I've learned that the work is hard, but the people doing it are stronger, because they are grounded in love.

I've learned that healing doesn't come from policy alone but from trust, time, and truth.

And I've learned that what we need **is already in us.** In our communities. In our culture. In our stories.

This convening is a reflection of all of that.

You'll hear about progress backed by data, but also pain that still needs tending.

You'll see **proof of systems built to last**, but also people who've carried this work on their backs without enough support.

You'll feel joy and grief, brilliance and burden, all living in the same breath because that's what it means to be real about comprehensive public safety.

This work doesn't belong to one group or city, nor will it be successful with just one strategy.

It belongs to all of us, moving together across neighborhoods, jurisdictions, and generations. So while you're here, I hope you find something more than inspiration.

I hope you find clarity. I hope you find family.

And I hope you remember that you are not alone in this work... not now, not ever.

From my city to yours, welcome to Louisville!

Let's keep leading the way.

With deep gratitude,

Anthony Smith

Executive Director, Cities United



WHAT TO EXPECT AT THIS YEAR'S CONVENING

For over a decade, Cities United has stood shoulder to shoulder with mayors, community leaders, and credible messengers working to create safe, healthy, and hopeful communities for young Black men and boys and their families. Each year, our convening becomes a mirror of what's possible when we lead together, learn together, and build together.

This year, we gather under a theme that reflects both our progress and our purpose:

LEADING THE WAY: HIGHLIGHTING WHAT'S WORKING

Across the Cities United network, jurisdictions have built comprehensive public safety ecosystems: not hypotheticals, but real strategies, real structures, and real relationships that are reducing violence and restoring trust. From school-based supports to street outreach to hospital response teams to reentry pathways, our cities are leading the way with solutions rooted in care and powered by community.

Together, we've moved beyond pilot projects into sustainable infrastructure. We've shown that public safety isn't the absence of violence, but the presence of opportunity, wellness, and joy.

At this convening, you'll see what happens when **narrative, data, and culture** are aligned. You'll hear from local leaders who are designing systems that last. You'll experience the collective momentum of a network rowing in the same direction - grounded in truth, driven by love, and committed to change.



WHAT YOU'LL EXPERIENCE

DYNAMIC PLENARY SESSIONS

Engage in thought-provoking conversations with national leaders, mayors, practitioners, and young leaders who are advancing proven solutions.

SPOTLIGHT ON LOUISVILLE

Celebrate the leadership of our host city and learn from local models that reflect the resilience and creativity of community-driven solutions.

INTERACTIVE BREAKOUTS

Dive deep into strategies that are working in real time from data-informed violence prevention to wellness-centered reentry programming.

CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Be inspired by art, music, and spoken word performances that lift up the stories of our communities and remind us of the joy we're building toward.

NETWORKING & COLLABORATION

Connect with peers across the country who share your commitment to creating safe, healthy, and hopeful communities.

OUR SHARED COMMITMENT

This convening is more than a gathering. It is a collective promise: to keep building, keep leading, and keep centering the voices of those most impacted by violence.

As you move through the sessions, performances, and conversations, we encourage you to ask yourself: What's working in my community? How can I build on it? Who can I partner with to make it sustainable?

Because when we lead the way together, transformation is inevitable.



SCHEDULE

DAY 1

REGISTRATION & EXPLORATION VENDOR HALL

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

8AM - 4PM

Registration
Vendor Hall

AFTERNOON

Explore the city of Louisville!

3PM - 7PM

One City Basketball National Championship
Norton Sports & Learning Complex



DAY 2

OPENING DAY | SITE VISITS | VENDOR HALL

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

8AM - 4:30PM

Registration Vendor Hall CVLN “Know Your Rights”
Training

12PM - 1PM

Lunch

1PM - 4PM

Site Visits

AT HOTEL

- Cities United 101
- No More Red Dots
- Roca
- Gentle Yoga + Meditation (1:30-3:30pm)

5PM - 6:30PM

Opening Plenary

6:30PM - 8PM

Cities United’s Welcome Reception

OFF-SITE

- Louisville Urban League
- Blueprint502
- Goodwill: Pivot to Peace
- Russell: Place of Promise
- Metro United Way
- University of Louisville Hospital
- Play Cousins Collective
- Louisville Story Program
- BLACK



DAY 3

FULL PROGRAMMING

Thursday, October 30, 2025

8AM - 4PM

Registration

8AM - 9AM

Breakfast

9AM - 10AM

Morning Plenary

- From Boys to Men: Healing at the Intersection of Blackness and Manhood
- Special Moment with Hannah Drake

10AM - 11AM

State of CU Address

11:15AM - 12:15PM

Breakout Sessions

- Utilizing a Multi-Sector Approach to Child Welfare
- Healing the Peacekeeper: Tools To Keep Your Peace
- Tracking and Showcasing Your Impact
- Lessons From the Frontline: Moving The Work Forward
- You Heard the Hurt, Now Hear the Hope
- Sustaining and Protecting Your Ecosystem
- Jurisdiction Immersion: Toledo
- Jurisdiction Immersion: Lexington
- Jurisdiction Immersion: Allegheny County
- Building Bridges for Safer Communities
- The Blueprint: Building Pathways to Leadership

12:30PM - 2:45PM

Lunch + Afternoon Plenary

- Leading the Way: Highlighting What's Working
- Special Moment with Ajamou Butler
- Emerging Leaders: Shaping the Future of Public Safety

3:05PM - 4:20PM

Breakout Sessions

7:00PM - 11:00PM

Sneaker Ball & Awards Ceremony

DAY 4

CLOSING BREAKFAST SESSIONS

Friday, October 31, 2025

6:00AM - 8:00AM

Roadwork Run/Walk

8:00AM - 11:30AM

Farewell Table Open

8:00AM - 9:00AM

Breakfast

9AM - 10:00AM

Closing Plenary

10AM - 10:30AM

Convening Group Photo

10:45AM - 12:00PM

Women's Farewell Session: Sisters in Service

Men's Farewell Session: Brothers in Arms



2025 FOUNDERS AWARDS

Since 2018, Cities United has honored the past, present, and future by recognizing its network members' leadership, dedication, and commitment. The Founders Awards honors Cities United's founders, William Bell, Former Mayor of Philadelphia Michael Nutter, former Mayor of New Orleans, LA, Mitch Landrieu, Shawn Dove, and the National League of Cities. This year, Cities United will award six individuals or organizations for their commitment to Safe, Healthy, and Hopeful Communities for young Black men and boys, their families, and communities.

AWARD	2025 NOMINEE
Mayor In honor of the vision and voice of founder Mayor Mitch Landrieu	Mayor Ed Gainey Pittsburgh, PA
Jurisdiction In recognition of the support and leadership of the founding partner, the National League of Cities	City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County
Philanthropy With gratitude for the passionate leadership and steadfast support of founder Dr. William C. Bell	Langeloth Foundation
National Organization In recognition of the unwavering dedication to the collaboration of founder Shawn Dove and the Campaign for Black Male Achievement	(BUILD) The Brotherhood Unified for Independent Leadership Through Discipline

AWARD	2025 NOMINEE	
<p>Young Leader</p> <p>In recognition of the vision and staunch leadership of founder Mayor Michael Nutter</p>	<p>Fadumo-Tufaah Abdullahi Zaynab Adesokan Muminah Adeyemi Seryn Bentley Trey Bonilla Kwanbe Bullard Chase Campbell Erion Davison Ousmane Diallo Jamien Eutsey Monta Fullilove Justin Gatling Tareil George Kya Hector Chyna Hodges</p>	<p>Mazzi Ingram Kaaleah Jones Jailen Leavell Doneah Marshall Solyana Mesfin Emanuel “Boo” Milton Gabriel Moore Jwa’n Moore Jessiah Muhammad Dezarae Newstrom Marissa Pittman Lynese Redeemer Shay Rodgers Asa Singleton Jasmine Todd Brandon Vincent</p>
<p>Brave Young Leader Award</p>	<p>Elliott Kelly, Jr.</p>	

BRAVE YOUNG LEADER AWARD

SPONSORED BY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF LOUISVILLE

In Memory of Kenneth “KJ” LaFranzo Rhodes II

The Brave Young Leader Award honors the life and legacy of Kenneth “KJ” LaFranzo Rhodes II, a cherished member of the Cities United family whose kindness, humility, and light continue to inspire us. KJ carried out his purpose in building community and uplifting others in his work with Cities United and beyond. Even in passing, KJ continued his legacy of giving as an organ donor, a final act of generosity that reflects his lifelong commitment to helping others.

This award recognizes a young leader who embodies KJ’s courage, compassion, and commitment to service. The awardee is recognized as someone leading with love and helping others find their voice and purpose along the way.

KJ’s legacy lives on in every brave young leader who dares to make a difference.



12TH ANNUAL CONVENING

CODE OF CONDUCT

“To build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination.”

— bell hooks, Teaching Community

Cities United is committed to honoring its values of connecting, learning and leading by providing a friendly, safe, and welcoming environment for all, regardless of race, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, or religion. We set the expectation that all participants will proactively work to create an environment free from discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment.

We seek to create safe, healthy, and hopeful communities across the country, therefore we must be diligent in protecting our peace and joy when we gather.

This code of conduct outlines our expectations for attendees’ behavior at all national, regional and local events of Cities United. We expect all participants (speakers, attendees, staff, and other guests) to abide by this code of conduct at all event venues and event-related social functions.

Behavior that is expected and encouraged:

- Be respectful, inclusive, and accepting of others. Actively seek to challenge your personal biases, assumptions, and preconceived stereotypes. Approach differences with openness and curiosity.
- Be conscious of how your words and actions might harm others (even unintentionally). Be mindful of impact, as well as intent.
- Be aware of privilege and power dynamics. If you find you are talking or commenting a lot, consider stepping back to leave more space for others. If you share the work or ideas of others, give credit where it is due.
- Be considerate of privacy and personal boundaries. Convenings can be a lot, give others a chance to “opt-in” to personal interactions, and respect boundaries when they are set.
- Be constructive in offering criticism, and be gracious in accepting it. Consider “calling in” rather than “calling out,” and direct critiques toward ideas rather than people.

Behavior that is strictly prohibited:

- Discrimination, including unfavorable or disparate treatment to others because of any aspect of their identity, appearance, or protected class.
- Harassment and harassing behavior, including use of epithets and slurs, derogatory or hostile comments, repeated attempts to make contact, or any behavior that interferes with another person's participation in the Convening.
- Sexual harassment, including use of sexual images, jokes of a sexual or gendered nature, or any unwelcome contact of a sexual nature in any medium.
- Sexually harassing conduct in particular may include all of these prohibited actions, as well as other unwelcome conduct, such as requests for sexual favors, conversation containing sexual comments, physical contact, lewd or offensive behavior or language, and other unwelcome sexual advances. Sexually harassing conduct can be by a person of either the same or opposite sex.

If you are experiencing prohibited behavior, notice that someone else is experiencing prohibited behavior, or have any other concerns, please contact a member of Cities United or Convening Staff immediately. Convening Staff can be identified as they have a gold badge that reads "STAFF" on their event badges.

If you experience or witness a violation of this Code of Conduct, please submit a report using the Whova App, QR code below, or email convening@citiesunited.org.

CITIES UNITED INCIDENT REPORT



OUR PARTNERS

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF®) is devoted to developing a brighter future for millions of children and young people with respect to their educational, economic, social and health outcomes.

Their work focuses on strengthening families, building stronger communities and ensuring access to opportunity, because children, youth and young adults need all three to succeed. They advance research and solutions to overcome the barriers to success, help communities demonstrate what works and influence decision makers to invest in strategies based on solid evidence.



BALLMER GROUP

Ballmer Group is committed to improving economic mobility for children and families in the United States, funding leaders and organizations that have demonstrated the ability to reshape opportunity. We focus on multiple impact areas and systems that can impact economic mobility, such as early learning, K-12 education, college and career pathways, housing, behavioral health, and criminal justice. Ballmer Group is both a national and regional funder—we have a presence and invest deeply in southeast Michigan, Washington state, and Los Angeles County. Ballmer Group was co-founded by philanthropist Connie Ballmer and her husband Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft, founder of USAFacts, and chairman of the Los Angeles Clippers. Learn more at www.ballmergroup.org.



CALIFORNIA WELLNESS FOUNDATION

The California Wellness Foundation (Cal Wellness) is a private independent foundation created in 1992. Our mission is to protect and improve the health and wellness of the people of California by increasing access to health care, quality education, good jobs, healthy environments and safe neighborhoods.



CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care in the United States. Our mission is to provide and improve — and ultimately prevent the need for — foster care.

Founded in 1966, Casey Family Programs works in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and with tribal nations across North America to influence long-lasting improvements to the well-being of children, families and the communities where they live.



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF LOUISVILLE

Founded in 1984, the Community Foundation of Louisville mobilizes people, networks, and capital to spark meaningful change in and beyond Louisville. With more than \$900 million in assets, over 2,200 charitable funds, and collaborations with hundreds of local partners, we connect real investments with relevant causes. The Foundation has addressed and continues to address a wide range of community needs. The key priorities of the Foundation's mission are to remove barriers to accessing capital and resources and to open opportunities for all. Learn more at cflouisville.org.



EVERYTOWN COMMUNITY SAFETY FUND

Everytown's Community Safety Fund (CSF) is the nation's largest grantmaking program dedicated to advancing community safety. Since its launch in 2019, the Fund has provided funding, training, and capacity-building support to 142 community-based organizations across 72 cities nationwide.

Everytown for Gun Safety is a movement of nearly 10 million mayors, teachers, survivors, gun owners, students, and everyday Americans working together to end gun violence. Through civic engagement, advocacy, and cultural change, Everytown is building a movement to register voters, elect leaders committed to gun safety, hold elected officials accountable, shift public perceptions of gun violence, and create safer communities for all.



FUND FOR A SAFER FUTURE

The Fund for a Safer Future (FSF) is a donor collaborative with over 35 funding partners focused on preventing gun violence in the United States through targeted policy and practice strategies. FSF pools expertise and financial resources to make strategic grants across four key approaches: Communications and Narrative Change, Field Building and Infrastructure, Policy and Legal, and Research.

Since 2011, FSF has made more than \$25M in grants to reduce gun violence nationwide and leveraged an additional \$250M in aligned grantmaking. FSF believes ending gun violence and building safer communities requires coordinated action and consistent philanthropic investment.



JACOB AND VALERIA LANGELOTH FOUNDATION

The Langeloth Foundation supports health and racial equity outcomes for all people in order to foster and sustain safe and healthy communities. They envision an equitable and just society free of systemic barriers where individuals and communities can reach their full potential.



ROOTS & WINGS

Roots & Wings is a family foundation established in 2020 by Judy and Gordon Faulkner. Roots & Wings makes grants across the fields of healthcare, early learning, basic needs, and safety & justice. The Foundation supports non-profit organizations that help low-income children and families reach their full potential through prevention, early intervention, and in-depth programming that changes lives. More at www.rootswings.org.



TRAJECTORY CHANGING SOLUTIONS

Trajectory Changing Solutions (TCS) is a consulting firm specializing in CVI strategies to reduce violence and to strengthen organizational capacity. TCS shares its extensive experience through effective, customized technical assistance for clients locally and globally. We listen intently to our clients to ensure we understand their intentions and provide guidance to achieve the desired results.



INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A SAFE, HEALTHY, AND HOPEFUL FUTURE

Across the country, communities continue to grapple with the urgency of violence, the fatigue of underinvestment, and the need for a coordinated response rooted in care. Mayors are asking for solutions. Residents are demanding accountability. And young people are searching for hope and safety.

In this moment, Cities United has answered with presence, precision, and partnership. Over the last year, we've delivered more than **800 hours of coaching and technical assistance to 35 jurisdictions, walking alongside local leaders to strengthen systems and strategies. Through our Leading the Way Tour, we've invested \$2.4 million into jurisdictions working to redefine public safety on their terms.** Our engagements have equipped cities, counties and states with roadmaps, narrative tools, and frameworks to move from intention to implementation.

Along the way, we've convened thousands (virtually and in-person) through ecosystem meetings, strategy planning labs, advocacy trainings, and national learning sessions that reached **over 675 unique communities.** We've watched safety plans be completed, young leaders step into governance roles, and jurisdictions begin to coordinate crisis response systems that prioritize prevention, not punishment.

We are laying the groundwork for cities to build sustainable, community-led ecosystems that keep young Black men and boys and their families *safe, healthy, and hopeful*. We are helping the field not only hold the weight of this moment, but carry it forward with strategy, support, and shared accountability.

As we gather at this convening, we honor the work already done and recommit to what's next: **a national movement of jurisdictions, and individuals equipped to lead, ready to change, and deeply rooted in the communities they serve.**

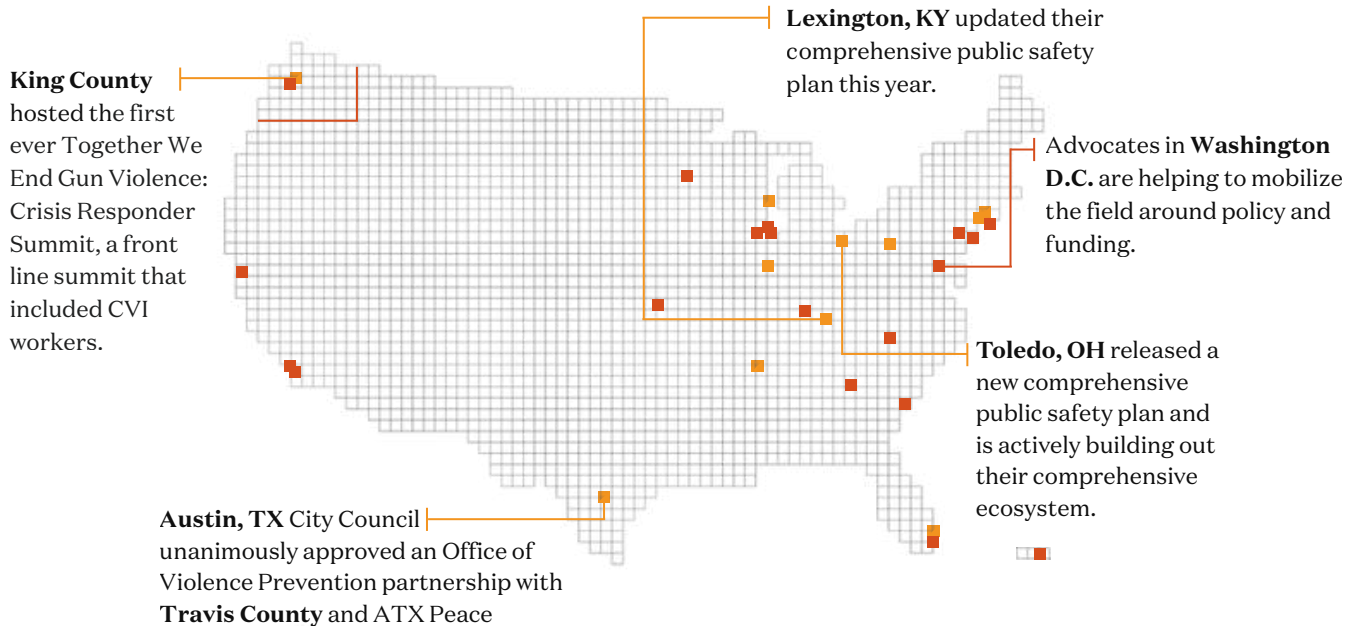


2024 - 2025 BY THE NUMBERS: MEASURING OUR MOMENTUM

- **800+ hours** of coaching & capacity building delivered
- Educated, advised, and supported over **600 local elected and appointed officials in understanding community-led public safety strategies and aligning municipal efforts** with ecosystem partners.
 - Invested **222 hours of direct engagement with mayors, city councilmembers, and senior officials to strengthen local leadership, deepen coordination, and translate political will into action**
- **35 jurisdictions** engaged through site visits, roadmaps, and plans
 - **11 jurisdictions visited during Leading The Way tour**
- **\$3 million** invested in local communities through the Leading the Way Tour, SYNC, Convening, and sponsorships to the field.
- Hosted **13 national webinars** reaching **1200+ attendees across 675 locations**
- **340+ hours** of Young Leader engagement, coaching, and career development
- **45+ Young Leader Alumni** attending the 2025 Convening—largest participation

COACHING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Hands-on guidance for jurisdiction leaders, young leaders, and grassroots partners, including training, mentoring, and equipping them with the tools and skills to strengthen their work.



Partner Jurisdictions We Visited

- | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Allegheny County (Pittsburgh, PA)* | • Lake County (IL) | • Mt. Vernon, NY* | • Toledo, OH* |
| • Atlantic City, NJ | • Lexington, KY* | • Newark, NJ* | • Travis County (Austin, TX)* |
| • Atlanta, GA | • Long Beach, CA | • New York City, NY | • West Palm Beach, FL* |
| • Brooklyn Park, MN | • Los Angeles, CA | • Oakland, CA | • Washington, DC |
| • Charleston, SC | • Louisville, KY | • Philadelphia, PA | • Washington State |
| • Chicago, IL | • Miami, FL | • San Juan, PR | • Winnebago County (Rockford, IL) |
| • Kankakee, IL* | • Milwaukee County (Milwaukee, WI)* | • Shelby County (Memphis, TN)* | |
| • King County (Seattle, WA)* | | • Topeka, KS | |

***Leading the Way Tour Jurisdictions**

Education & Infrastructure Building

Working with local councils, state and federal partners, and coalitions to advance funding and strategies that support community-led safety.

- ✓ Austin Council/ATX Peace in Austin, TX
- ✓ Support for #ProtectCVI and Federal Cuts
- ✓ Community Justice Action Fund Advocacy Day in Washington D.C., and Louisiana
- ✓ Emerging Youth Achievement Advisory Council in Milwaukee, WI

Virtual Engagements

Webinars, roll calls, and online training that keep the network connected, share learning, and highlight local efforts in real time.

13 CITIES UNITED
VIRTUAL LEARNING
EVENTS/WEBINARS

11+ PARTNERED VIRTUAL
LEARNING
EVENTS/WEBINARS

Thought Leadership

Cities United is elevating national thought leadership by publishing tools, shaping frameworks, and guiding the field's understanding of what community-led safety truly requires. Our team conducted over **100 interviews across 17 organizations and 11 jurisdictions** to inform actionable tools and learning products rooted in real experience. We've also brought our voice to national stages presenting at convenings, panels, and strategy sessions that move the conversation from theory to transformation.

SELECTED CONFERENCES

- #ProtectCVI National Day of Action
- African American Mayors Association Annual Conference
- Beyond the Bullet: Gun Violence Conference
- Brady Summit: Building a Future Without Gun Violence
- COMNET 25
- Community Justice Advocacy Summit
- CVI Narrative Strategy Workshop & Summit
- Emory University Violence Prevention Summit
- Intergenerational Conversations Creation of Future Justice Leader
- JustUs Ideas Week
- Mayor's Innovation Project
- Milken Institute Financial Innovations Lab
- National League of Cities (NLC) Retreat
- National League of Cities - Black Caucus
- Northwell Gun Violence Prevention Forum
- Prevention Summit
- Project Unloaded: Narrative Change to Culture Change
- Rocket Foundation Annual Event and Summit
- Youth Justice Summit

COMPREHENSIVE SAFETY PLANS

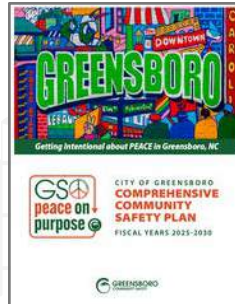
Helping jurisdictions create and update written, data-driven strategies that bring all elements of the ecosystem together into a long-term roadmap for safe, healthy, and hopeful communities.

CHECK OUT THE PLANS



[TINYURL.COM/CUPUBLICSAFETYPLANS](https://tinyurl.com/cupublicsafetyplans)

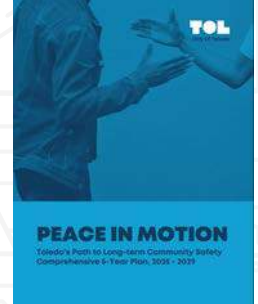
2025



GREENSBORO



LEXINGTON
(UPDATE)

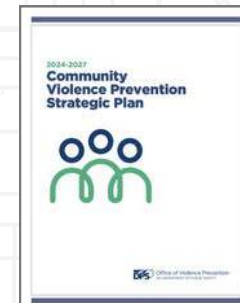


TOLEDO

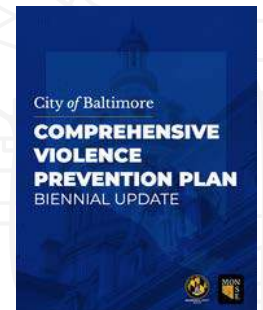
2024



BATON ROUGE



STATE OF NC



BALTIMORE
(UPDATE)

Crisis Response

Direct support in moments of acute violence or community need, showing up in jurisdictions experiencing spikes or tragedies to provide expertise, coordination, and solidarity.



GREENSBORO



LEXINGTON



TOLEDO



WASHINGTON
D.C.



MEMPHIS



LOUISIANA

JURISDICTION SPOTLIGHTS: OUR WORK IN ACTION

ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PA

Since 2017, Cities United has partnered with Allegheny County to strengthen its comprehensive public safety ecosystem, building on decades of local organizing and innovation. Through Roadmap Academy and ecosystem convenings, we've supported alignment across system leaders, frontline organizations, and youth advocates. Together, we are shaping a long-term strategy rooted in care, equity, and sustainability anchored by cross-sector collaboration and new philanthropic investment.



GREENSBORO, NC

Since 2023, Cities United has had the privilege of working alongside the City of Greensboro in reimagining public safety and advancing community-driven strategies for violence reduction. Greensboro joined our 2023 Road Map Academy, in a rigorous journey designed to help cities build comprehensive public safety plans rooted in community.

KING COUNTY, WA

Cities United began its partnership with King County in 2019, supporting efforts to align government, grassroots, and philanthropic leaders around a shared vision for community-driven safety. Through Roadmap Academy and ongoing coaching, we've helped deepen local infrastructure, elevate the role of credible messengers, and integrate narrative change into public safety strategies.



LEXINGTON, KY

Cities United began working with Lexington in 2018 through Roadmap Academy, helping deepen the city's commitment to community-based violence intervention. In partnership with One Lexington, city leadership, and a wide range of stakeholders, we've focused on elevating data capacity, engaging young leaders, and narrative power. Today, Lexington is advancing a multi-layered strategy that aligns public investment, policy, and community insight to address the root causes of gun violence.

TOLEDO, OH

Toledo joined Cities United's ecosystem in 2023 with a bold vision for public safety driven by grassroots leadership, survivor voices, and credible messengers. Cities United has supported the city in launching a data-informed roadmap process and uplifting organizations already leading peace and prevention work on the ground. With a growing cohort of young leaders and renewed civic momentum, Toledo is poised to become a regional model for community-centered safety.



[illegible]

LEADING THE WAY TOUR: BY THE NUMBERS	120+ Partners Engaged	\$110K+ Community Partner Investments
11 Local Storytellers Engaged	152 Young Leaders Engaged	\$76K Young Leader Compensation
1,300+ Participants	121 Local Officials	\$67K Paid to Local Black Vendors

LEARNING, IMPACT, AND WHAT'S NEXT

POTENTIAL IMPACT

**1.7M BLACK RESIDENTS
& 256K YOUNG BLACK
MEN AND BOYS
AGES 18–24.**

These numbers reflect the communities served by the 11 jurisdictions participating in Cities United's 2025 Leading the Way Tour. While our work does not directly reach every individual, it strengthens the ecosystems that shape their lives — from local public safety plans and community partnerships to youth leadership and capacity-building. Together, these cities and counties are creating safer, healthier, and more hopeful futures for Black families and the broader communities they represent.

BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY: WHAT'S WORKING

- **Presence Builds Credibility** – National support elevates local efforts.
- **Momentum Needs Anchors** – Grassroots energy must translate into infrastructure.
- **Coaching Strengthens Follow-Through** – Tailored support turns ideas into implementation.
- **Shared Tools Create Alignment** – Frameworks give cities a common language for progress.
- **Networks Expand What's Possible** – Connections help cities access funders and platforms.



INVESTING IN YOUNG LEADERS

This year, **more than 55 Leading the Way Young Leaders** from across the country will join us at the Cities United Convening in Louisville. Their participation is evidence of the tour's commitment to building the next generation of civic leadership. These young leaders are central actors in transforming how cities define and deliver safety.

WHAT'S NEXT: FIVE CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES

1. Building Strong & Sustainable Governance
2. Creating Real Pathways for Young Leaders
3. Centering Survivor & Family Voices
4. Strengthening Data Capacity & Accountability
5. Building Narrative Power & Political Will

These themes, along with detailed post-tour reports and recommendations, will dictate the coaching that Cities United's team members provide to each jurisdiction, recognizing local priorities and dynamics will help to guide the process appropriately.

"Our young people have solutions, our young people have ideas, and our young people want to be involved."
— Allegheny County Ecosystem Partner

[illegible]

PUBLIC SAFETY REDEFINED

noun / verb phrase

verb phrase — The active process of transforming how cities, systems, and communities imagine and build safety by centering the brilliance of young Black men and boys, dismantling inequities, and sustaining ecosystems that prevent harm before it occurs.

“When our elected and appointed officials committed to Public Safety Redefined, the jurisdiction began funding initiatives to interrupt the cycle of violence, and family supports instead of more jail beds.”

Note: Public Safety Redefined is not a program or slogan. It is a governing philosophy and collective practice. It is both a vision (what safety should mean) and a verb (what we do daily to build it).

Real change comes when all elements are **connected, coordinated, and sustained**. This requires:

- ## COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SAFETY ECOSYSTEM

Political and Public Will Aligned

Comprehensive Public Safety Strategy

Cross-Sector Collaborations

Young Leaders Fully Engaged and Guiding Efforts

Jurisdiction Office that Focuses on Reducing Community Violence

Law Enforcement Agencies,
Fire Departments,
Emergency Medical
Services, Public Safety
Communications Systems,
and Related Infrastructure.

SAFE INTERRUPTING THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Stopping harm before it spreads and saving lives in real time through trusted, community-based responses.

- Violence Interruption
- Street Outreach
- Hospital-Based Violence Intervention
- Diversion & Alternate Pathways
- Coordinated Crisis Response
- Collaborative Public Safety Funding Models

HEALTHY DISMANTLING SYSTEMS OF INEQUITY

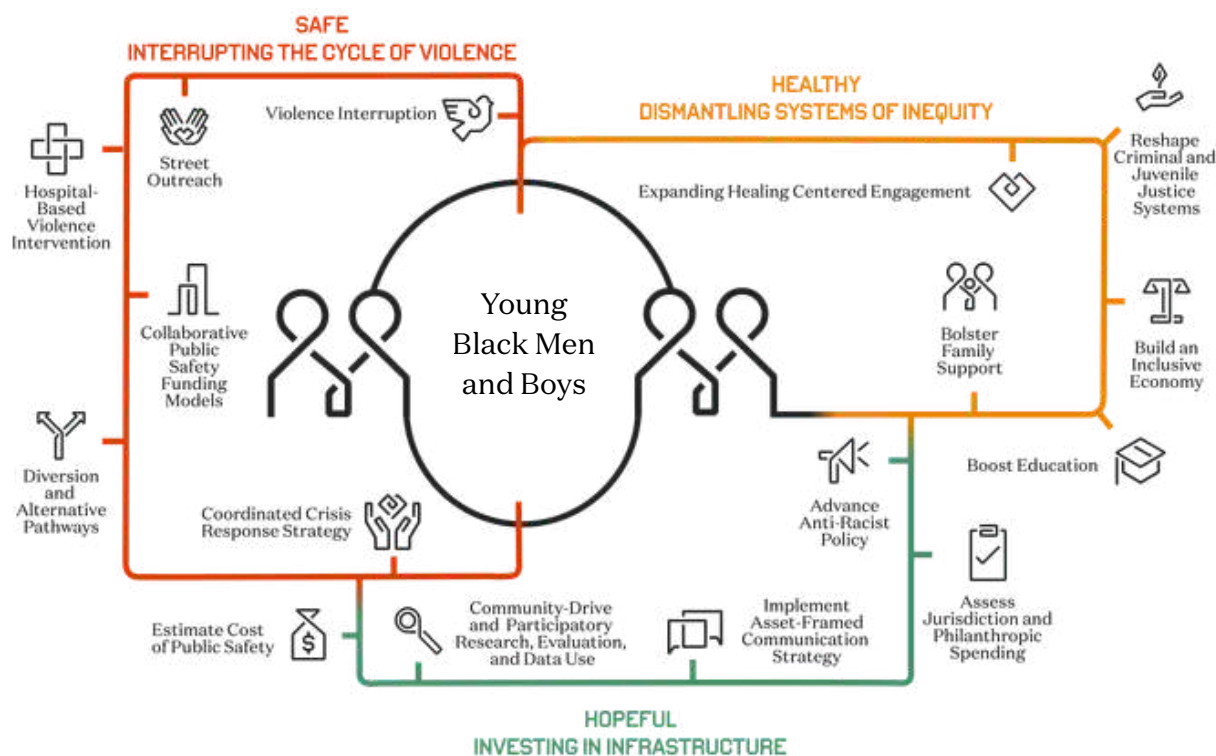
Transforming schools, justice, health, and economic systems that fuel cycles of violence by centering equity and healing.

- Boost Education
- Expand Healing-Centered Engagement
- Build an Inclusive Economy
- Reshape Criminal & Juvenile Justice Systems
- Bolster Family Support

HOPEFUL INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

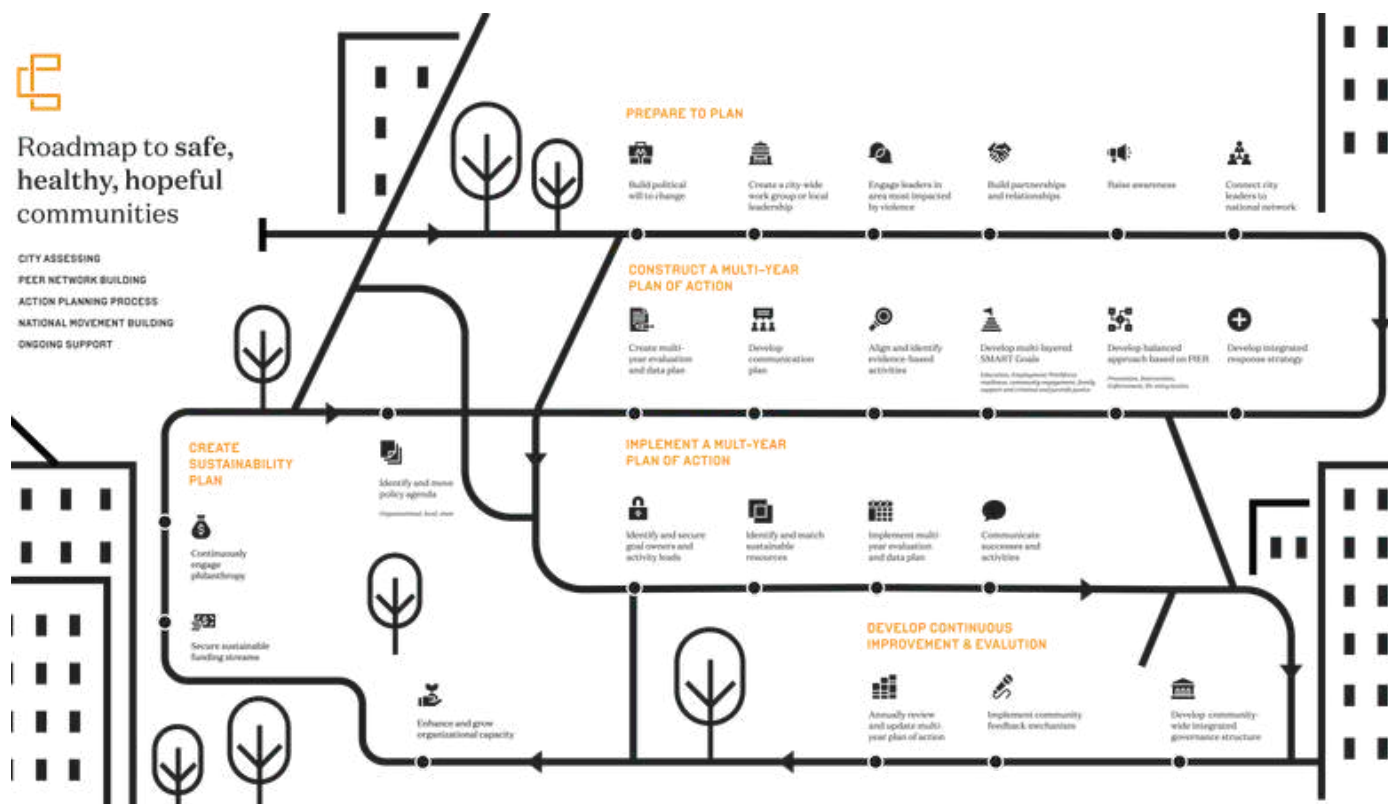
Building durable systems that sustain safety and opportunity across generations. Infrastructure means funding, policy, and narrative change that outlast election cycles.

- Estimate Cost of Public Safety
- Assess Jurisdiction & Philanthropic Spending
- Advance Anti-Racist Policy
- Implement Asset-Framed Communications
- Community-Driven and Participatory Research, Evaluation, & Data Use



ROADMAP

The **Roadmap** is Cities United's step-by-step process for helping cities bring Public Safety Redefined to life. The Roadmap describes the journey for getting to the vision of Public Safety Redefined. It guides jurisdictions through learning, planning, implementing, and sustaining strategies across the ecosystem, ensuring that ideas become coordinated action and lasting change.



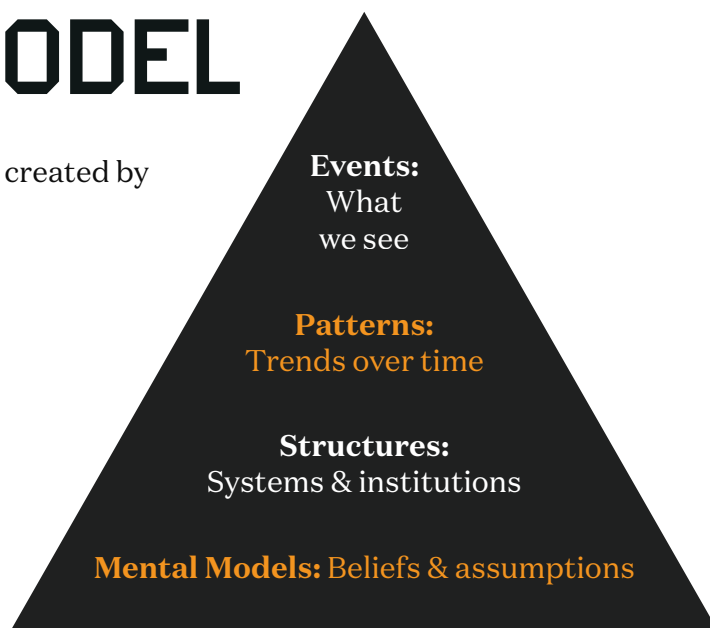
THE ICEBERG MODEL

A systems thinking tool to look beneath the surface created by Michael Goodman

WHY IT MATTERS:

The Iceberg Model helps us move from reacting to single events → to transforming the deeper patterns, structures, and beliefs that shape them.

It shifts public safety from **reaction** to **redefinition**—building conditions for safe, healthy, and hopeful communities.



TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY

ICEBERG MODEL

(Current State)

WHAT WE SEE (EVENTS)

- Fatal shootings
- Police response at crime scenes
- Arrests, detentions, court appearances
- Funerals, memorials, vigils

SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS (STRUCTURES)

- Over-policing and punitive policies
- Cash bail and sentencing disparities
- Underfunded schools and healthcare
- Housing discrimination and disinvestment
- Limited pathways to economic stability

WHAT KEEPS REPEATING (PATTERNS)

- Non-fatal shootings and cycles of retaliation
- High rates of youth arrest & incarceration for minor offenses
- School pushout, suspensions, and dropouts
- Young parents unable to secure stable, livable-wage jobs
- Intergenerational trauma and community instability

BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS (MENTAL MODELS)

- “Safety = policing and punishment”
- “Some communities are dangerous”
- “Black boys and young men are problems to contain”
- Harm and trauma are inevitable

PUBLIC SAFETY REDEFINED

ICEBERG MODEL

(Fully Implemented Ecosystem)

WHAT WE SEE (EVENTS)

- Fewer shootings and homicides
- Immediate crisis response teams with health workers, interrupters, and outreach
- Community-designed safety initiatives
- Families and youth engaged in healing circles and decision-making

SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS (STRUCTURES)

- Dedicated Offices of Violence Prevention with funding authority
- Equitable budgets (investment in youth jobs, housing, health, prevention)
- Cross-sector governance tables linking government, philanthropy, CBOs, schools, faith, and young leaders
- Racial equity impact assessments embedded in all policies
- Community-driven data and evaluation dashboards

WHAT KEEPS REPEATING (PATTERNS)

- Declines in gun violence and retaliation
- More youth in school and career pathways
- Families supported with resources and stability
- Media narratives center resilience, healing, and leadership
- Communities expect prevention and equity as the standard

BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS (MENTAL MODELS)

- “Safety = healing, prevention, and opportunity”
- Black boys and families are assets and leaders
- Violence is preventable, not inevitable
- Budgets and policies are tools for justice and thriving communities







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