



Leading the Way 2025 Tour

KANKAKEE REPORT

HIGHLIGHTING WHAT WORKS

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends, Partners and Kankakee Leadership and Community,

Kankakee has taken steps to truly embrace comprehensive public safety. The strength of the team at Kankakee United, the deep partnerships among the community, law enforcement and city leaders-all play a role in bringing this small but mighty city closer to an all hands on deck approach to safety. Cities United chose Kankakee as a stop on the Leading the Way Tour due to its commitment to all Black men, boys and their families.

The Leading the Way Tour is designed to listen deeply to those closest to the work (credible messengers, young leaders, survivors, grassroots organizations, county agencies, and city staff) and to reflect back both what is working and what is needed. In Kankakee, we heard powerful examples of law enforcement's desire to have a more comprehensive crisis response system, of young people sharing urgent priorities for their safety and well-being, and of partners in government and health systems making public safety a core part of their strategies. These stories illustrate not only the strengths in Kankakee's ecosystem but also the desire to build new partnerships.

The report that follows captures these insights. It highlights Kankakee's progress, surfaces the challenges that participants candidly shared, and lifts up their vision for what comes next. Recommendations are paired with immediate and long-term opportunities, but they are grounded in what participants themselves expressed during our time together.

Kankakee's efforts deserve national attention but more importantly, they highlight how important cross sector collaboration is on the ground. Young leaders were clear about what they need to feel safe and thrive, and adults across sectors affirmed the importance of moving from conversation to action. Cities United is committed to walking alongside the city and its partners as these steps are taken, so that together we can advance our shared vision of building safe, healthy, and hopeful communities.

In partnership,

Anthony D. Smith

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

BRIDGING VISION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

From **July 8–10, 2025**, Cities United hosted its **Leading the Way Tour stop in Kankakee**, Illinois — bringing together city officials, community-based organizations, law enforcement, educators, faith leaders, and young leaders for three days of learning, reflection, and strategy building. The visit provided a snapshot of **Kankakee’s progress in developing a comprehensive public safety strategy** and identified the priorities, challenges, and momentum shaping its next steps.

Kankakee’s public safety ecosystem is anchored by **measurable results**, trusted grassroots relationships, and a growing infrastructure led by Kankakee United, the city’s Office of Violence Prevention. Over the past three years, the city has seen a significant decline in **reported gunshot incidents (774 in 2021 to 359 in 2024)**, reflecting the likely impact of coordinated prevention and intervention strategies. This progress has been fueled by cross-sector collaboration, dedicated outreach, and meaningful engagement of young leaders.

The city is in **Phase 2 of the Cities United Roadmap** — having identified high-level focus areas, early opportunities for alignment, and initial cross-sector collaboration. The next step is **Phase 3**, marked by clear goals, formal governance structures, sustained partnerships, and the resources needed for full implementation.

Together, these partners form a **coordinated force**: addressing immediate safety needs while building the skills, connections, and opportunities that allow young leaders to thrive.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE TOUR

- **Strengths:** Strong community pride, trusted relationships, and targeted focus on improving outcomes for young Black men and boys.
- **Challenges:** Limited organizational capacity, gaps in countywide coordination, uncertain funding, lack of role clarity, and disparities in education and employment.
- **Momentum:** Visible community events, expanded young leader engagement, and new investments signaling readiness for implementation.
- **Strategic considerations:** Formalize governance, expand rapid response, align CVI strategies, and build a shared narrative to mobilize stakeholders and resources.

The Recommendations & Opportunities for Support section outlines five priorities:

- Build formal countywide coordination structures.
- Strengthen capacity and strategic positioning of Kankakee United.
- Develop a coordinated narrative and storytelling strategy.
- Strengthen violence intervention infrastructure and rapid response.
- Deepen school, faith, and private sector engagement.

With **strong leadership**, community will, and continued collaboration, Kankakee can turn recent progress into **lasting, systemic change**. The momentum captured during the Leading the Way Tour stop offers a clear path forward — one that centers prevention, healing, and opportunity to create a safer, more connected Kankakee for all.



INTRODUCTION

Cities United’s **Leading the Way Tour** is designed to strengthen the **public safety ecosystem** through the promotion of strategies that are **data-driven, healing-centered, and community-led**. At each stop, the tour brings together community, city and county leaders, young leaders, and institutional partners to reflect on current efforts, surface challenges, and align around **sustainable solutions**. The **Kankakee stop** convened government officials, community-based organizations, law enforcement, educators, and young leaders for honest dialogue, celebration of progress, and identification of **key next steps**.

THE LEADING THE WAY TOUR SEEK TO:

- Highlight effective, comprehensive public safety practices and models
- Foster cross-sector collaboration
- Amplify community-led solutions
- Enhance local capacity
- Evaluate progress and impact through the Cities United Roadmap Framework
- Assess and foster young leader engagement

Kankakee—a small city with a strong network of grassroots partners, a dedicated Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), and a track record of measurable impact—welcomed the tour during a pivotal moment. **Gunshot incidents in the city have dropped from 774 in 2021 to 359 in 2024—a 53% decrease**—reflecting coordinated prevention and intervention work (Shaw Local, 2025). Still, challenges remain, including capacity constraints, uneven countywide coordination, and public misconceptions about OVP’s role.



We’re now talking about safety and healing in the same breath.

MAYOR CHRIS CURTIS – KANKAKEE

Across strategy sessions, workshops, and community gatherings, participants emphasized the need for **stronger coordination**, expanded outreach, and **deeper integration of young leaders into decision-making**. These conversations underscored a shared commitment to formalizing a comprehensive public safety plan that is inclusive, sustainable, and rooted in the lived experiences of those most impacted. Currently in **Phase 2 of the Cities United Roadmap**, Kankakee is preparing for full implementation. This phase focuses on aligning high-level priorities and building collaborative momentum before launching full-scale implementation efforts.

This report draws from **full-session transcripts, local data, and reflections** from young leaders, community members, and institutional partners. It highlights strengths, names persistent challenges, and outlines opportunities for advancement alongside potential areas where Cities United can partner with Kankakee in moving from planning to measurable, lasting change.

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE: KANKAKEE

Grounded Strengths: Measurable Impact and Growing Capacity

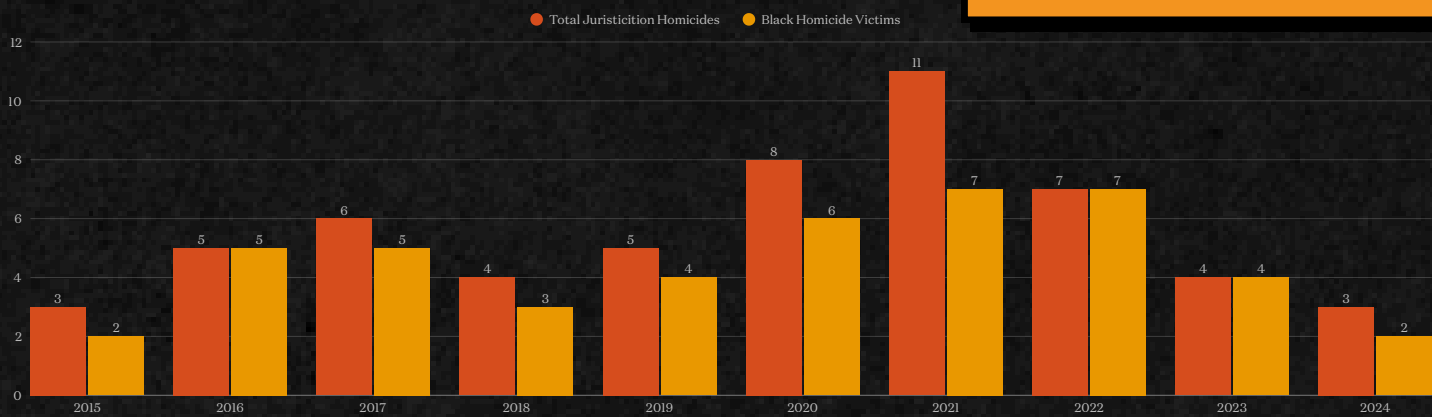
Kankakee’s public safety ecosystem is anchored by **measurable results**, trusted grassroots relationships, and a growing infrastructure that centers prevention, healing, and opportunity. Throughout the tour’s strategy sessions and facilitated workshops, participants pointed to the city’s strong relationships, credible messengers, and sense of **community pride** as key drivers of progress. Coordinated prevention and intervention strategies — from credible messenger outreach to targeted neighborhood events — have likely contributed to a **53% reduction in reported gunshot incidents** over the past three years (774 in 2021 to 359 in 2024).

Number of people “At Highest Risk” of being directly impacted by gun violence

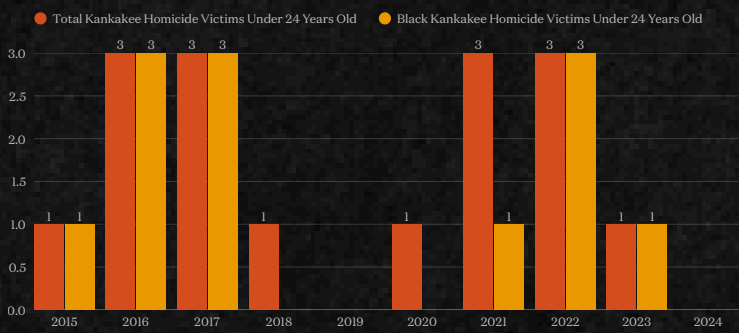
24

(0.1% of population)

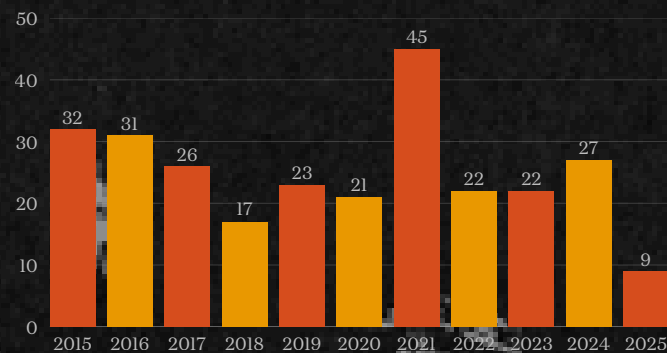
KANKAKEE HOMICIDES



KANKAKEE HOMICIDE VICTIMS UNDER 24 Y.O AND BLACK



KANKAKEE FIREARM INJURIES



	Number of violent crimes	Violent crime rate per 100,000 residents	Murder Rate per 100,000 residents
County	161	698	13
State	38,915	310	7
Country	1,253,813	374	6

The City of Kankakee’s Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), known locally as **Kankakee United**, leads the city’s public safety strategy with a focus on improving outcomes for young African-American men and boys through neighborhood engagement, mentorship, and opportunity-building. Its work includes supporting community-building events, launching trauma-informed initiatives like the Forgiveness Campaign, providing scholarships, and partnering with schools, workforce organizations, and justice leaders to expand educational, employment, and second-chance opportunities.



MOMENT THAT MATTERED

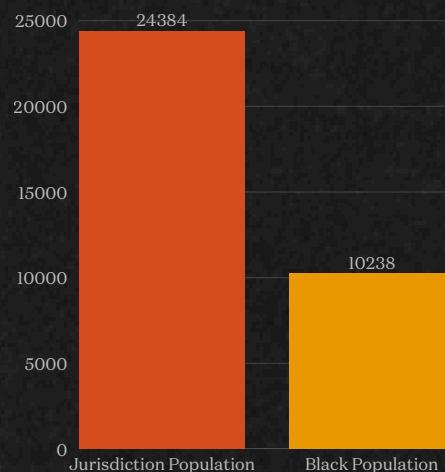
“When I joined the Youth Council, it wasn’t just about having a seat at the table — I met mentors who helped me through some of my hardest times,” a young leader shared.

His peers nodded in agreement, adding that these opportunities make them feel “seen, heard, and part of something bigger.” The moment underscored how both formal and informal mentorship can foster belonging and prevent harm.

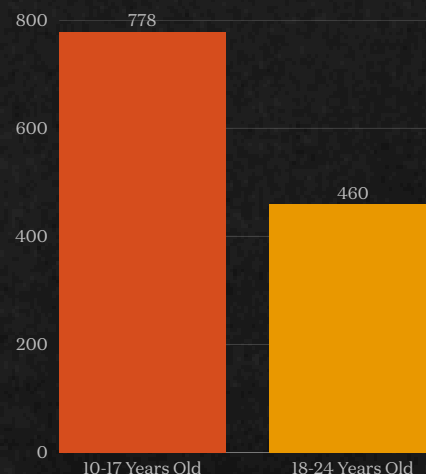
These strengths are not abstract. In the **SWOT analysis**, participants consistently named the city’s credible messengers, long-standing organizations, and willingness to “show up” as critical assets. These are lived realities, evident in church partnerships, school-based initiatives, and grassroots spaces that prioritize relationship-building over punitive measures. Kankakee’s size and interconnected networks allow for a unique level of personalized engagement with residents.

Finally, there is visible cross-sector **momentum**. Representatives from government, law enforcement, education, healthcare, and nonprofit spaces engaged actively during the tour. These emerging partnerships—along with Kankakee’s connections to national networks like Cities United—signal readiness to deepen strategy, expand capacity, and attract external resources for sustainability.

POPULATION



BLACK MEN/BOYS AGES 10-24





PERSISTENT CHALLENGES: CAPACITY LIMITS AND SYSTEM GAPS

Despite recent progress, Kankakee faces **structural barriers** that slow the development of a fully coordinated public safety strategy. Feedback from stakeholders, the SWOT analysis, and Cities United team reflections and observations reveal recurring issues in **organizational capacity, alignment, funding stability, and public perception** — all of which must be addressed for the city to move confidently toward full-scale implementation.

One of the most immediate challenges is **limited organizational capacity**. Kankakee United — the city’s Office of Violence Prevention — operates with only three staff members who manage an expansive portfolio, from street outreach to program delivery to convening citywide partners. This small team is often called upon to be “everywhere at once,” leaving limited time for proactive planning, grant development, or the sustained execution of a Relentless Engagement model. As a result, promising ideas such as a **24–48 hour coordinated response to shootings** or deeper school-based engagement have been slow to scale.

Capacity constraints are compounded by **gaps in countywide** coordination. While relationships with individual partners are strong, there is no formal countywide structure to align public safety priorities, resources, and referral pathways. Coordination often depends on personal relationships rather than standardized systems, which leads to inconsistent service coverage across municipalities. Law enforcement agencies in the county collaborate effectively, but other parts of the ecosystem — schools, service providers, and violence intervention programs — often lack the same level of alignment, especially beyond Kankakee city limits.



Kankakee United operates with just 3 staff members managing outreach, programs, and citywide coordination.

Uncertain funding pathways also threaten sustainability. Much of Kankakee United’s work is funded through short-term or competitive grants, with key staff positions tied directly to these cycles. This forces leadership to focus heavily on fundraising and grant renewal rather than scaling impact. The “start-stop” nature of funding can interrupt services, erode trust, and prevent the city from executing long-term strategies.

Another recurring theme is **confusion about Kankakee United’s role**. Community members and some partners are unclear on whether the office is primarily an event organizer, youth program provider, or policy leader. Limited communications capacity reinforces this ambiguity, leading some to underestimate the office’s strategic role in shaping the city’s public safety agenda. Misunderstandings about what the office can and cannot fund further complicate engagement. This is further compounded by a lack of consistent definitions and shared understanding of strategies — particularly **Community Violence Intervention (CVI)** approaches. Stakeholders noted that while CVI is often referenced, there is variation in how it is interpreted, the activities it includes, and how it should be coordinated alongside other prevention and intervention models. Without alignment on language and approach, opportunities for collaboration can be missed, and measuring progress becomes more difficult.

These structural issues intersect with system gaps in intervention and prevention. **Illinois’ SAFE-T Act (Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity–Today)** has changed arrest protocols for young people with firearms, creating both opportunities and tensions. Without the ability to mandate short-term holds, some stakeholders worry that certain young people remain at high risk of re-engaging in violence without sufficient wraparound support.

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

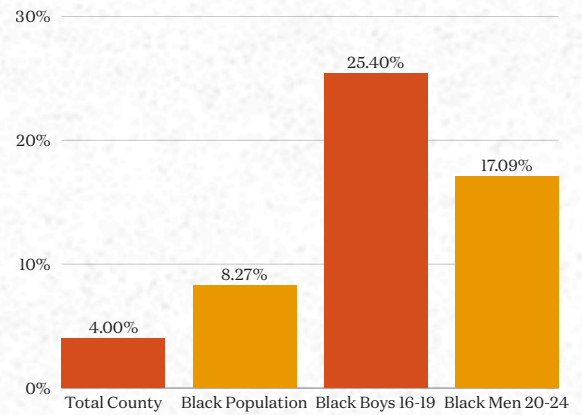
*“We’ve had a young person caught multiple times with a firearm, and under the current law, we can’t hold them,” one law enforcement partner shared. “They’re right back on the street, and without **immediate, intensive support**, the cycle continues.”*

*This account resonated across the room and sparked a discussion about the urgent need for **stronger intervention pathways**, including a coordinated 24–48 hour response to shootings that mobilizes schools, Safe Passage teams, violence interrupters, therapists, hospital supports, faith-based partners, police, and victim services.*

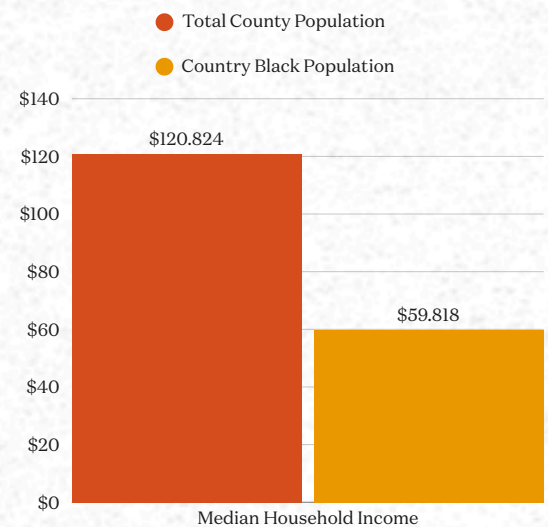
Other gaps emerged in school engagement, faith community partnerships, and consistent convening of the Violence Prevention Coordinating Council – all of which limit the reach of prevention and intervention services. High unemployment among young African-American men and boys remains a pressing concern, with rates estimated at **36.6% for ages 16–19 and 15.9% for ages 20–24**. Educational disparities further compound the challenge: **the graduation rate for African-American students is 64% compared to the district average of 75%, and only 6% meet math proficiency standards and 9% meet reading proficiency standards**. Chronic absenteeism affects over half of African-American students in the district, highlighting the need for stronger school-to-work pipelines and in-school conflict resolution programs.

These interconnected challenges – limited capacity, uneven alignment, unstable funding, unclear role definition, inconsistent understanding of strategies, and gaps in intervention and opportunity – underscore the importance of **building a stronger foundation**. Strengthening internal capacity, establishing formal coordination structures, and investing in consistent public messaging will be essential to locking in recent gains and preparing Kankakee for its next phase of implementation.

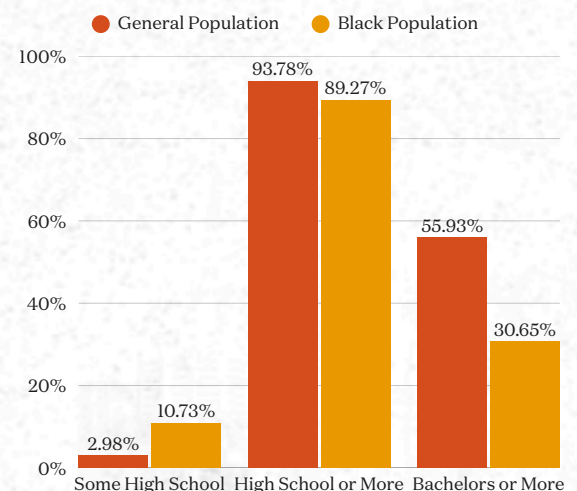
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



EDUCATION LEVEL



EMERGING MOMENTUM: VISIBLE ACTION AND RENEWED COMMITMENT

Kankakee's public safety ecosystem is experiencing a surge of **visible action**, deeper cross-sector collaboration, and expanded opportunities for **young leaders** to shape solutions. These developments, while still in early stages, are building public trust and reinforcing the city's readiness to move from planning to full implementation.

Recent community events have served as **powerful symbols of unity and commitment**. The second annual Walk Against Gun Violence drew approximately 100 residents, young leaders, and city officials, traveling through historic Ward 1 and Ward 2 neighborhoods. Chants for "safe streets" echoed alongside personal stories of loss and resilience, creating a shared moment of purpose. In July, the Bike Against Violence ride, co-led by Kankakee United, Kankakee Forgives, and local police, brought 25 young cyclists and law enforcement officers together to ride through neighborhoods impacted by violence, offering a visible statement of **peace and partnership**.

Momentum is also building through **structured youth engagement**. The Teen Town Hall held in March at the Kankakee Public Library's Teen Zone brought young leaders into direct conversation with city officials, giving them a platform to influence programming, share concerns, and propose solutions.

Kankakee's renewed partnership with **Cities United** in mid-2025 has further strengthened this momentum. As part of the continued collaboration, **\$40,000 in funding** was dedicated to local organizations, along with stipends for 15 young leaders to participate in public safety discussions. In addition to these investments, Kankakee United continues to support grassroots capacity through its **community mini-grant program**, which provides \$2,000–\$5,000 awards for projects such as block parties, youth mentorship, and workforce readiness programs. These small but targeted grants enable neighborhood leaders to take direct action in advancing the city's public safety strategy.

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

"Riding with the police and the community together, it felt like we were actually on the same team," one young participant in the Bike Against Violence shared. "People saw us coming and waved — that's not something I've felt before."

The ride's mix of visibility, collaboration, and safety underscored the power of shared experiences in building trust between residents and institutions.

Together, these developments signal an **inflection point** for Kankakee — one where visible action, resource investment, and young leader engagement are converging to create the conditions for long-term, systemic change.

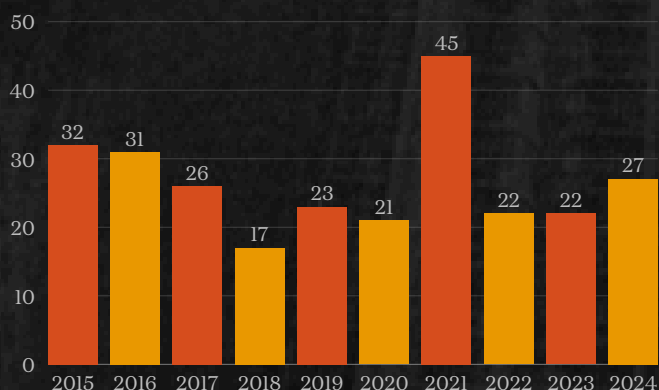
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS: ADVANCING FROM PLANNING TO FULL IMPLEMENTATION

Kankakee is currently in **Phase 2** of its public safety planning journey. At this stage, the city has identified high-level focus areas, surfaced opportunities for alignment, and begun early cross-sector collaboration. Moving from this early framework toward the full construction of a comprehensive strategy is the next critical step, as it marks the transition from planning to implementation. As Kankakee continues to build out this plan, it should align **SMART goals** that clearly define its priorities and create pathways for coordination across systems.

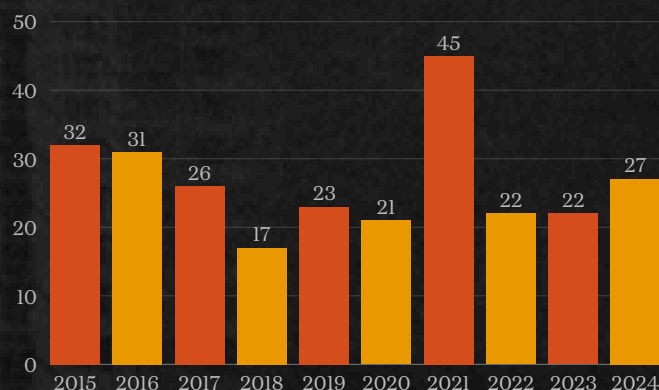
A key component of this next phase will be establishing a **coordinated crisis response system** capable of mobilizing resources within 24–48 hours of a shooting, bringing together schools, Safe Passage teams, violence interrupters, therapists, hospital staff, faith leaders, law enforcement, and victim services. The city’s comprehensive strategy should also be anchored in the **PIER framework** — Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement, and Reentry — with evidence-based activities across each pillar to address root causes of violence and promote safety and healing.

Long-term, the plan must also outline actions that drive **systems change**, improve resource sharing, and invest in supports around education, workforce development, family services, and criminal justice reform. This work is essential given the scale of need — nearly three in ten Kankakee residents are under the age of 18, and the city’s violent crime rate remains higher than both state and national averages despite recent progress. Sustaining the reduction in gunshot incidents achieved since 2021 will require a durable governance structure, secured partnerships, and long-term funding streams.

INSERT SUPPORTING DATA TRENDS



INSERT SUPPORTING DATA TRENDS



To effectively transition into **Phase 3**, Kankakee will need a **multi-year data and evaluation framework** to monitor outcomes, guide continuous improvement, and demonstrate impact to both funders and the community. Strengthening **public communications** to clarify the role of Kankakee United, expanding compensated leadership opportunities for young leaders, and differentiating outreach models will be essential to ensuring the plan is intentional, strategic, and ready for execution.

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

“We had a shooting, and it took a full day for the school to even know. Some people got help right away, others got nothing. Imagine if within an hour, every partner knew, youth mentors were checking in, and therapists were on the block. That’s what a coordinated plan could give us.”

This real-life account underscored the urgency of moving from ad-hoc crisis management to a unified, cross-sector response framework — a hallmark of Kankakee’s next stage of public safety planning.

KANKAKEE: SAFETY & EQUITY SNAPSHOT

Building on themes surfaced through the SWOT analysis, Cities United team reflections, and community discussions, the following snapshot provides key data points that illustrate the structural conditions shaping Kankakee’s public safety landscape — a city making measurable progress yet still confronting systemic barriers to sustained safety and opportunity.

Population: 24,384

Black Population: 10,238

Black Boys (ages 10–24): 1,238

Gunshot Injuries since 2015: 275

Cumulative Homicides since 2015: 56

Unemployment among Black Males (ages 20–24): 15.9%

Overall Graduation Rate: 77.8%

Graduation Rate for Black Students: Data not available in the provided dataset

These indicators reinforce why Mount Vernon’s next steps must be rooted in coordination, equity, and sustained commitment to community-led safety solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

FOR CITIES UNITED SUPPORT

The Kankakee stop of the **Leading the Way Tour** surfaced clear priorities for advancing a city-led, comprehensive **public safety strategy** rooted in prevention, healing, and opportunity. These recommendations reflect a combination of **Cities United team reflections**, end-of-stop feedback, and facilitated dialogue throughout the tour. Each recommendation is paired with potential opportunities for **Cities United** to partner with Kankakee in building on existing progress.

1. Build Formal Countywide Coordination Structures:

Tour discussions underscored that while Kankakee has strong partnerships with individual organizations, there is no formalized countywide body to align priorities, resources, and referral systems across municipalities. A coordinated structure would strengthen connections between law enforcement, service providers, schools, and community-based programs, ensuring consistent access to supports and reducing duplication of efforts.

Opportunity for CU Support:

- Facilitate the creation of a countywide public safety coalition with broad sector representation.
- Develop standardized referral and data-sharing protocols to ensure consistent service delivery across jurisdictions.
- Convene quarterly cross-sector meetings to align strategies and monitor progress.

2. Strengthen Capacity and Strategic Positioning of Kankakee United:

Kankakee United plays a central role in the city's public safety work, yet operates with limited staff capacity and resources. Without additional support, the office risks being stretched too thin to maintain program quality while also driving long-term strategy. Expanding capacity while clarifying its role as a systems convener would position Kankakee United to lead more effectively and engage partners more strategically.

Opportunity for CU Support:

- Identify sustainable multi-year funding sources to secure staffing and program continuity.
- Provide targeted training for staff in grant development, program evaluation, and strategic communications.
- Create a public awareness campaign and resource guide that clearly defines Kankakee United's mission, services, and partnership opportunities.
- Develop a communications plan that positions Kankakee United as a policy leader and connector in the city's public safety work.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

FOR CITIES UNITED SUPPORT

3. Develop a Coordinated Narrative and Storytelling Strategy:

Building a shared narrative around Kankakee's public safety vision will help unify stakeholders, improve public understanding of strategies like Community Violence Intervention (CVI), and highlight progress. Storytelling that centers lived experiences and data can inspire trust, attract resources, and combat misconceptions about what Kankakee United can and cannot do.

Opportunity for CU Support:

- Facilitate storytelling workshops with young leaders, community members, and partners to develop shared messaging.
- Establish a regular communications rhythm (e.g., newsletters, social media campaigns) to share progress and impact.
- Develop a narrative toolkit for partners to ensure consistent language and framing when describing public safety efforts.

4. Strengthen Violence Intervention Infrastructure and Rapid Response:

Kankakee's prevention and intervention efforts have strong individual components but lack a fully coordinated system for responding to incidents of violence. Stakeholders identified the need for a 24–48 hour rapid response plan that deploys resources immediately to affected neighborhoods, including schools, Safe Passage teams, violence interrupters, therapists, hospital-based violence intervention (HVIP) teams, faith partners, law enforcement, and victim support services. Building clarity around the difference between violence interruption and broader street outreach — and integrating these into a coordinated Violence Prevention Coordinating Council — would create consistency and accountability.

Opportunity for CU Support:

- Design and implement a 24–48 hour coordinated shooting response protocol that includes clear roles for all partners.
- Strengthen the Violence Prevention Coordinating Council's focus and structure to prioritize actionable coordination.
- Expand partnerships with hospital-based intervention programs like Riverside to ensure victims and families receive immediate and sustained support.
- Provide training for local elected officials and police to increase alignment with CVI best practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

FOR CITIES UNITED SUPPORT

5. Deepen School, Faith, and Private Sector Engagement in Public Safety Strategy:

Long-term violence prevention in Kankakee will require stronger engagement of schools, faith-based organizations, and the private sector. Schools offer a critical point of access for prevention and conflict resolution programs, including the potential for school-based violence intervention and prevention models led by trained young leaders. While faith communities hold influence, participants noted they may not always reach those most at risk — requiring targeted strategies to engage them effectively. Private sector and philanthropic partners also remain an underutilized resource for funding and sustaining prevention work.

Opportunity for CU Support:

- Partner with schools to embed mentorship, conflict resolution, and school-based violence intervention programs.
- Develop targeted strategies for faith-based engagement that recognize cultural and trust barriers while leveraging their role in community healing.
- Convene funders and private sector leaders to explore collaborative investments in violence prevention and intervention.
- Create spaces for young leaders, educators, and community members to share ideas and inform school-based and neighborhood-level strategies.

These recommendations represent a **blueprint** for strengthening Kankakee’s public safety ecosystem while honoring the community’s commitment to **prevention, healing, and opportunity**. By building formal structures, expanding capacity, clarifying roles, aligning strategies, and investing in **young leaders**, Kankakee can transition from planning to full implementation. **Cities United** stands ready to partner in this work, leveraging national networks, technical assistance, and resource development to help ensure that progress is both **measurable and sustainable**.

Conclusion:

A Call for Aligned Action

The Kankakee stop of the **Leading the Way Tour** highlighted a city making **measurable strides** in reducing violence, strengthening relationships, and expanding opportunities for **young leaders** — while also facing capacity constraints, coordination gaps, and resource challenges that could limit its ability to sustain progress.

With strong **community pride**, trusted grassroots networks, and a dedicated Office of Violence Prevention in Kankakee United, the city is well-positioned to move from **Phase 2** — where high-level focus areas, early alignment opportunities, and initial cross-sector collaboration are taking shape — toward **Phase 3**, characterized by clear goals, formal governance, sustained partnerships, and the resources needed for full implementation.

The work ahead will require **deepened countywide coordination**, strengthened organizational capacity, and a shared narrative that builds trust and invites broader investment. It will also depend on fully integrating rapid response protocols, school-based and community prevention models, and expanded engagement from faith and private sector partners.

By pursuing the recommendations outlined in this report and leveraging the partnership with **Cities United**, Kankakee can continue to transform its public safety ecosystem into one that is **prevention-driven, healing-centered**, and equipped to deliver lasting change.

APPENDIX

Referenced Quotes & Attribution

- *“When I joined the Youth Council, it wasn’t just about having a seat at the table — I met mentors who helped me through some of my hardest times.”* — Young leader, Youth Council session transcript
- *“These opportunities make them feel ‘seen, heard, and part of something bigger.’”* — Young leader peer feedback, Youth Council session transcript
- *“We’ve had a young person caught multiple times with a firearm, and under the current law, we can’t hold them. They’re right back on the street, and without immediate, intensive support, the cycle continues.”* — Law enforcement partner, strategy session transcript
- *“Riding with the police and the community together, it felt like we were actually on the same team. People saw us coming and waved — that’s not something I’ve felt before.”* — Young participant, Bike Against Violence event

Key Data Points Referenced in Report

- **Population:** 24,384 — Kankakee LTW Pre-Tour Briefing Materials
- **Black Population:** 10,238 — Kankakee LTW Pre-Tour Briefing Materials
- **Black Boys (ages 10–24):** 1,238 — Kankakee LTW Pre-Tour Briefing Materials
- **Gunshot Incidents:** 774 (2021) → 359 (2024) — 53% decrease — Illinois State Police data via CU pre-brief
- **Cumulative Homicides:** 42 — Kankakee LTW Pre-Tour Briefing Materials
- **Unemployment (Black Males ages 16–19):** 36.6% — U.S. Census Bureau ACS via CU pre-brief
- **Unemployment (Black Males ages 20–24):** 15.9% — U.S. Census Bureau ACS via CU pre-brief
- **Graduation Rate (overall):** 77.8% — Kankakee School District Report Card via CU pre-brief
- **Graduation Rate (African-American students):** 64% — Kankakee School District Report Card via CU pre-brief
- **Math Proficiency (African-American students):** 6% — Kankakee School District Report Card via CU pre-brief
- **Reading Proficiency (African-American students):** 9% — Kankakee School District Report Card via CU pre-brief
- **Chronic absenteeism (African-American students):** 54% — Kankakee School District Report Card via CU pre-brief

APPENDIX

Sources of CU Team & LTW Jurisdiction Member Feedback

- **Transcripts:** Core Leadership Meeting, Roadmap Bootcamp Part I & II, SWOT Workshop, Public Safety Meeting
- **Forms:** End-of-Stop Reflections, Daily Reflections (CU team)
- **Internal Notes:** CU high-level notes and facilitated session documentation

Supplemental Materials Reviewed

- Agenda-at-a-Glance: Kankakee LTW Stop
- SWOT Workshop Visuals
- Kankakee LTW Pre-Tour Briefing Materials
- Vividus Labs Kankakee Evaluation Report
- 2025 Tour Data File for Kankakee (CU pre-brief dataset)





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