

THE RAS BARAKA BLUEPRINT

to Reduce Crime and Violence In Newark

2024 RAS BARAKA
for MAYOR

A New Strategy to Reduce Violence in Newark And Restore Healthy Neighborhoods

By Ras J. Baraka

Violence has become a crippling public health epidemic that is destroying our communities. This historic violence against African Americans, Latinos, and recent immigrants has morphed into a culture of self-destruction and desperation. The quality of life of every Newarker is affected by the culture of gun violence.

My purpose in seeking to become mayor of Newark is to build a broad base movement of people and institutions empowered to transform our city. Transforming opportunities for our youth is an integral part of our vision.

The theme of my campaign is Believe in Newark. This is not just a political slogan. It is a statement of the truth that we, the people of Newark, have the power to transform our city if we do it collectively. This Blueprint is a work in progress. I challenge you, the people of Newark, (because you are the experts), to participate in this process by responding to the ideas presented here and by joining my campaign to reduce crime and violence in our city.

The principles of empowerment and collective action are at the core of my proposed strategies for education and economic development. These principles are at the heart of my strategy to reduce crime and violence. The strategy is holistic and comprehensive.

A Comprehensive Holistic Approach to Public Safety

Using a public health approach, we will engage and coordinate the people of Newark, leaders in education, criminal justice, community development, local government, housing, workforce development, public health, mental health, substance-abuse treatment, religion and victims' advocates, to address our public safety challenges and make the people of Newark safer in their daily lives.

Every institutional stakeholder must be at the table, including universities, small businesses, public schools, corporations, nonprofits, and philanthropic organizations. But the most important participants are the citizens of Newark.

The evidence and history tells us that principles of collective action, self-determination and self-empowerment coupled with structural changes offer a lasting solution to the plague of violence and crime.

The most effective way to reduce violence and crime is to ensure that all Newark residents capable of working have a job and the ability to become self-sufficient. There is a direct correlation between crime and unemployment. I have a comprehensive strategy to put those without jobs in Newark back to work. It can be found in my Blueprint for Jobs and Economic Development which can be found at <http://www.rasjbaraka.com/policy/jobs/>

Community Mobilization

It is irrational and futile to think that Newark can be a safe community if only one or a few of us are safe. If the woman next door is abusing her child, and we turn our backs, then we are a contributor to the illness of domestic violence. If a person is shot in broad daylight in front of us, and we pretend that we did not see it, then we are a contributor to the illness that is gun violence.

This plan is built around three concepts:

- 1. Ending the Culture of Violence.**
- 2. Making Citizens Partners in Enforcing the Law.**
- 3. Mobilizing Law Enforcement and All of Our Other Resources to Focus on the Places Where Crime is Concentrated.**

As Mayor, My Priorities To Reduce Violence Will Be...

- **Creating Office of Community Wellness and Public Safety to Coordinate Solutions**
- **Focusing on the Areas Where Violence Rules. Broadening the Use of Compstat**
- **Intensely Engaging With Gangs – Project Chill**
- **Reentry – Facilitating the Path from Jail to Community**
- **Early Intervention: Stopping the Violence Begins with Our Children**
- **Strengthening Newark's Economy to Reduce Unemployment**

Violence should be treated as an infectious disease

Violence is one of the leading causes of death and has reached epidemic proportions in urban communities. Typhus, Pneumonia, Yellow Fever and Diphtheria have been controlled by changing environments, isolation of the disease, immunizations and application of new medical techniques. We must fight violence in the same way that we summon our resources to wipe out AIDS and other deadly diseases.

The U.S. Surgeon General, the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have all identified violence as a priority public health issue challenging local, national and global communities by its negative influence on morbidity, mortality, and quality of life.

As a Councilman, I sponsored a resolution passed unanimously recognizing that violence is a public health problem requiring a strategic, long-term, and multi-faceted response. As Mayor, I will implement that mandate of the Newark City Council.

Create an Office of Community Wellness and Public Safety

I will establish an Office of Community Wellness and Public Safety to lead the coordinated strategy to reduce violence. This office will work across city agencies, collaborate with federal, state and county officials, mobilize the community, and partner with universities, business leaders, and philanthropic organizations to develop resources, and implement the strategy to reduce crime and violence.

Focusing on the Areas Where Violence Rules. Broadening the Use of Compstat.

Computer geographic mapping technology allows us to pinpoint areas where crimes are concentrated. We can pinpoint entire neighborhoods, blocks, or even buildings.

Newark presently uses Compstat to target concentrations of crime and to assign law enforcement personnel based upon where crimes occur rather than upon wards or districts. We will expand the use of geographic mapping technology to target workforce development, social services, code enforcement, literacy programs, vacant lot clean ups, building demolitions and other means to make neighborhoods safer and more livable.

Compstat permits us to target places where violence is heaviest in addition to targeting the individuals committing the violence. Research has found that place-based solutions are the most effective way to reduce violence and crime.

My administration will bring together every law enforcement tool to focus on the areas of major gang activity. We will deploy aggressive order maintenance techniques by police, including making arrests for public drinking, arresting street drug dealers, and conducting expanded foot patrols to supplement beat officers. This component is intended to take high-risk individuals off the street and also to bring minor offenders into a new community court system. When incidents of violence occur, we will deploy saturation police patrols in the surrounding neighborhood.

Intense Engagement With Gangs: Project Chill

The power of law enforcement agencies can be used to *prevent* violence in addition to prosecuting and jailing those who commit violence. Project Chill will be built on the three principles of exercising law enforcement authority to prevent violence, rewarding gang members with significant opportunities for ceasing violence and community involvement .

Similar to programs that successfully reduced gang violence in Boston, Mass. and Stockton, California, Project Chill will target the relatively small group of chronic gang offenders. Similar programs have been highly rated by the U.S. Department of Justice and recommended by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. A major share of the violence in Newark occurs among members of a handful of gangs who are constantly on the watch for each other and as a result carry guns to protect themselves as well as to retaliate against others.

Project Chill will send a credible, clear message about the consequences of gang violence to those already involved in gangs or at risk of becoming involved. It will reward those who give up violence with intense job training and education, meaningful jobs, valuable reentry help and community welcome and acceptance.

It will take advantage of the vulnerabilities created by their chronic criminal behavior and turn them into violence prevention tools. Project Chill will use the existing strengths of criminal justice agencies such as controlling drug investigations, patrolling streets and supervising probation and mobilize them in a plan primarily intended not to take gang members off the street, but to reduce violence by protecting them from themselves and other gang members.

Project Chill will involve collaboration by police, prosecutors, probation and patrol officers, federal officials, workforce development specialists, business leaders, social service agencies and community groups. It will bring to bear an alphabet soup of federal agencies, from the ATF to the IRS to work with police in going after gang members and violent criminals. These groups will focus their attention on chronic youth offenders linked to violent gangs, warning them through direct meetings and indirect channels, such as gang outreach workers and flyers, that continued violence will be met with severe sanctions including targeted crackdowns and referrals for federal prosecution and offering significant rewards for changed behavior.

Direct Communication With Gang Members

Direct communication with gang members is a key element of the strategy. All gangs in Newark will be made aware that there will be zero tolerance for violence. They will be made aware of that fact and of how to avoid being the target of stepped up law enforcement. When focus on a particular gang becomes necessary, the gang will be told that their violence has drawn intense law enforcement attention, and only a cessation of violence will stop the crackdown. This message will be communicated directly to individual gang members by outreach workers, probation officers, police officers and others.

Part of Project Chill will involve meeting with gang members on probation. They will be told that if they are involved in the shooting, police will target all of their fellow gang members. At the same time, gang members will be given the opportunity to take advantage of conflict mediation, counseling from pastors and other community leaders and help in job training, getting jobs or GED classes.

The program will rely on Youth Outreach Workers to communicate to gang members and at risk youth that they have better options for their lives. Youth Outreach Workers will be streetwise young men and women trained in community organizing, mentoring, mediation, and conflict resolution.

Gang violence creates more gang violence. If violence can be quelled for a meaningful period of time, it may not naturally come back. This was the experience of the program in Boston. The streets are violent now, so they stay violent. If they become safe they may remain safe. In the absence of constant fear and provocation, the temperature on the streets can go down.

Help for At Risk Youth

We will target impact areas (our term for neighborhoods of high gang activity and violence) for immediate job development, training and referrals and track the progress of those programs. Working in conjunction with the Youth Outreach Workers, community leaders, and churches, we will flood those neighborhoods with mentorship programs and extended school day programs that involve cultural development and social collaboration.

The police explorers program will target schools with at risk teens and recruit heavily for youngsters to become officers. We will develop youth councils in those areas that will provide young people with a voice in their community. In essence we will empower our young people to feel that they are a part of the success or failure of their community and have a stake in it and understand that the community has a stake in them.

Reentry: The Path from Jail to Community

The overwhelming majority of individuals who are incarcerated will eventually return to the community. Many of these individuals will return to Newark without having received treatment or adequate services and supervision upon release. Many will revert to lives of crime and violence without our help.

My administration will develop a comprehensive reentry strategy that reintegrates individuals into society, and helps them to become full and legal participants in our city and in the neighborhoods where they live. The reentry strategy will center on jobs and economic opportunity, but also encompass housing, healthcare, and the unique plight of returning women.

Reentry of Women

Women are the fastest growing segment of the prison population. Compared to men, women represent a smaller portion of individuals reentering communities, however, their numbers are rising at a much higher rate than those of men. While the number of women in jail continues to grow, prison and reentry planning are still designed to meet the needs of men. We can no longer afford to make women an afterthought in reentry planning.

Women, while incarcerated and upon release, face a unique set of challenges. They are more likely than men to be incarcerated for drug and property crimes. Women in prison are more likely than men to experience staff sexual misconduct, have chronic or communicable medical problems (including HIV, Hepatitis C, and sexually transmitted diseases), and have symptoms of a current mental health problem.

In order to effectively reintegrate women back into Newark, my administration in partnership with State and county corrections departments will adopt a coordinated and gendered approach to reentry planning.

The most pressing needs for women preparing for reentry are lack of vocational training, history of drug abuse, and tenuous family situations. Newark will address these issues by including women in workforce development programs and making reasonable accommodations for childcare needs during training; partnering with the state and federal government to expand drug and mental health treatment facilities and make community healthcare services more accessible to women; and partnering with the Newark Public Schools, social services, and faith-based institutions to identify and address the needs of children with incarcerated or reentering mothers and fathers.

Reentry Employment

Newark's unemployment rate is about twice the state's average. Among the unemployed are deserving, hard working, and law-abiding residents. There are also similarly deserving and hard working residents with criminal convictions. Our comprehensive jobs strategy will address the needs of both segments. Connecting former prisoners to employment has multiple benefits.

On the individual level it offers a chance to become a productive member of society, and creates a sense of self-worth. On a family level, it provides income to financially assist loved ones. On the community level, all residents win public safety benefits when ex-offenders are engaged with legitimate work.

Helping the reentering population is a good example of why my strategy of total community mobilization and coordinated effort is needed. It is a good example of why I decided to create an Office of Community Wellness and Public Safety to coordinate all of Newark's efforts to reduce violence. Successful reentry requires cross-system collaboration among the criminal justice, workforce development, family services, health and human services, social services systems and community organizations and leaders.

For example, the criminal justice system needs to collaborate effectively with the health and human services system to address substance abuse and mental illness among ex-offenders, both of which affect an individual's ability to succeed in the workplace. In addition, there needs to be intergovernmental collaboration, because these systems are administered at the city, county, and state levels. Only through collaboration can we leverage the necessary resources to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders, and rebuild our communities.

I have led the reentry and employment focus of the Newark City Council. In 2012, I supported the Ban the Box ordinance. This law expands the opportunity of ex-offenders to compete for jobs, by delaying when and determining how employers can use criminal history information, consistent with the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission's guidelines.

As mayor, my administration will leverage city, state, and federal resources to expand job-training programs in growing industries. As I detail in my Blueprint for Jobs and Economic Development, all job training will be tied to job placement programs, and each program's progress will be tracked to determine which are most successful. The City will only invest in the most effective services. Ex-offenders should be included in all appropriate projects that benefit from city resources.

Reentry Housing

Among the first considerations for an individual returning home from prison is appropriate housing. Yet, housing is one of the most difficult obstacles to successful reintegration. As mayor, I will lead the effort against housing discrimination against ex-offenders by educating homeowners and property managers about the benefits of reintegrating ex-offenders. My administration will strictly enforce the "ban the box" ordinance, which covers those seeking housing.

Healthcare Upon Reentry

Many individuals enter prison with a variety of health problems, some are treated, but many are left untreated. Other health problems are contracted while in prison, some are treated, while many are never diagnosed or inadequately treated. Thus, ex-offenders return home with health issues that affect the wellness of our community.

Obamacare creates the opportunity to increase access to healthcare for people returning home from prison. Under the new provisions, more than half of federal and state prisoners reentering the community each year are estimated to be eligible for either Medicaid or federal subsidies to help buy health insurance from state health insurance exchanges.

I will direct Newark's Office of Offender Reentry to work with social service and community providers to: (1) determine eligibility for coverage for residents that walk through their doors, (2) facilitate the application and enrollment of eligible individuals in Medicaid or other coverage, and (3) connect residents with appropriate healthcare providers. Increased access to healthcare will improve the overall wellness of the community, and allow ex-offenders to more seamlessly reintegrate in the community.

Early Intervention: Stopping the Violence Begins with Our Children

Law enforcement leaders have long known that giving children the right start in life is the best way to prevent violence and crime. Social science and neuroscience research backs this up. In the first few years of life, children's intellects and emotions, and even their ability to develop concern for each other (the beginnings of conscience) are beginning to build the foundation upon which later success or failure will depend.

We will step up and invest in what works to keep Newark's most vulnerable children from becoming our most wanted adults using a strategy that involves partnering with the school district, philanthropic organizations, existing agencies and the people of our city to carry out a comprehensive plan.

Under my administration, early intervention will mean four basic steps:

1. Provide all at risk families access to high-quality early care and education for children from birth to age 5.

We will support young families with access to voluntary early education and care for babies, toddlers and preschoolers, with focus on preparing children for happy and productive lives.

2. Offer voluntary parent coaching to at risk parents of young children through home visiting or other options proven to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Studies show that being abused or neglected multiplies the risk that a child will grow up to be a violent criminal.

3. Ensure that all school-age children and youth have access to effective programs during school hours and after school to help them keep on track.

Both approaches are needed to help school aged children steer clear of crime: first, effective programs during the school day and second, high quality after school programs

4. Identify troubled children and provide them and their parents effective interventions so that the children will avoid a life of crime

Many children who are overly aggressive and at higher risk of becoming involved in violent crime later in life can be identified at an early stage and helped. Many young people who are already offenders can become productive citizens with the right help.

Centers of Hope

Literacy is one of the biggest deterrents to crime. The more access people have to books and the greater their literacy, the less likely it is that they will be arrested, join a gang or wind up in jail. As a councilman I have dealt with the problem of literacy by opening Centers of Hope in the South Ward. We enlisted places of worship and community centers to open their buildings after school hours

for reading and literacy programs. We recruited volunteer literacy coaches and reading specialists to make them a success.

As mayor I will do the same in impact areas throughout Newark. The Centers of Hope will focus on skills training as well as literacy. They will connect caregivers with services within the community. The centers will identify children of incarcerated parents because studies suggest that these children are at greatest risk of coming in contact with the criminal justice system than other children. Children with parents in jail are more likely to live with caregivers who abuse drugs or lack an education; live in households with incomes below the poverty line; experience sexual abuse; and be subject to multiple changes in residences and caregivers.

We will provide mentorship and counseling to the young people growing up with relatives and siblings in jail or that have been victimized by violence and encourage their guardians to make sure that they are enrolled in a school as early as 3 years old. We will send teams of college student volunteers to visit the homes of interested parents to engage families in literacy programs. We will make literacy a required component of city-funded recreation and social programs.

Community Court for Minor Offenses

I intend to pursue a restorative justice model that employs community involvement. Restorative Justice is a departure from the traditional criminal justice model. It does not simply seek to punish perpetrators by restricting their freedom, instead it seeks to restore what the victim and the community lost. Research shows that this model is effective in schools. In fact, Central High School, where I am the Principal, has used it with remarkable success. First time and second time minor offenders need, instead of jail or large fines, a reasonable community intervention that will help assure that they don't repeat their bad behavior.

As Mayor, I will seek public and private grants to establish community courts on an experimental basis. These courts would be located in the neighborhoods where the offenses occur. A person found guilty of a minor offense would be made to meet once a week for a few months and in a restorative circle with community leaders, parents, victims, religious leaders, etc. and discuss the ramifications of their actions on the community and on the quality of life of their neighborhood.

This approach to quality of life offenses is modeled on New York City's successful system of "Community Panels." We should use this intervention as an opportunity to begin to address behaviors that led to the initial crime.

Rebuild the Economics of Distressed Neighborhoods

In my Blueprint for Jobs and Economic Development, I discuss measures to restore the economic vitality of neighborhood shopping corridors. In addition, we will establish neighborhood Quality of Life Task Forces. It is important to vigorously enforce building, fire, and health codes in high crime areas. Many of our neighborhoods have substandard housing, buildings in disrepair, and absentee landlords, all of which attract anti-social activities and contribute to a sense of hopelessness.

The Quality of Life Task Forces will be multi-agency teams of fire, building, and health code enforcement officers as well as police officers to go building by building through neighborhoods. Community residents will be encouraged to suggest targets for the inspections. Through vigorous enforcement, landlords will be compelled to properly maintain their buildings or sell them to someone

interested in doing so.

The City will target vacant lots and abandoned properties by legally obtaining them, and reselling or redeveloping the land. Our goal will be to put people in homes, and put homes back on the tax rolls.

Establish Pedestrian Corridors

In other cities, strict enforcement of laws against loitering and obstructing sidewalks has made it more difficult for gangs to operate. I have introduced legislation in the City Council establishing “pedestrian corridors” in hot spots. On “pedestrian corridor” streets, the only people permitted to enter or exit the area would be those travelling to a residence or business or those using the street to get to an outside destination.

Bring Community Policing Closer to the People

The Newark Police Department operates under the principle of community policing. Officers are assigned to beats, defined geographic areas, and encouraged to get to know local residents, businesses, community leaders and shopkeepers. However, there is a need for more frequent interaction than occurs now between beat officers and neighborhood residents.

In my administration, I will give beat officers wide autonomy to work with residents and businesses to suggest and implement problem solving solutions unique to the conditions in their neighborhoods. We will direct them to hold frequent beat meetings and even building meetings with residents and shop keepers.

Aggressively seek grants to deploy the latest law enforcement technologies

Because of the needs of Homeland security, police technologies are advancing at a very rapid rate. Newark needs to use the latest and best technologies. I will aggressively seek state and federal grants for that purpose.

The Ras Baraka Record on Combating Crime and Violence

- **Opened Bergen Street Mini-Precinct**

After two years of work, Councilman Baraka opened the South Ward Police Substation in partnership with the Newark Police Department. The substation located at 1049 Bergen St. is operational and provides additional officers seven days a week 8 AM to 12 AM.

- **Secured Additional Patrols by Essex County Police**

As a result of the efforts of Councilman Baraka and 5th District Police Captain Eugene Venable and in partnership with the Essex County Sheriff's Office, additional patrols by Essex County police vehicles were added to the South Ward on Elizabeth Avenue, Lyons Ave., Clinton Avenue and Chancellor Avenue.

- **Organized Annual 24 Hours of Peace Cultural Event.**

Councilman Baraka hosts this event along with local and nationally recognized talent to advocate for peace and gun control. The event, held on Clinton Avenue, aims to ensure 24 hours of peace, fellowship, cultural enrichment and education.

- **Organized Citizen Night Patrols.**

Councilman Baraka organized citizen night patrols composed of volunteers to walk the streets with the goal of discouraging crime in high crime areas.

- **Led Newark to Recognize Violence as a Public Health Issue.**

In 2012, the City Council unanimously voted to support the resolution sponsored by Councilman Baraka to acknowledge and address violence as a public health issue. The landmark resolution highlights the public-health significance of violence and suggested that Newark pursue programs that identify risk factors, design interventions to address these factors and evaluate the effectiveness of those programs.

- **Initiated legislation to address complaints on loitering.**

To address community concerns about noise disturbance around retail stores, Councilman Baraka sponsored an ordinance that required restaurants and retail stores on designated streets to close at 10 PM Sunday through Thursday and 11 PM on Friday and Saturday

- **Initiated legislation to address abandoned properties and blight.**

Councilman Baraka created a pilot urban homesteading program enabling qualified residents of abandoned properties willing to rehabilitate and live in the home for minimum of five years to own the homes in which they live

- **Organized block cleanups.**

Councilman Baraka brings together volunteers and workers from neighborhood services and many other organizations to organize block cleanups in the South Ward.

- **Worked with building owners to put security cameras on their buildings.**

- **Secured 5 computers for the local police precinct through a donation from Beth Israel Medical Center.**