



EDDIE
MELTON
— **FOR** —
MAYOR
GARY 2023

Public Safety Policy Plan

March 2023

FOR GARY, INDIANA

Public Safety Policy Plan

INTRODUCTION

“We cannot over-police, nor arrest our way to a safer Gary. I will implement a holistic approach to public safety in Gary by addressing the systemic issues that cause crime and poverty in our city.”

— Senator Eddie Melton

Keeping people safe is the first job of the government. Our city faces an epidemic of gun violence, and domestic violence is on the rise. The time is NOW for clear and decisive leadership from the Mayor of Gary, whose fundamental role is to set clear goals, provide the resources necessary to realize those goals and hold people accountable for results.

My vision is for a S.A.F.E.R Gary where residents are empowered to contribute to the betterment of their community, First Responders have the support they need to do their jobs well and crime is addressed at the root to bring forth effective solutions. We are able to see Gary’s potential, and that idyllic vision includes measures of public safety that cultivate a sense of security for all members of our community, including those who are sworn to serve and protect us. Together, we will achieve this vision and improve the quality of life and life outcomes for our residents.

OVERVIEW

The S.A.F.E.R. Gary Public Safety Plan

- S** **Systemic change is required to address the root causes of crime and improve the overall quality of life for all Gary residents.** By intentionally prioritizing both educational and workforce opportunities and 21st Century Policing tactics, we will create the conditions conducive to a thriving, safe community.
- A** **Assertive action will be taken against the small networks of perpetrators causing disruption in the community.** We cannot and will not allow the poor decisions of the few to affect the lives of the masses. By targeting known violence and drug offenders, we will be able to stifle future crime.
- F** **We will Fortify our investment in Gary's public safety department and ensure the needs of our First Responders are met so they can perform at their best.** After a full audit, we will reallocate and redistribute the city's current budget to ensure it is covering all essential elements of a thriving public safety department as well as identify areas where ARPA funding could be used to fill gaps.
- E** **Prioritizing Engagement with the community is essential to all public safety efforts.** The eyes and ears of Gary know where the true problems are and how to address them. Elevating the level of community engagement will help us to not only address public safety concerns but also build a stronger, more tightly-knit Gary that is empowered to contribute to the safety and well-being of the entire city.
- R** **We will Reinvest in the people who make public safety possible by creating opportunities for both the community and our First Responders to thrive.** Our First Responders must be offered the opportunities for professional development and benefits packages that incentivize them to live and work in Gary city limits.

Systemic Change for a Safer Gary

It is the job of the government to address systemic issues that cannot be fixed by superficial programming failing to address the root cause of the problem. Studies show that more highly-populated, educated neighborhoods with higher rates of stable employment result in safer communities with relatively low crime rates. Therefore, as Mayor of Gary, I will ensure that investment across our city creates an environment conducive to these conditions. In conjunction with such conditions, modern community policing strategies have a positive impact on the safety of our citizens. We must make a unified commitment to holistically address public safety by doing the following:

a. Strategically implementing, in collaboration with local and state public safety experts, evidenced-based 21st Century policing efforts that include:

- i. Modern interdepartmental, intra-agency, data-driven, community-based policing in collaboration with local law enforcement agencies. In conversations with the Lake County Sheriff, I learned that Gary failed to participate in Lake County's "real time crime center," which includes a crucial county-wide camera system to share crime-related information with other agencies. Gary has also failed to invest in the Lake County Metro Homicide Unit and the Lake County Drug Task Force, two critical crime reduction partnerships that I will restore.
- ii. Using resident-led task force strategies to prevent crime.
- iii. Cultivating and curating nonprofit and community resources that address housing, food, health and other basic needs.
- iv. Improving the quality of city services like code enforcement, demolition, etc.
- v. Working towards quickly solving criminal investigation cases.

b. Systematically addressing low education and high unemployment rates in Gary to incentivize residents against engaging in criminal activity and placing them on a path toward a productive and fruitful livelihood. We will do this by creating incentives for local, domestic and international entities to further economic development within city limits. Hiring targeted populations and developing public-private partnerships to invest in the economic future of our youth and young adults will also be key.

Assertive Action Against Common Agitators

We will curb violence by targeting the known offenders causing the majority of crime in our city. Homicides are increasing at a staggering rate, and Gary's per capita homicide rate is disproportionately high. We will address this by:

- a.** Arresting and aggressively prosecuting known violent and drug offenders who choose to victimize our residents and engage in illicit activities.
- b.** Allocating more detectives to specifically focus on solving violent crime cases quickly to prevent additional violent crime.
- c.** Advocating for and investing in evidenced-based re-entry strategies including incentivizing businesses to hire ex-offenders to fully re-engage residents with prior convictions into the workforce and prevent the likelihood of re-offending.



Fortifying our City's Investments

For our city to uphold a standard of excellence across our entire public safety department, we must both identify areas where reapportionment and reallocation are needed and use federal funding to bolster the areas that are in need of additional resources. This will not only permit our First Responders to perform at their highest level but will also aid in staff retention and recruitment for a more responsive public safety workforce that will keep people safe. We will do this by:

- a. **Implementing facility improvements and capital investments to provide our First Responders – which includes Police, Fire and EMT – with state-of-the-art public safety facilities.** Measures such as these take into consideration the morale, health, and personal welfare of those who keep Gary safe, creating the conditions for them to do their jobs at peak performance.
- b. **Enlisting strong, decisive leadership by confirming the innovative, experienced and forward-thinking Police Chief our city deserves.** This will begin with an internal search for talented candidates who are ready to lead the transformation of Gary's public safety services, including the Fire Department, EMT, Code Enforcement and Animal Control.
- c. **Enforcing existing municipal codes on animal neglect and abuse. Research is clear that animal crimes are gateway crimes, and that exposure to animal crimes makes youth more likely to engage in criminal acts.** My administration will address Gary's severely neglected Animal Control division, implement a system for tracking intake calls as well as disposition and engage with community volunteers to turn Gary into a more humane city through community outreach, consistent enforcement and education on humane practices. I will also encourage holistic department-wide engagement on animal crimes consistent with recommendations from the FBI and National Sheriff's Association.
- d. **Enhanced code enforcement to address blight, dumping, litter and other code violations that depress Gary's tax base and erode quality of life.** I will implement a transparent system that identifies areas for improvement, including a portal for tracking complaints by address, assigning standardized work expectations for members of code enforcement and measurable quarterly goals. I will make those results available to the public so the community remains invested in keeping our city clean and can see the results of their efforts in real time.

Prioritizing Community Engagement & Citizen Leadership

In a democratic nation, we are remiss when we fail to include the public in decision-making regarding their own neighborhoods. We will prioritize public engagement for residents to share their public safety concerns and inform us regarding the type of public servants they will embrace, support and develop necessary alliances with to improve community-police relations. Additionally, we will empower our residents by creating and appointing a citizen review coalition made up of the individuals and groups that contribute to a thriving community. This includes faith leaders, community activists and even young people to help establish a set of criteria for police transparency and accountability.



Reinvesting in Our Human Infrastructure

We must remember that our human infrastructure is our city's greatest asset. Our talent is critical to both the growth of our city and a successful public safety plan. I have consulted with First Responders across all professions and jurisdictions, and what I have learned is disheartening. Our current public safety capacity is underutilized, resulting in longer than acceptable response times, unsolved cases and the inability to properly and effectively engage with community leaders and residents.

Our Police, Fire and EMT experience the same challenges of impending retirements, employee retention and talent recruitment as other industries. But while private and even government entities can face those challenges without an immediate threat to public safety, our First Responders and their

departments cannot. As a result, we are placed in a precarious position each time an officer leaves the department for retirement or more competitive wages and benefits offered by neighboring agencies. To preserve the safety of our residents and the resurgence of our city, we have to address this fundamental problem. My plan will address this by:



- a. Recruiting the next generation of Gary First Responders through targeted public outreach and workforce development initiatives**, including the Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program and a Junior Firefighter Program.
- b. Reallocating the placement of existing officers to put more capacity on our streets and closed unsolved cases.** We will accomplish this goal by quickly hiring and onboarding new officers, addressing the problem of vacancies that exist in roles throughout the department. We will also promote more officers to detective roles to solve more cold cases.
- c. Retaining experienced officers by offering a more competitive benefits package** to keep talent in our city, including tuition reimbursement programs, Gary employer-assisted homeownership initiatives for public-sector employees, increased uniform stipends and upgrading the employer assistance programs to improve mental health and wellness benefits.

THE S.A.F.E.R. GARY PLAN

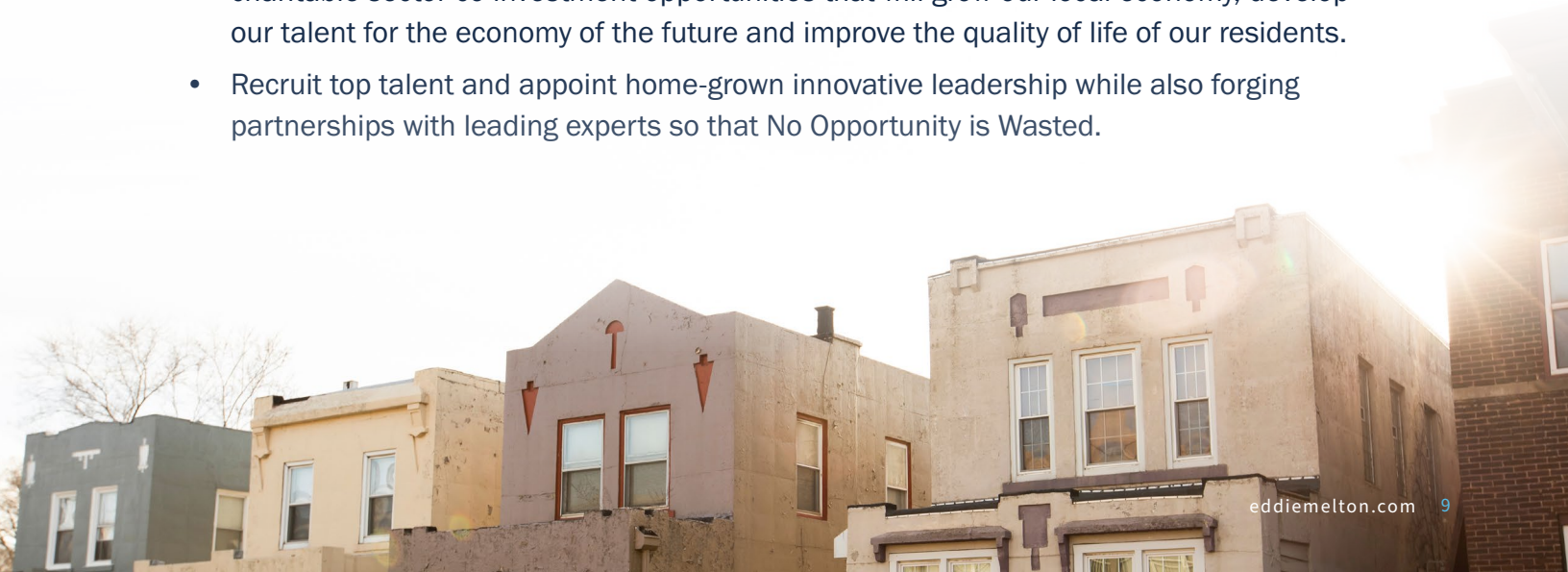
Public Safety

SUMMARY

The S.A.F.E.R. Gary plan will improve both public safety and the overall quality of life for all residents in Gary. We will fund the programs to achieve our goals – all without raising taxes. How will we do it?

OUR PLAN WILL INCLUDE:

- Strengthening Gary's tax base, which will be accomplished by attracting and developing new businesses that want to invest here, expanding homeownership for residents who want to build here and creating a workforce for talent to thrive here.
- Accountability enhancements, which will involve improving fiscal management and oversight of our critical public resources while also improving the services provided to Gary citizens. We will work to reduce response times, improve case-solving rates and enhance community-police relationships and oversight.
- Funding strategies that aggressively seek out and leverage state and federal funding already earmarked for infrastructure improvements and the modernization of law enforcement agencies.
- Economic growth to secure the public-private partnerships needed to attract private and charitable sector co-investment opportunities that will grow our local economy, develop our talent for the economy of the future and improve the quality of life of our residents.
- Recruit top talent and appoint home-grown innovative leadership while also forging partnerships with leading experts so that No Opportunity is Wasted.





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