



# SANTA ANA COMMUNITY SAFETY ASSESSMENT

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank all the community based organizations, personnel, and public agencies who graciously agreed to organize or help set up focus groups for us; representatives from the local schools, law enforcement and other public sector agencies for taking the time to speak with us; and the survey distributors and community residents that administered resident surveys for us. We are greatly indebted to all the individuals who participated in the focus groups and resident surveys. Without such participation, this report would not be possible.

This report was commissioned by The California Endowment. The opinions, findings and recommendations expressed are those of Urban Peace Institute.



### **Santa Ana Community Safety Assessment**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Santa Ana has a deep history with strong ties to its culture and identity that has demonstrated resilience amid years of violence and lack of economic opportunity within a resource rich county. The generational influx of Mexican, Central American, and Southeast Asian immigrants has contributed to a culturally diverse city with a mix of multigenerational families and more recent arrivals. Amid the many complex challenges that exist, the city has always strived for a greater vision for the future. At times the vision between city leaders and residents is aligned, however throughout Urban Peace Institute’s (UPI) year-long assessment, major gaps were uncovered, widened by special interests. While some public officials expressed frustration with the entrenched political dynamics that hinder meaningful change within the city, others were fine with maintaining “business as usual”. Much of the City’s future can be found in the passion of the next generation of leaders.

The Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) prides itself on focused investment in youth and their families. Survey respondents identified the school district as the number one trusted service provider in the city. Not only does the school district invest in innovative programs for students, they also actively engage their families and maintain a positive presence in the community beyond the school walls. Most impressive is their commitment to developing leadership among their students. It is this vision of leadership that will propel Santa Ana and Orange County into the future. In 2016, the New York Times characterized Santa Ana as the “face of a new California, a state where Latinos have more influence in everyday life— electorally, culturally and demographically—than almost anywhere else in the country.”<sup>1</sup>

**Santa Ana is currently engaged in a struggle to define the future values of the city.** New ideas among young, progressive leadership are being pushed to the forefront, while traditional leadership resists, seeking to maintain old values of a city on the precipice of transformation. This was evident throughout the assessment process via numerous attempts to engage old guard city leaders. One major gap in this assessment is the absence of the Santa Ana Police Department’s (SAPD) perspective on public safety. Despite multiple attempts to engage command staff and their officers to assess community safety, ultimately any type of cooperation was denied. Santa Ana PD is a major political force within the city, strengthened by the efforts of the police union. Among Orange County’s oldest 34 cities, Santa Ana is perceived as the most open minded and represents an important battleground for progressive change in the region.

Over a one-year period, UPI engaged over 1,000 residents and stakeholders via focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and surveys to shape this report which identifies key community and city assets, perspectives on safety, existing service gaps, and an analysis of systemic issues. Community safety, which includes an analysis of public safety data coupled with individual perceptions of safety, is an important indicator to assess as it uncovers dynamics that can contribute to toxic stress and overall community health. The top five issues impacting safety in Santa Ana were ranked as follows: 1) homelessness, 2) fear of deportation, 3) drug sales/use, 4) general disorder (i.e. trash, graffiti, noise), and 5) gang activity and gun violence. These concern areas shaped the perceptions of community safety among assessment participants.

Santa Ana serves as a cultural hub hosting many resident visitors from throughout Orange County. Additionally, Santa Ana is the county seat for the region and absorbs a disproportionate amount of the public safety burden. For example, it is estimated the 52% of the homeless population comes from surrounding cities throughout the county. The cost of homelessness in Santa Ana can be estimated at roughly \$77 million per year invested in services and abatement. It is estimated that 26% of homeless people in Santa Ana are women and from interviews conducted many reported being vulnerable to sexual assault in public spaces.

Although Santa Ana is a sanctuary city, the lack of trust for the SAPD fuels the fear of deportation among residents. The gap between community residents and SAPD deepens the challenges to providing comprehensive public safety solutions that can increase public trust thereby strengthening the effectiveness of local law enforcement. Over the last five years, Santa Ana has experienced a 62% increase in homicides. The homicide clearance rates have dropped over that same time period by 59%. Santa Ana is home to 33% of the documented gang members in all of Orange County. Community leaders have advocated to improve community-police relations seeking opportunities to dialogue with the department regarding their concerns. They seek community-based resources to improve public safety and youth development funds to buttress law enforcement efforts by creating opportunities for young people to thrive as opposed to feeling criminalized.

Consistent political turnover has generated instability within the city preventing any long-term comprehensive safety investments to address violence and improve the quality of life among residents. Furthermore, the assessment uncovered a deep mistrust for city officials from residents who felt they have been ignored by local leaders. Through the assessment, residents requested increased and meaningful community engagement from city leaders to address their needs to improve overall community safety. Many respondents cited the schools as a trusted partner that has invested in authentically engaging students and parents. The trust built

between residents and the school district can be leveraged by the city through investment in resources to expand their efforts through partnership.

Despite the number of challenges faced by different community sectors identified in this report, the predominant finding was that residents maintain hope for systemic transformation and optimism for the future. While there are numerous service providers in the city, they require systematic investment to scale their services, in partnership with the city, to address the community safety issues outlined in this report. Currently, the majority of resources are invested to support traditional law enforcement suppression strategies without much acknowledgement of existing service providers that service youth and families more preventatively. This assessment has unearthed significant safety concerns and opportunities to strengthen the city's community safety approach through strategic coordination and collaboration.

Throughout the data collection process, the gap between community needs and responsiveness of local officials resonated as a major finding. The city has instead catered towards special interests and internal division has become normalized, sidelining the needs of residents for political survival. Santa Ana's culture and youth are its strongest assets and the driving force of change in the city. The "business as usual" approach will not live into the emerging values of the next generation of leadership. Santa Ana is experiencing a political awakening that will require the city to pivot efforts to address deep seated issues so youth and families can thrive.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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Santa Ana, California has a great opportunity to lead its residents as well as Orange County in how city government addresses community safety comprehensively, collaboratively and proactively. Urban Peace Institute (UPI) was asked by The California Endowment (TCE) to conduct a community safety assessment in Santa Ana. UPI gathered a variety of data including primary data through interviews, focus groups, and surveys to determine community safety needs, strengths, access to services, and overall community dynamics.

This report reflects the voices of community residents and stakeholders and includes quantitative data to establish a community profile and understand neighborhood-level dynamics. In addition to needs, community assets are discussed and recommendations are made to address community safety issues identified by residents and stakeholders. Moreover, this assessment can be used to inform comprehensive community safety strategies in Santa Ana.

The general limitations of this report include multiple data sets based on zip codes and census tracts which extend beyond specific Santa Ana area boundaries. This provides a broader demographic scope of the target area and includes surrounding communities and can overstate actual numbers. Some organizations and individuals also declined or did not respond to being interviewed, hosting a focus group, or helping administer surveys. After a year of multiple requests and meetings, Santa Ana Police Department declined to have their officers and command staff participate in the assessment. The limitations outlined do not call into questions the findings which are backed by extensive research and statistical evidence.

A neighborhood-based, comprehensive public health strategy to reduce gang and community violence requires an understanding of the dynamics of Santa Ana ecology and history. This report aims to better understand Santa Ana's unique history, gang violence and culture, historical, political, and/or social landscapes, and community assets. Recommendations to increase comprehensive safety strategies and coordination are made based on resident and stakeholder themes, analysis and feedback.

## **Who We Are**

Urban Peace Institute (UPI) is a national social justice non-profit organization working with communities across the country to develop and implement innovative policy, system and practice solutions. Through policy and program development, training, smart justice, and technical assistance UPI implements effective strategies to reduce violence, achieve safety, and improve overall community health. Building on 15 years of success as a program of the Advancement Project, UPI launched as an independent organization in August 2015 and is currently operating under the fiscal sponsorship of Community Partners.

## II. COMMUNITY PROFILE

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The City of Santa Ana is in Orange County and is 27.3 square miles with a population of 334,493<sup>2</sup>, making it the fourth densest city in the USA (for cities over 300,000). Santa Ana is the County Seat and second largest city in Orange County, and eleventh largest in California. The Santa Ana River is adjacent to the city and lends its name to the Santa Ana Freeway which runs through the town. Santa Ana has a diverse population with the largest ethnic population being Latino, largely of Mexican descent. Within the census tracts, the racial makeup of Santa Ana is 78.2% Latino/a, 10.4% Asian, 9.2% White, 1% Black and 1.2% other.<sup>3</sup> Santa Ana is a unique and proud city, one which prides itself for its strong history, culture and diversity. Santa Ana has a diverse economic background but is also known by some as an area where residents live in poverty, have limited economic opportunities, are intimidated by gang presence and violence, and where community advocacy is strong but not often heard by city hall.

### A. DEMOGRAPHICS

There are 61,847<sup>4</sup> families that reside in Santa Ana with a median household income of \$57,151<sup>5</sup> roughly \$23,000 lower than the median family income in Orange County, where the cost of living is among the highest in the region, let alone the nation. Nineteen and a half percent<sup>6</sup> of the population lives below the poverty line, double the rate of Orange County, with 30% of the population below the age of 20 and 12% over the age of 60. When comparing poverty rate trends to Orange County, Santa Ana has seen an increase in poverty rate while Orange County has maintained its rate. Santa Ana is generally a young city, and as such, has a variety of youth serving community and faith-based organizations throughout the city. This is important to note when considering how city government expenditures have been and are prioritized.

The Santa Ana foreign born population is 45.2% which is higher than the foreign born persons of Orange County which is at 30.3%.<sup>7</sup>

Of the foreign born population of Santa Ana 79.5% were born in Latin America and 18.1% born in Asia.<sup>8</sup> Foreign born persons may face unique challenges such as limited English language proficiency to utilization of social services. It is estimated, as precise figures are not available the “not a U.S. citizen” population is around 30%<sup>9</sup>, though these numbers can include residents that are in the country with documentation or without. Calculating the undocumented population is challenging as the “not a U.S. citizen” population can include lawful permanent residents, asylees, and refugees. It is also important to note, that census numbers of undocumented population is calculated by the total legally resident foreign-born population- naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, asylees, refugees and nonimmigrants by foreign-born population.<sup>10</sup> Individuals often skip the question about place of birth or respond born in the USA which leads to a large undercount. There are also individuals who do not partake in the Census because they fear census takers will

## Santa Ana Community Profile

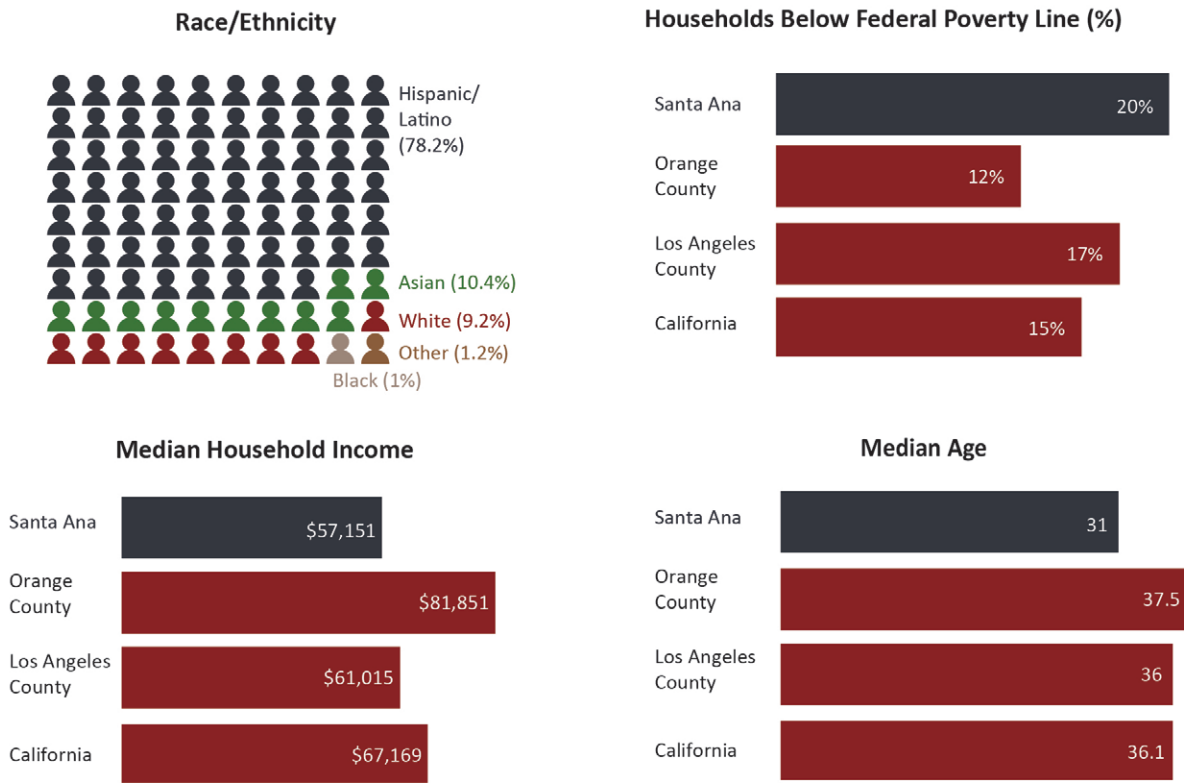


Figure 1: Santa Ana Community Profile (data source: American Community Survey, Census 2017)

report them to the government or immigration authorities. Among Santa Ana’s foreign born not a U.S. citizen, 95% are employed (in labor force) compared to Orange County’s 93.3% employed.<sup>11</sup> What’s unclear in the data

is how the immigrant community in Santa Ana may contribute to the local and regional economy and if poverty and density rates may be even more impacted by the large undercount of such individuals and families.

## B. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The city is currently governed by six city council members and a directly elected mayor. Santa Ana lies within CA’s 46th and 48th Congressional Districts represented by Lou Correa and Harley Rouda, 34th State Senate District represented by Tom Umberg, Assembly District 69th represented by Tom Daly

and 72nd District by Tyler Diep, and Orange County Supervisor Andrew Do.

Santa Ana’s council-manager system consists of six council members who are elected by residents in a ward district-like system. Each council member represents a ward and

serves a four-year term and up to a total of three terms. The current council members are Vicente Sarmiento, David Penaloza, Jose Solorio, Cecilia Iglesias, and Juan Villegas. The mayor pro tem is elected by the six council members. The current mayor pro tem is Juan Villegas. Santa Ana elections occur every two years.

Santa Ana is predominantly democratic compared the rest of Orange County where the republican party is more dominant. There are 109,302 registered voters within Santa Ana (about 33% of the actual population),

51.2% are registered Democrats and 16.7% are registered as Republican.<sup>12</sup> In Orange County, there are 1,595,260 registered voters and 33.5% are registered Democrats, 34.0% are registered Republicans, and 28.2% are registered no party preference.<sup>13</sup> Since 1868, Santa Ana has had two official mayors, William Spurgeon and Miguel Pulido. William Spurgeon was the city's first mayor who served from 1868-1915. Miguel Pulido became mayor in 1994 and since then has been re-elected for two additional terms. Pulido, the first mayor of Latino descent, has served as mayor of Santa Ana for 25 years.

## C. HISTORY

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### 1. Early History

In the early 1500's Santa Ana was home to the Tongva indigenous tribe. The Tongva tribe referred to the area as "Hotuuk."<sup>14</sup> In 1769 during the Spanish expedition of Gaspar de Portola, Portola named the area Vallejo de Santa Ana (Valley of Saint Anne). The Spanish enslaved and relocated the Tongva tribe to build several missions in various cities in present day Orange County. Simultaneously, the Spanish began referring to the Tongva people after the missions they built. They were renamed to Gabrieleño, Juaneño, and Luiseño tribes. Following the Mexican Independence in 1810, Jose Antonio Yorba a former Spanish sergeant, was awarded the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana land grant by the Spanish Empire. Yorba was a corporal under Portola during the Spanish expedition of 1769. The land grant encompassed 63,414 acres of land covering present day cities such as Olive, Orange, Santa Ana, Tustin, Costa Mesa, and

Newport Beach. Yorba used the land to graze cattle and developed an irrigation system using the Santa Ana River. Santa Ana flourished into rich fertile farmland. Santa Ana remained part of Mexico until 1848.

At the end of the Mexican-American War, Santa Ana became territory of the United States of America. In 1869, William H. Spurgeon, a farmer from Kentucky, purchased the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana for approximately \$1,000 from the Yorba Family.<sup>15</sup> Spurgeon founded the town and renamed it Santa Ana.<sup>16</sup> Shortly after, Spurgeon built the first road and first general store in Santa Ana. As Santa Ana's population grew, Spurgeon founded the First National Bank and served as president. In 1886 Spurgeon incorporated Santa Ana as a city, the 2nd city in Orange County to do so after Anaheim, and at the same time became Santa Ana's first mayor.<sup>17</sup>

Before World War II, Santa Ana was a predominantly conservative area, home to mostly wealthy white Americans. During the 1940's, a growth in jobs followed by a housing boom attracted many white Americans to Santa Ana. Simultaneously, the Bracero Pro-

gram brought a wave of low-wage Mexican immigrants to the area. The demographics began to change. Santa Ana, like many other cities in California experienced white flight to the suburbs. By the mid 1970's, Latinos accounted for the largest population.

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## 2. Population and Demographics Shifts

In 1880, the population of Santa Ana was 711 people. In 1886, the Santa Fe Railroad, which extended south to San Diego, arrived in Santa Ana. By 1890 the population consisted of 3,628 residents. New roads, infrastructure, and job opportunities attracted people to Santa Ana in the following years. From 1910 to 1940 Santa Ana's population grew from 8,429 to 31,921 residents.<sup>18</sup> In 1950 during the beginning of the Cold War, Santa Ana was home to 45,533 residents. Simultaneously, from the late 1940's-1960, the bracero program brought 70,000 Mexican and Filipino, Jamaican, and Japanese immigrants to work in Orange County fields. By 1960, Santa Ana's population had almost doubled to 100,350. Just ten years later the population in Santa Ana increased by another 50% totaling 156,561 residents. During the 1970's-1980's, Latin American countries endured a series of civil wars and dictatorships. As a result, California experienced a mass immigration of

Latinos. For the first time, Santa Ana became home to the largest population of Latinos, accounting for 40,000 to 90,000 people. Similarly, following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, Orange County experienced a mass migration of Vietnamese people. Today, Little Saigon encompasses portions of Santa Ana, Garden Grove and Westminster.<sup>19</sup> In 2010, the U.S. Census reported a population of 324,528. Santa Ana's ethnic groups constitute about 80% of the city's population.<sup>20</sup> These groups represent countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, Guatemala, and El Salvador.<sup>21</sup> Presently, the 2018 U.S. Census report accounts for a population of 334,493 residents.<sup>22</sup> The recent demographic make-up of Santa Ana residents consist of 78.2% Latino, 10.4% Asian, 9.4% White, and 1% Black.<sup>23</sup> The population and demographic trends of Santa Ana have created a rich culture and diversity that contributes to the city's various perspectives and history.

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## 3. Recent History

Santa Ana's famous 4th street was once lined with quinceañera dress shops, discount stores and other predominantly Latino businesses. Santa Ana was home to many low-income families, especially immigrant families. These small businesses are mostly fami-

ly-owned, catered to the Latino population and provided affordable goods and services. Latino families would frequent 4th Street on the weekends on family-outings searching for a dresses, toys, and other goods. Key landmarks like the Yost Theatre, a cultural and

performing arts center would showcase Mexican music and cinema. Additionally, Santa Ana was known for high crime and violence. By 1990, Santa Ana had the highest homicide rate in Orange County. It had a record of 2,318 victims of violent crime, such as homicide, forcible rape, aggravated assault, and robbery.<sup>24</sup> In the early 1990's Santa Ana was perceived as a bustling and dangerous town.

Today, the historic corridor 4th street or "La Calle Cuatro" as it is now called, is filled with a variety of boutiques, high end restaurants, and other retail shops that cater to a variety of customers.<sup>25</sup> Quinceañera shops have diminished and families no longer take day trips to 4th Street. The Yost Theatre no longer hosts Mexican music or cinema shows and instead is now a nightclub. Many residents attribute these changes to the impacts of gentrification. Developers have redeveloped areas in and around 4th Street.<sup>26</sup> Pricey lofts and high-end art galleries have attracted a different demographic to the area and has pushed smaller businesses out. Santa Ana remains a city with a predominantly Latino and immigrant population as well as a city with some of the highest overcrowding and poverty rates.<sup>27</sup>

Santa Ana is a city that honors and preserves heritage while embracing new creative art. In 1930, the Bowers Museum, an art and history museum, opened with a large collection of fine art and artifacts from around the world. In 1990, the demographics not only began to shift in Southern California but, spe-

cifically Orange County. As a result, the Bower Museum embraced the shift in demographics and underwent renovation. In 1992 it reopened as the Bower Museum of Cultural Art exhibiting fine arts of indigenous people from the Americas, Africa, and Pacific rim. In 2007, a third renovation and expansion brought a permanent Chinese exhibition, permanent oceanic exhibition, and additional galleries. In 1998, the Discovery Cube of Orange County opened its doors in Santa Ana. The goal was to educate children on the history of Orange County in the 1900's and be a world-class science center. In 2012, the Discovery Cube expanded its arts and science exhibitions to include a life sciences hall, environmental pavilion, and an IMAX theater.<sup>28</sup> Today, visitors throughout Orange and Los Angeles County visit Santa Ana for its museums, restaurants and boutiques.

Furthermore, the streets of Santa Ana are adorned with bright murals painted on the walls of small businesses, alleys, history buildings, two story commercial buildings and other locations. These murals display Santa Ana's rich history and culture through modern and contemporary art. One example includes Carlos Aguilar's, "Heroes Among Us", mural that pays tribute to Mexican-American war veterans. Today, Santa Ana has become the center of Orange County with distinct cultural and historically rich neighborhoods, bustling business corridors and shopping centers, thriving parks and museums, and home to many to live and work in.



## D. LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

In an effort to bring more trees to Santa Ana, William Spurgeon built the first road from Santa Ana to Anaheim. In 1887 the Santa Fe Trains reached Santa Ana from Los Angeles and extended to San Diego. In 1906, the Pacific Electric Railway Company otherwise known as the “Red Cars” provided public transportation from Los Angeles and ran right along Fourth St. In 1950’s the red cars route was done away with and the tracks were removed. Shortly after, in 1953 the Santa Ana Freeway (Interstate 5) was built. Today, Interstate 5 heads north to Los Angeles, and south towards Southern Orange County and San Diego. Other forms of transportation in Orange County that serve Santa Ana include Metrolink’s Orange County Line, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), and John Wayne Airport.

Santa Ana’s transportation history has evolved since the late 1800’s. Access to roads, highways, and air travel has increased the city of Santa Ana ability to be mobile.

Due to high population density, Santa Ana has faced transportation challenges including fatal collisions amongst drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. To address these challenges, a Safe Mobility Santa Ana Plan was adopted by the city council in 2016. The goals of the plan include: 1) increasing safe mobility in all areas of the city, 2) achieve zero fatal bicycle/pedestrian collisions, 3) reduce vehicle speeds, and 4) minimize collision patterns. This 14-year plan aims at improving public transportation services in Santa Ana and keeping all residents and pedestrians safe.

## E. COUNTY SERVICES

Social services are handled through the Orange County Social Service Agency, a countywide entity that services all residents of Orange County whose headquarters and offices are primarily based in Santa Ana. The city of Santa Ana also serves as the County Seat, and as such houses county, state and federal governmental agencies that include courts, jails, administrative and other services for all Orange County residents in addition to local governmental departments and bodies. Most county, federal, state, and city buildings for Orange County residents are located in Santa Ana on Civic Center Drive and along the Main St. corridor.

In nearly all categories for participants receiving services, the city of Santa Ana has

the highest rate of recipients compared to any other city in Orange County. Categories include CalWorks, CalFresh, Child Abuse & Neglect, and other categories. Santa Ana has 33% of CalWORKS recipients and 22% of CalFRESH recipients in Orange County. Compounded with the highest rates of poverty in the County, Santa Ana is disproportionately impacted by a plethora of community and health needs. Since Santa Ana also serves as the County Seat, the city has had to deal with a disproportionate share of other public safety concerns and issues in their own backyard, given the location of jails, services, and administration in the city, often times by residents of neighboring cities and throughout the county.

Wards 1, 2 and 6 have the highest rates of social service recipients and arrests made throughout the city. Geography can be an important factor when considering place-based initiatives by schools, community based organizations and local government.

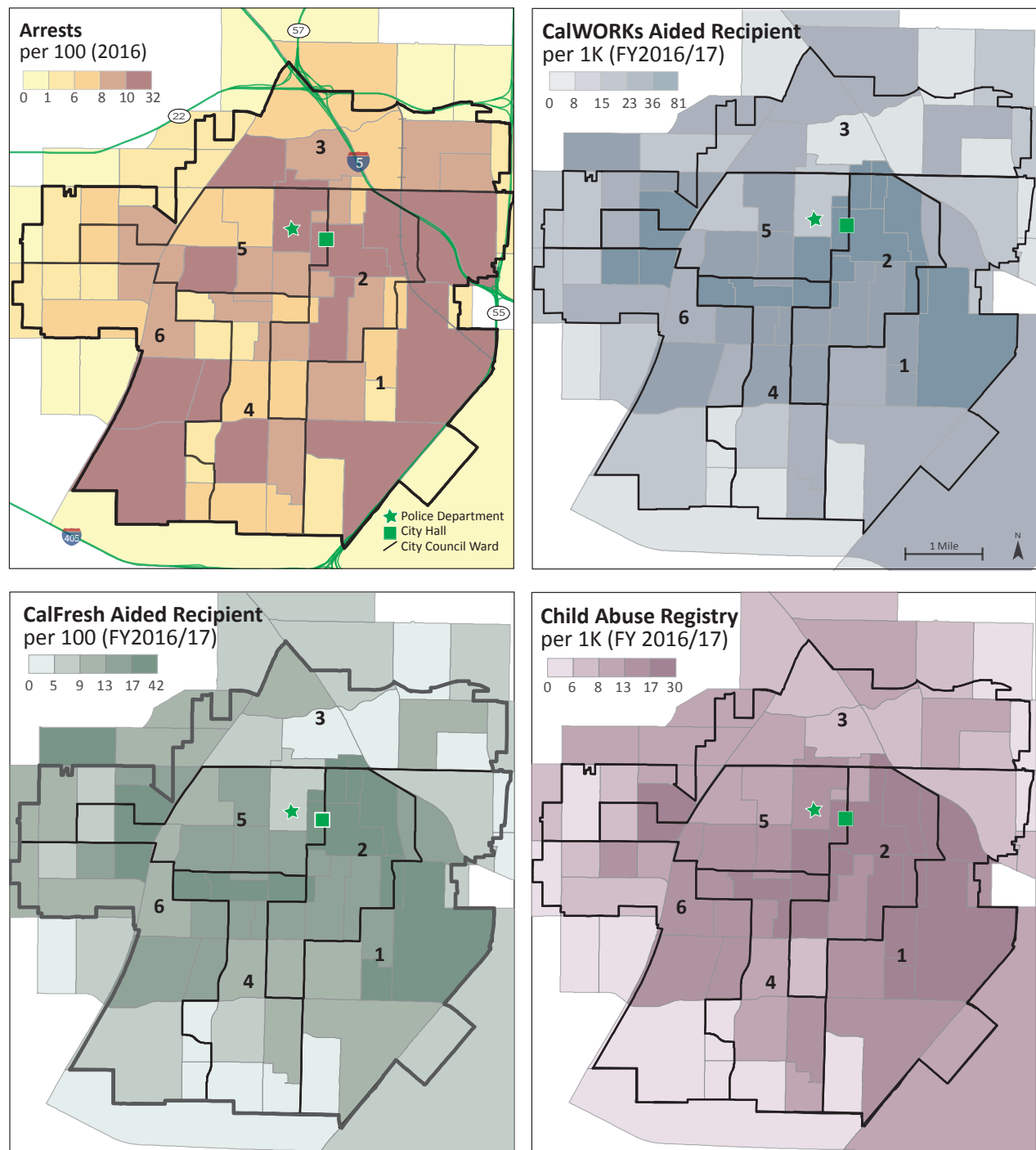
Orange County Gang Reduction and Intervention Partnership (OC GRIP) is a collaborative effort between the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, Orange County Sheriff’s Department and various law enforcement agencies throughout Orange County to prevent youth from joining gangs. The targeted outreach occurs at elementary and middle schools with the highest truancy rates. Santa Ana has 31% of OC GRIP

schools, with the highest rate and number at 14 of the 59 targeted schools county wide for the 2018-2019 school year. GRIP focuses on academics, attendance, and attitude through mentoring, case management, parent meetings, faculty presentations and other activities in partnership with dozens of community and corporate partners. This data and population-based approach has proven to be successful in decreasing truancy rates. With the infrastructure of funding, partnerships with school districts, law enforcement agencies, community and corporate partners, this model of gang prevention should be leveraged and enhanced to better coordinate with local providers and the city who may already be servicing these families in other ways.

	<b>Santa Ana</b>	<b>Orange County</b>	<b>Anaheim</b>	<b>Garden Grove</b>	<b>Orange</b>
CalWORKS <sup>29</sup>	10,225	31,087	8,133	2,831	1,851
CalFRESH	55,489	257,750	11,731	5,703	2,459

Table 1: CalWORKS and CalFRESH recipients by city and county (data source: Orange County Social Service Agency, FY 16/17)

## Number of Arrests and Social Services Aided Recipients by Census Tract Santa Ana City Council Wards



Data mapped by Census Tract and classified by quintile. Data Sources: Arrest data from Santa Ana Police Department (2016); Social Services data from Orange County Social Services Agency (FY 2016/17 - as of June 30, 2017); Population data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Five-year Estimates (2012-2016). Geographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), Orange County Transportation Authority (2018) and City of Santa Ana Open GIS Data (opendata-santa-ana.opendata.arcgis.com).

Figure 2: Number of Arrests and Social Services by City Council Wards

## F. CRIME STATISTICS

### 1. California Department of Justice Statistics

The California Department of Justice tracks crime statistics for every law enforcement agency in the state. Looking at trends in violent crimes over the last two decades, Santa Ana's trend generally aligns with Orange County and California as a whole. However, when looking at only the last five years, Santa Ana has seen a 46% increase in violent crimes, compared to only 26% in Orange County and 18% statewide.

The dramatic increase in violent crime over the last five years is even more alarming when one looks at the increase in homicides over that same period of time. While there has been a 5% increase statewide in the number of homicides over the last five years, Santa Ana has experienced a 62% increase in homicides. The increase in homicides over the last five years in Santa Ana is 12 times greater than the increase statewide.

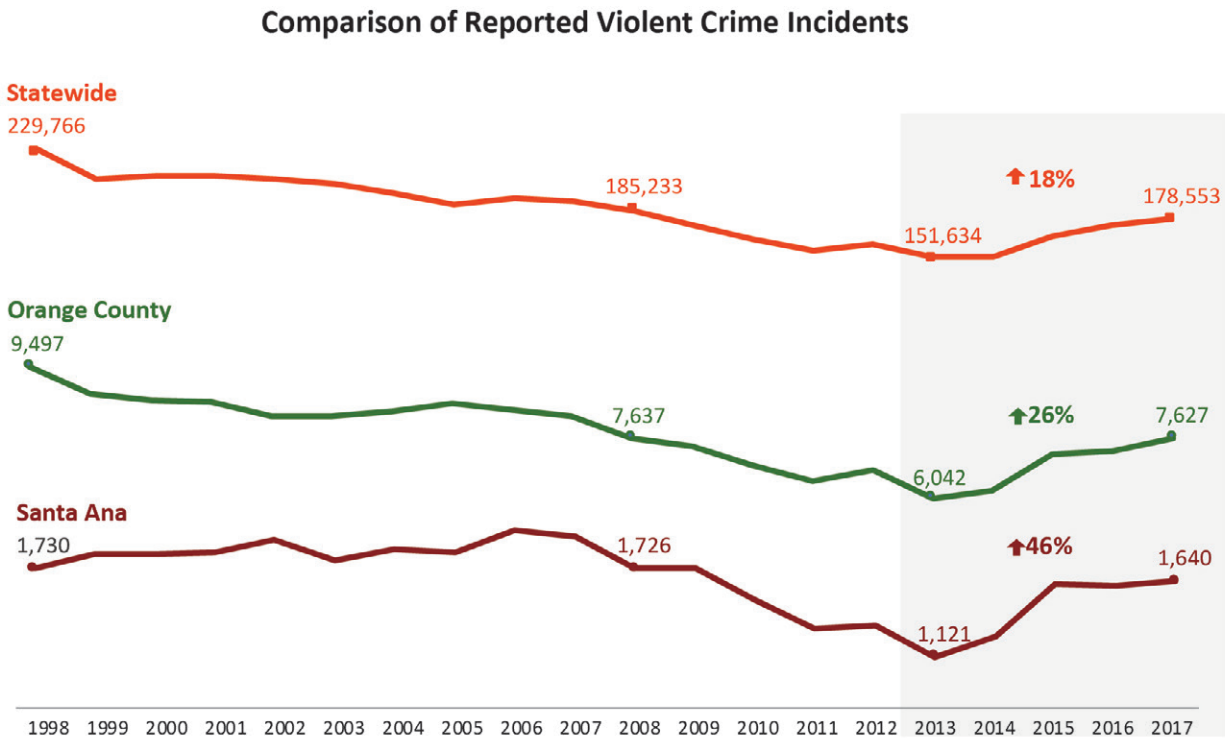


Figure 3: Comparison of Reported Violent Crime Incidents (data source: California Department of Justice)

## Homicide Clearance Rates (%) - Santa Ana

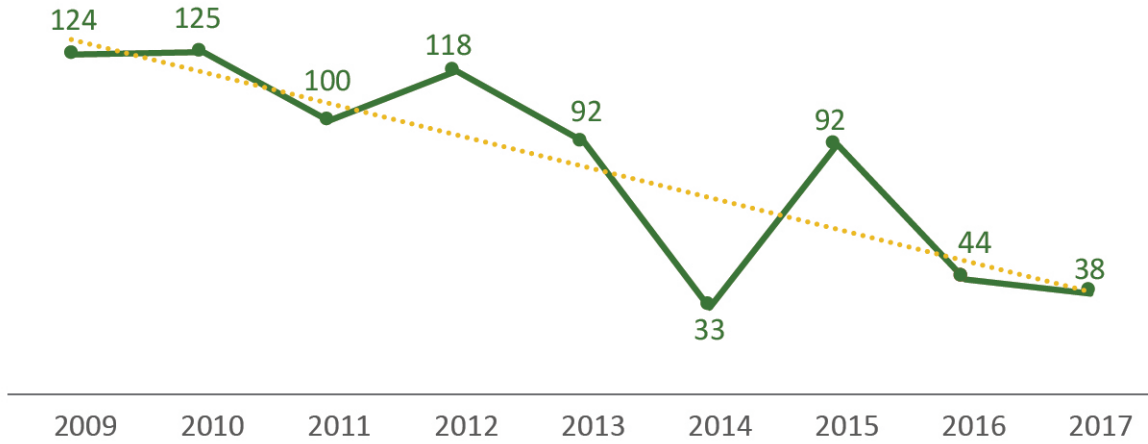


Figure 4: Homicide Clearance Rates (%) – Santa Ana (data source: California Department of Justice)

## Comparison of Reported Homicides

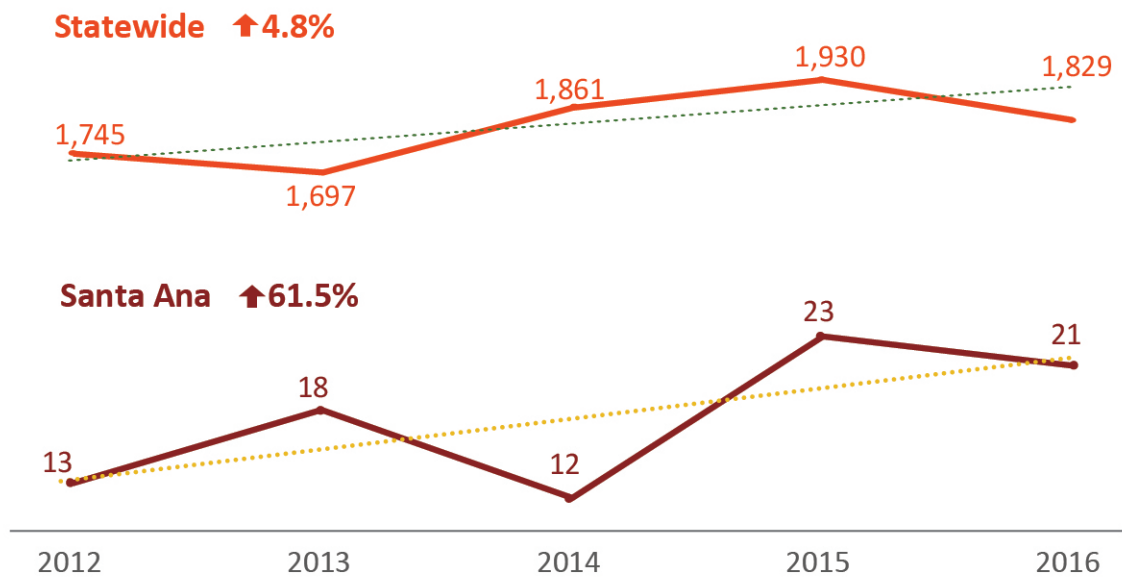


Figure 5: Comparison of Reported Homicides (data source: California Department of Justice)

Also, homicide clearance rates have dropped over that same time by 59% and have dropped from their high in 2010 by 70%. SAPD was unavailable for comment to

explain the decrease. There is a need to further investigate and clarify the fluctuations over time.

---

## 2. Santa Ana Police Department Statistics

This section provides a general snapshot of Santa Ana Police Department data over the last 5 years. This data was retrieved through a Public Records Act request in Summer of 2018 and is important to share to display more specified crime and violence trends in Santa Ana. The category with the highest number of arrests reported by the Santa Ana Police Department is narcotic arrests. There has been a 2.5% increase in narcotic arrests from 1700 arrests in 2016 to 1743 arrests in 2017. Over the past five years, there has been a 15% decrease from 2062 narcotic arrests in 2012 to 1743 narcotic arrests in 2017.

Total violent crime arrest totals for each year were derived by adding the following crime arrest categories: homicides, rape, aggravated assault, simple assault, robbery, auto theft, arson, and weapons. There was a 9% increase in the number of total violent crime arrests in Santa Ana from 1422 arrests in 2016 to 1553 arrests made in 2017. Total violent crimes include other types of crime, but totals in this report only reflect the crime types that were provided by the Santa Ana Police Department.

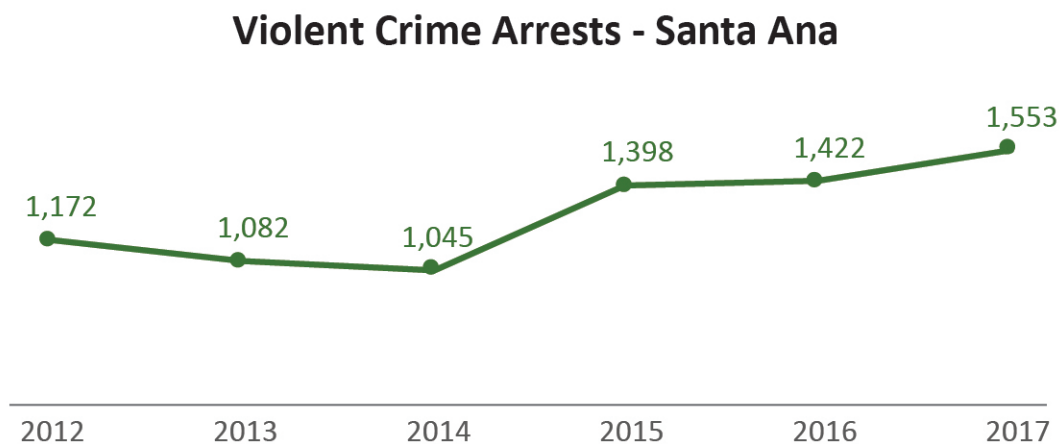


Figure 6: Violent Crime Arrests – Santa Ana (data source: City of Santa Ana)

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## Narcotic Arrests - Santa Ana

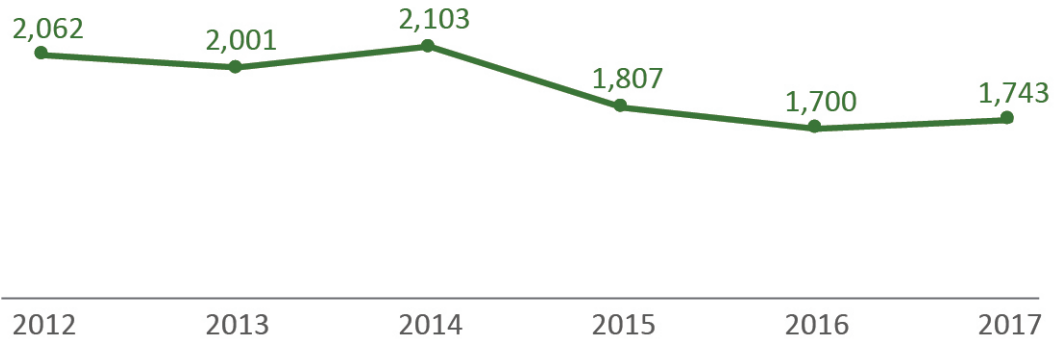


Figure 7: Narcotics Arrests – Santa Ana (data source: City of Santa Ana)

## Total Arrests by Crime Type - Santa Ana

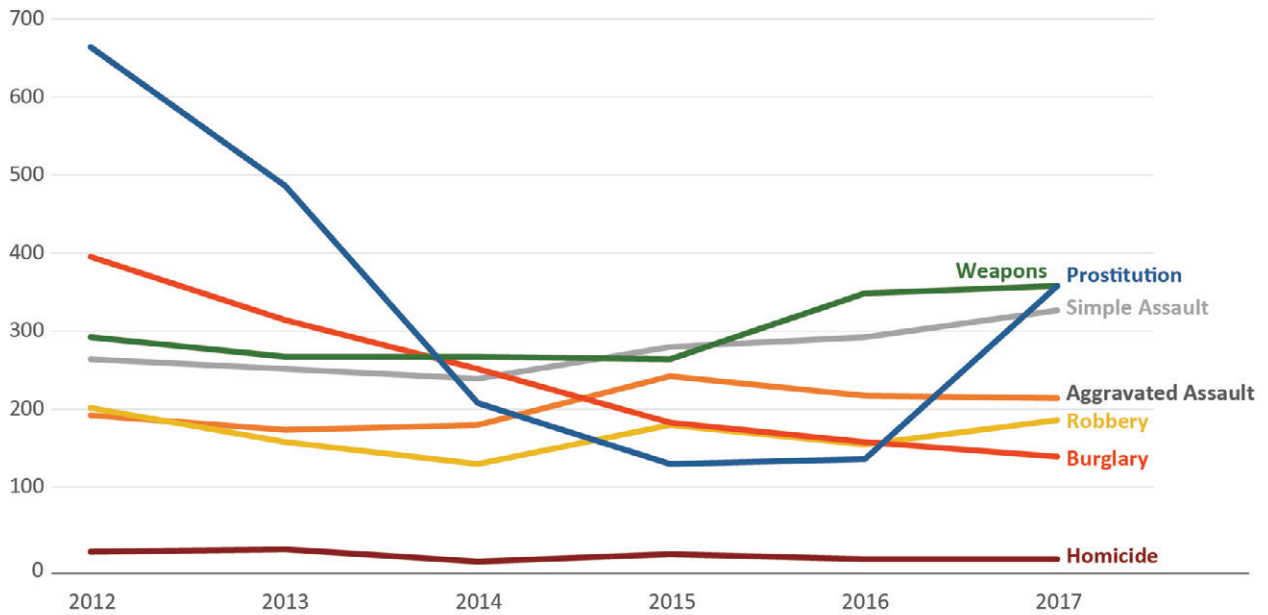


Figure 8: Total Arrests by Crime Type (data source: City of Santa Ana)

From 2016 to 2017, there are four categories with increase in arrests: prostitution, robbery, simple assault, and weapons. Prostitution arrests has increased 161% from 137 arrests in 2016 to 358 arrests in 2017.

Survey results have shown that Santa Ana residents have also identified prostitution as an issue in their community. Robbery arrests have increased 20% from 156 arrests in 2016 to 188 arrests in 2017. Robbery arrests are

### Density of All Arrests Santa Ana Police Department (2016)

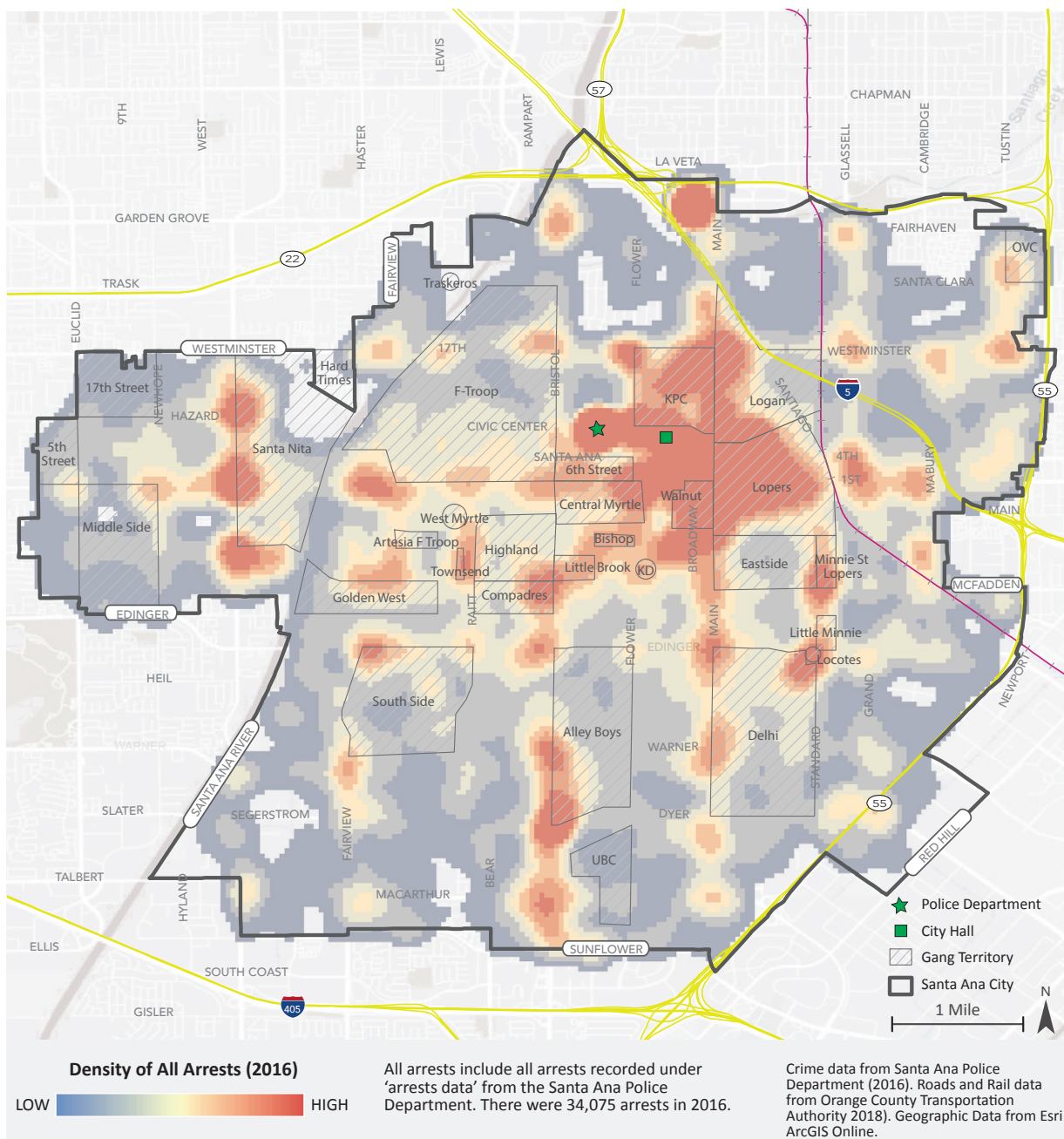


Figure 9: Violent Crime Arrests – Santa Ana (data source: City of Santa Ana)



made when an individual has attempted to take someone's personal property without the use of a weapon. Simple assault arrests have increased 11% from 293 arrests in 2016 to 327 arrests in 2017; simple assault is a misdemeanor that is defined as assault without a weapon and with no malicious intent. When compared to other arrest categories, narcotic arrests are the category that has the highest number of arrests. In 2017, 52% of all arrests made by officers involved narcotics. The next closest category are weapons and prostitution arrests, which are both at 11% of the total arrests.

Santa Ana Police Department also offers the locations of where arrests occur. The top ten addresses are listed below. The address with the highest number of arrests, 1080

W. Civic Center Dr., which is where there is a significant number of homeless individuals. This was the site of a homeless encampment that was removed in April of 2018. 2800 N Main St., 2850 N. Main St., and 2890 N. Main St. are locations that are found at the Main-Place Mall. 2909 S. Bristol St. is the California Lodge Suites. 3600 W. McFadden Ave. is a Walmart Supercenter. 501 W. Santa Ana Blvd is located right next to the Ronald Reagan Federal Building and United States Courthouse. 625 N. Ross St. is north of the Orange County Walk of Horror and west of the Santa Ana Public Library and Superior Court of Orange County. 700 W. Civic Center Dr. is west of the Santa Ana Stadium, south of the Santa Ana Public Library. 909 North Main St. is east of the California Coast University and is the location of the Community Court.

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### 3. Santa Ana Unified School District Police Department Patrol Statistics

The Santa Ana School Police Department is the 3rd largest school police agency in the State of California serving the 9th largest school district in the State and the 2nd largest in Orange County. The Santa Ana School Police Department is an approved agency in accordance to the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) and the primary law enforcement agency for the Santa Ana Unified School District. The department has 28 sworn officers, five full-time dispatchers, and 41 civilian District Safety Officers and other staff.

#### a. Arrest Preliminary Analysis

Data Period: 2013-14 to 2017-18 school years

- Total number of recorded arrests have

decreased by 68% from 2013-14 to 2017-18 school years.

#### b. Incidents Preliminary Findings:

Data Period: 2013-14 to 2017-18 school years.

- Total number of recorded incidents have decreased by 12% from 2013-14 to 2017-18 school years.
- It is important to note that incidents include Calls for Service as well as Officer Initiated Incidents (OII). OII's created by School Police through proactive police work. This includes traffic enforcement, community engagement and officers getting out in front of events in the hopes of preventing crimes.

**c. Citations Preliminary Findings:**

- The number of citations decreased by 33% from 2013-14 to 2017-2018 school year.

Data Period: 2013-14<sup>30</sup> to 2017-18 school years

**Total Juvenile Arrests by School Year  
Santa Ana Unified School District Police Department**



Figure 10: Total Juvenile Arrests by School Year (data source: Santa Ana Unified School District Police Department)

**Total Incidents by School Year  
Santa Ana Unified School District Police Department**

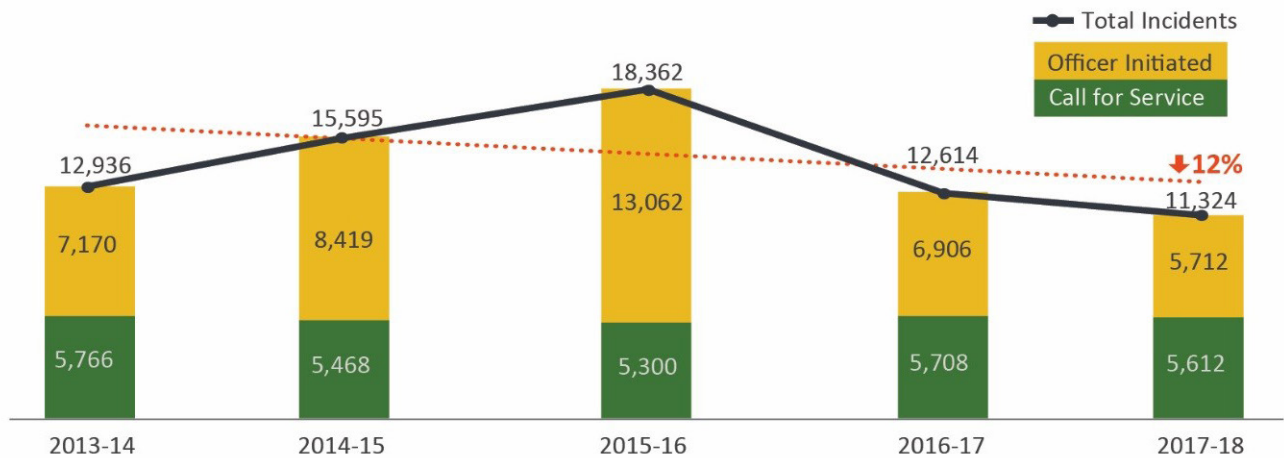


Figure 11: Total Incidents by School Year (data source: Santa Ana Unified School District Police Department)

## Total Citations by School Year Santa Ana Unified School District Police Department

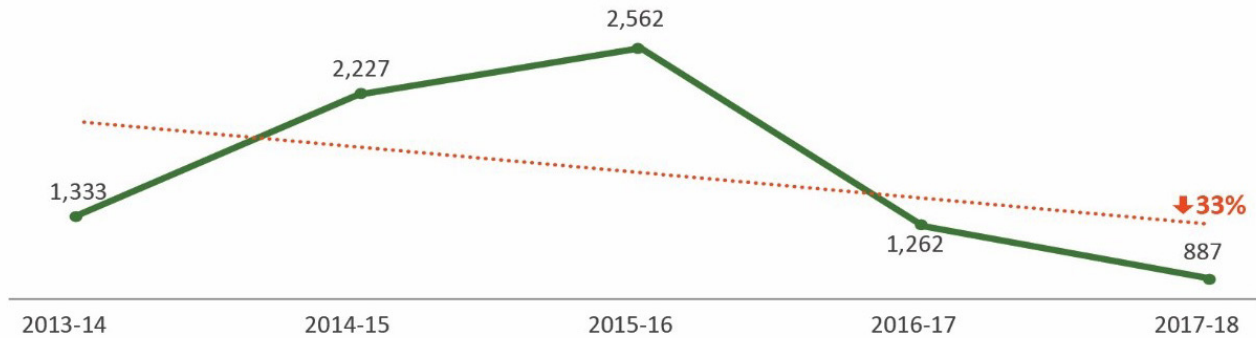


Figure 12: Total Citations by School Year (data source: Santa Ana Unified School District Police Department)

## G. GANGS

Santa Ana is home to dozens of street gangs. The Santa Ana Police Department reports to the California Department of Justice that they have currently documented 1,912 individuals as gang members.<sup>31</sup> This is 33% of the documented gang members in all of Orange County. It is more than double the 807 individuals documented as gang members by the Anaheim Police Department, the Orange County police department with the next highest gang membership number. The vast majority of Santa Ana’s gang members are male, between the ages of 18 and 30, and designated as Hispanic.

Like other cities in Orange County, Santa Ana’s gangs are predominately Latino, multi-generational, and territorial. But in important ways, Santa Ana’s gangs are different than other gangs in Orange County. Regionally, Orange County’s gangs are the product of the history of segregation and marginalization of the county’s Latino population. As

Orange County shifted from an agricultural to urban area in the post-WWII era, new housing developments were built on land that used to be farms, while the land previously populated by farmworkers became pockets of segregated housing for low-income people of color. Over time, most of these segregated neighborhoods became home to multiple generations of a gang. Many of these gangs developed rivalries with other nearby gangs. In contrast, a post-WWII influx of immigrants caused Santa Ana to develop as the one city in the region that is almost exclusively people of color. Unlike most of the rest of Orange County, because of Santa Ana’s denser and more homogenous population, a network of gangs evolved that more resembles gangs in larger urban centers like Los Angeles than gangs in other parts of Orange County. Santa Ana developed a block-by-block division of the city into multi-generational gang territories with complicated relationships of alliances and rivalries.

While most of Santa Ana’s gang-involved individuals have no direct interaction with organized crime, Santa Ana gangs do have some ties with Mexican prison gangs. While the prison gang continues to influence the activity of Santa Ana’s street gangs they continue to be predominantly disorganized and made up of neighborhoods and cliques of young people trying to assert themselves among peers.

Most gangs are not organized criminal enterprises; rather they are made up of small cohorts of young people whose criminal activity is generally limited to drug use and nuisance crimes<sup>32</sup>. Their involvement is usually

short-lived and ends when they “mature out” of a gang and simply stop participating over time.<sup>33</sup> It is untrue that once a person joins a gang they cannot leave. Data for Santa Ana’s gangs is consistent with this typical gang profile.<sup>34</sup>

However, among the gang-involved population are a smaller number of individuals responsible for many of the city’s most serious and violent felonies, including murders.<sup>35</sup> Santa Ana Police’s anti-gang efforts have been unable to prevent the last five years’ increase in gang related shootings and killings, despite its expanded gang suppression strategy announced in July, 2017.<sup>36</sup>

### Gang Members in Orange County by City (2018)

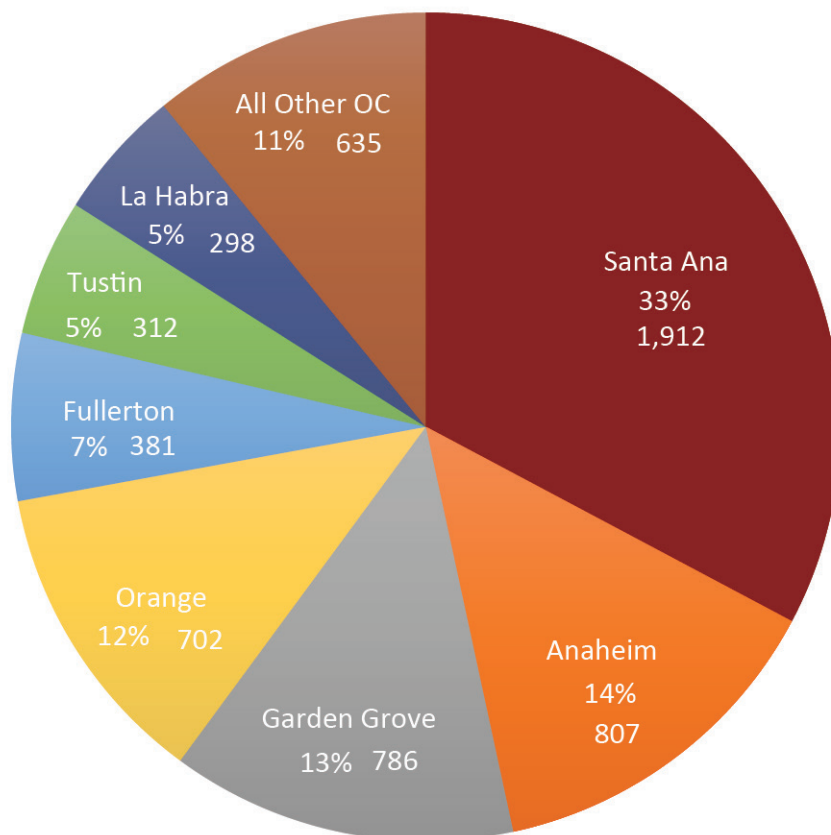


Figure 13: Members in Orange County by City (2018) (data source: California Department of Justice)

## Gang Members in Santa Ana (2018)

### 1,912 Persons

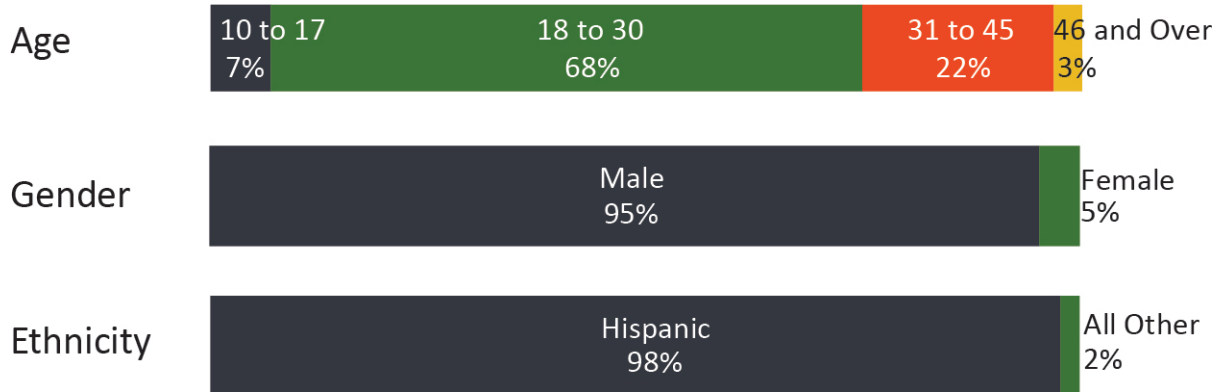


Figure 14: Gang Members in Santa Ana (2018) (data source: California Department of Justice)

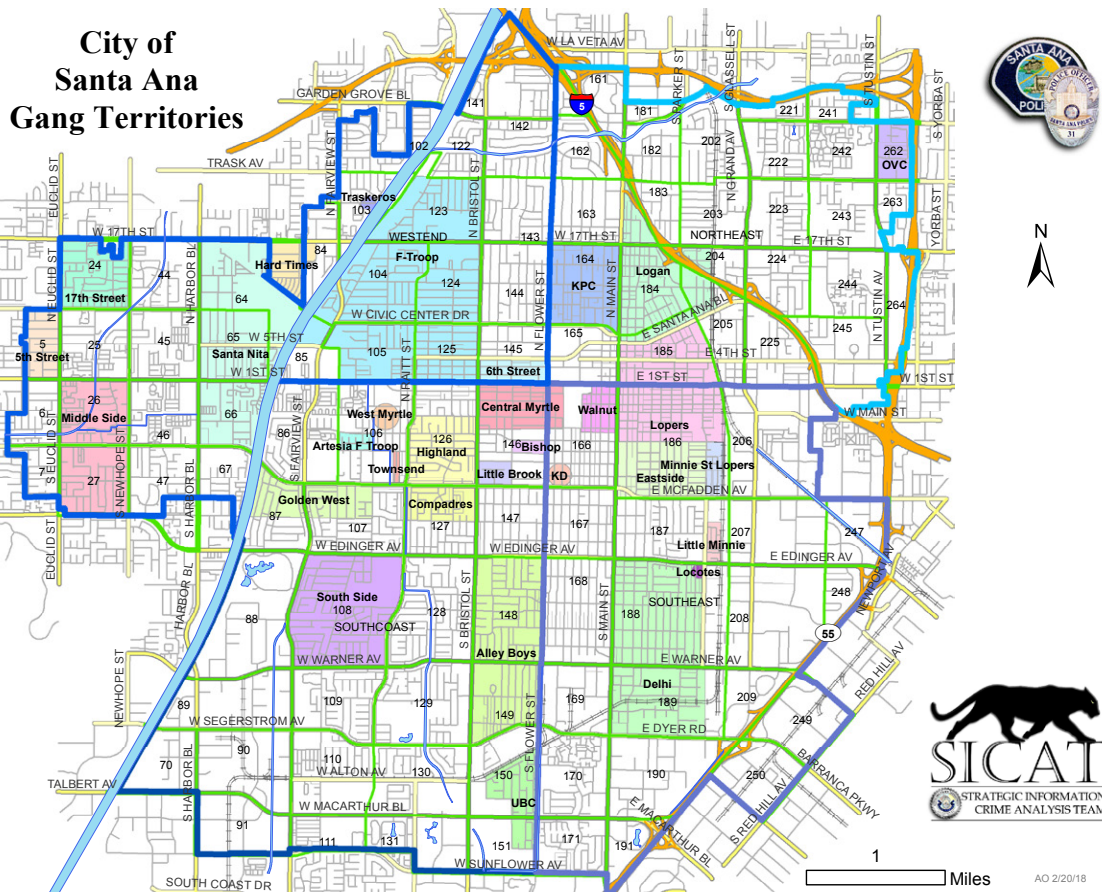


Figure 15: City of Santa Ana Gang Territories (source: City of Santa Ana)

# Density of Gang-Related Arrests Santa Ana Police Department (2016)

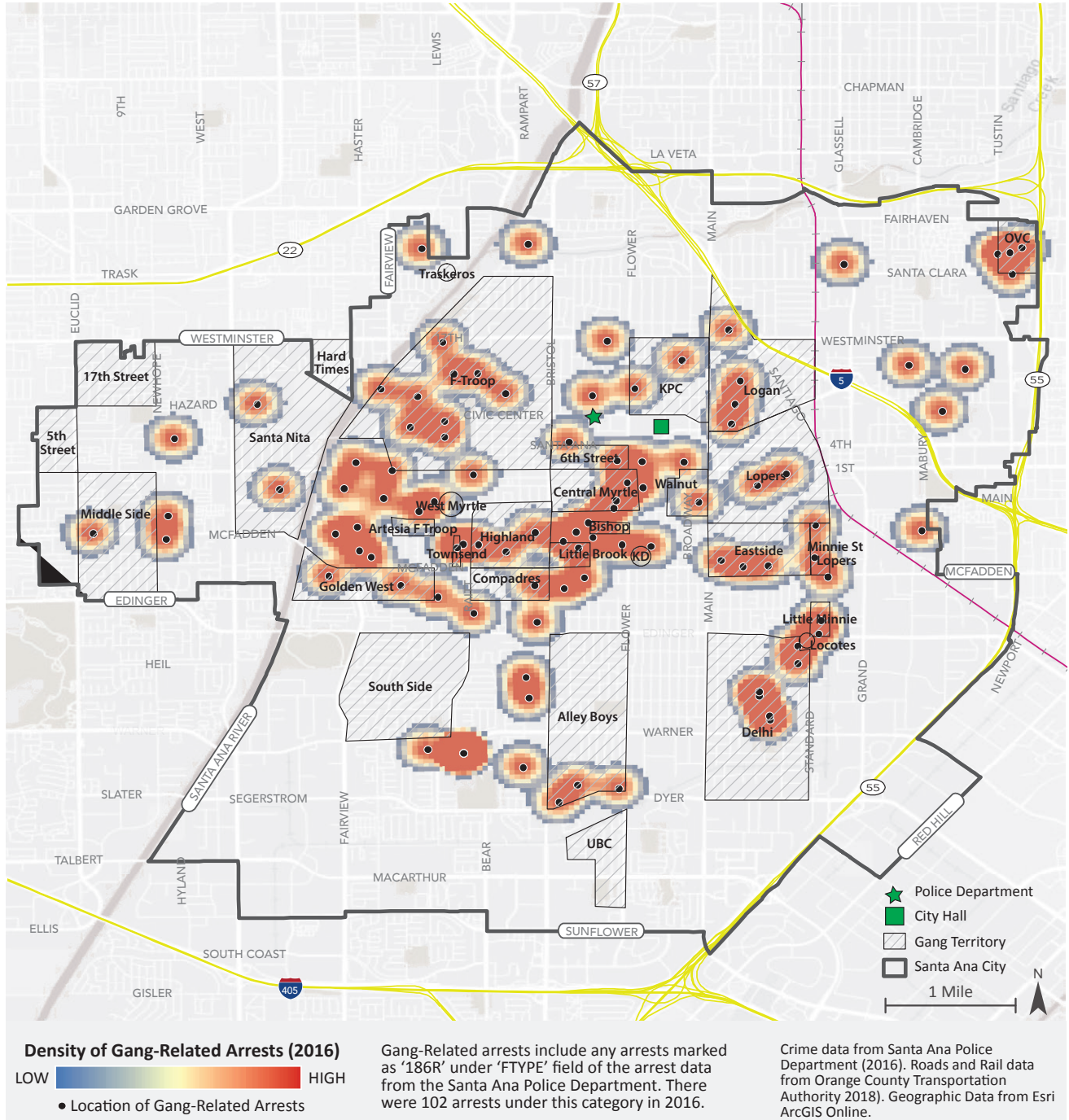


Figure 16: Density of Gang-Related Arrests (data source: City of Santa Ana)

## H. HOMELESSNESS

Santa Ana has experienced a surge in homelessness in recent years. According to the preliminary data from Orange County’s most recent point-in-time survey, there were at least 1,769 homeless people in Santa Ana in January 2019.<sup>37</sup> Approximately half of them were sheltered. This is a 77% increase in the total number of homeless people from the 1,000 homeless people counted in 2017.<sup>38</sup> When looking specifically at unsheltered homelessness, the increase is even more dramatic. The number of unsheltered homeless people nearly doubled from 466 to 830 over that same period of time. However, the percentage of homeless people who are unsheltered and the total number of unsheltered homeless people have both decreased since 2018.

The 2017 Santa Ana Point-In-Time Count report provides demographic information about Santa Ana’s homeless people. Most of Santa Ana’s homeless people are male, over the age of 24 and identified as White. However, there were 60 children under 18 counted,

and 26% of the homeless people were women. The majority of women and children were sheltered, while the majority of men were unsheltered. Mental illness was identified as a concern for 37% of Santa Ana’s homeless people. According to the 2018 count, 52% came from outside of Santa Ana. However other research indicates that most of those who are not from Santa Ana are likely from elsewhere within Orange County.<sup>39</sup>

According to the 2017 report, Homelessness in Orange County: The Costs to Our Community, \$299 million was spent to address homelessness in all of Orange County in the 12-month period of 2014/2015.<sup>40</sup> The report did not attempt to put a dollar amount on the cost of homelessness to homeless people or their lost potential. Though the report does not disaggregate how much was spent in Santa Ana, using the fact that 26% of Orange County’s homeless live in Santa Ana, the cost of homelessness in Santa Ana can be estimated at roughly \$77 million per year. The cost has undoubtedly grown since 2015.

### People Experiencing Homelessness in Santa Ana

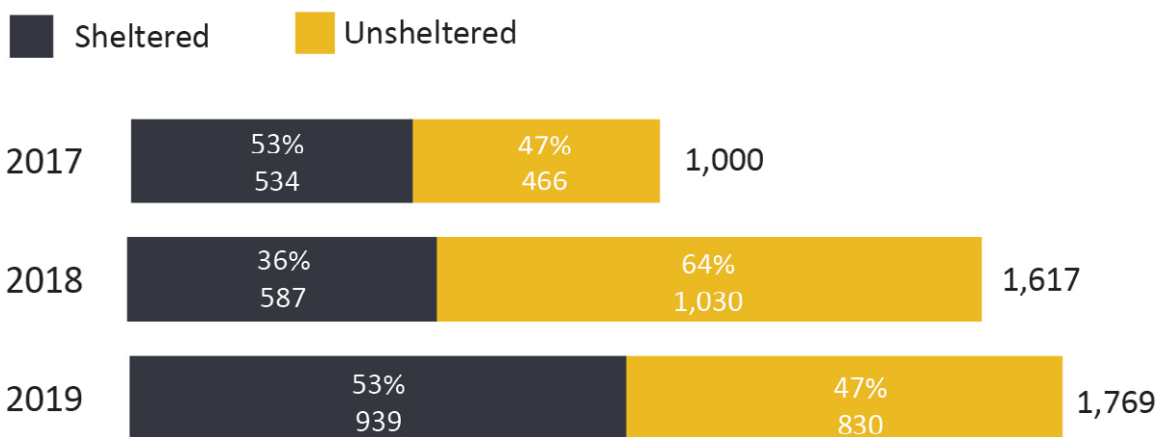


Figure 17: People Experiencing Homelessness in Santa Ana (data source: County of Orange)

# III. ASSESSMENT

## A. METHODS

UPI began the assessment process to better understand community safety in Santa Ana in March 2018 and completed the data collection phase in September 2018. With support from organizations in Santa Ana Building Healthy Communities network, UPI began its outreach to many community residents, and sought to understand public sector and community stakeholder perspectives from across the city. To maximize resident participation and coverage of all areas of Santa Ana, UPI identified agencies that serviced residents from particular geographic areas throughout the city.

Despite numerous requests over a one-year period to conduct focus groups with SAPD gang officers and patrol officers, UPI was ultimately declined in March of 2019. However, UPI was able to conduct interviews with SAPD Police Activities Athletics League (PAAL) staff and SAPD Gang Reduction Intervention Partnership (GRIP) officers through meetings at various community meetings to gather perceptions of community safety, current SAPD programming and initiatives, and to discuss challenges to policing the area. Further interviews and focus groups with gang, patrol officers and command staff would have provided a more comprehensive picture of first responders' perspectives of safety and solutions. Nonetheless, resident and stakeholder perspectives are equally as important in understanding the complexities of safety in neighborhoods as well as from a service-based lens. Other meetings with City

entities included staff from Santa Ana Public Works, Santa Ana Neighborhood Initiatives, Department of Recreation and Parks, and Library Services to gain insights about city service infrastructure, accessibility and program participation. Interviews and focus groups were also held with local service providers and groups such as Comlink, Resilience OC, Delhi Center, Latino Health Access, Project Kinship, Taller San Jose, and other groups like KidWorks and Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce. UPI sought citywide participation through consistent and ongoing outreach and research, as well as from recommendations from interviewees and residents.

FOCUS GROUP	N =
Santa Ana College Staff	11
Santa Ana College Students	14
Kidworks Youth	33
Kidworks Parents	18
Latino Health Access Promotoras	14
Resilience OC Youth	9
Delhi Center	12
SAUSD School Police	11
SAUSD Personnel	6



Senior Center (SPANISH)	16
Senior Center (ENGLISH)	10
Community Based Organizations	6
Project Kinship Adults	4
Santa Ana Parks & Recreation Staff	7
Parents (SPANISH)	14
Chicano Unidos	5
LGBT Center	4
Taller San Jose – HOPE BUILDERS	19
Pico-Lowell Cafecito Family	14
Com-Link	7
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N = 239</b>

Table 2: Focus Groups - Methodology

Local schools were engaged to understand the challenges faced by students, administration, and SAUSD school police. High school, middle school, college students and staff also participated in the research process through interviews, focus groups, and administration of youth surveys. Focus groups were held with SAUSD’s School Climate Committee, Santa Ana College faculty and staff, as well as Santa Ana College students.

Focus group participants were primarily recruited with the help of community-based organizations where participation was vol-

untary. Residents also received gift cards for their participation. In total, UPI conducted 21 focus groups with 239 participants representing local students, service providers, city and school staff, and residents.

Focus groups explored the experiences of residents and service providers regarding community assets and concerns, gang activity and violence dynamics, service needs, and law enforcement-community relations. Participants were asked to provide their input on ways to improve community safety. Focus groups were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on the primary language of the group. A note taker was present at each focus group. Focus group notes taken in Spanish were simultaneously translated and transcribed into English by UPI staff. Focus groups were also scheduled during the day or in the evenings to accommodate resident availability.

INTERVIEW	N =
OC Health Care Agency	2
Santa Ana Planning & Building Agency	2
City Manager & Deputy City Manager	2
SA Business Council/Downtown Inc.	2
Santa Ana Public Works Agency	1
Latino Health Access	1
Delhi Center	1
Santa Ana Unidos	2
Neutral Ground	2

Boy Scouts of Santa Ana	2
Chispa	1
Homeless Services Manager	1
Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce	2
Library/Youth Services	1
Victims Advocates	2
Cambodian Family	1
Southwest Community Center	1
Brook Weitzman – Homeless Lawyer	1
Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)	1
SAPD PAAL Director & Staff	2
SAUSD Charter School Administrator	1
Catholic Charities	1
SAPD GRIP	2
Boys and Girls Club	1
Salvation Army	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>N = 36</b>

Table 3: Interviews - Methodology

In total, UPI conducted 25 stakeholder interviews with 36 participants, representing school leaders, local government staff and community-based organization leadership and staff.

The purpose of holding interviews was

to garner insight regarding community strengths, access to services and safety concerns. Interviewees were also asked to identify additional stakeholders to interview as well as build a pool from which to recruit focus groups and/or survey administrators and participants.

To capture quantitative data that reflected the resident voices of Santa Ana, UPI developed a 32-point community survey to analyze residents’ perceptions of law enforcement, community safety, access to services, neighborhood concerns and strengths, and community cohesion. UPI staff along with twenty-five residents administered surveys to 550 residents in their preferred language (i.e. English, Spanish). In addition, over 60 surveys were administered by staff through community meetings and events and over 150 surveys through community-based organizations. Qualitative data was gathered through focus groups and interviews. To capture youth perspectives, UPI developed a short-form version of the community survey administered in youth focus groups, online through SAUSD platforms, and at a Santa Ana Unidos Community Resource Fair and Concert.

UPI obtained 160 youth surveys from middle and high school students. In total, 880 community surveys were administered and collected from March to September 2018. A total of 1153 residents and community stakeholders were engaged throughout the assessment process to generate data.

UPI also held a community safety forum (see appendices) titled, “The State of Community Safety” at the Delhi Center in September 2018 and invited residents and key community safety leaders throughout the city to discuss safety concerns, services,

and opportunities for potential collaboration. Panelists included Chief Valentin, SAPD; Chief Smith, SAUSD School Police, Hafsa Kaka, City’s Homeless Services Manager, Juan Plasencia, resident and City Youth Commissioner; Steven Kim, Project Kinship; and Bree Alvarado, Neutral Ground. The event was moderated by Norberto Santana, editor of the Voice of OC. Residents, stakeholders, focus group participants and interviewees were all invited to the public event in an effort to educate the community and highlight the need for comprehensive and tailored safety solutions for Santa Ana by its leaders. The discussion ended with a call to action around the need for better commu-

nication, collaboration and coordination of services.

In focus group and interview conversations along with public dialogues in the community, UPI explained the importance of the community assessment to support the development of Santa Ana’s larger community safety strategy. Most residents and community participants were receptive to the assessment and displayed an eagerness to receive more resources and increase coordinated efforts around community safety in Santa Ana. Many city leaders and elected officials also expressed interest in creative and comprehensive safety solutions.

## B. SURVEY DATA

### 1. Community Survey Results

#### Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

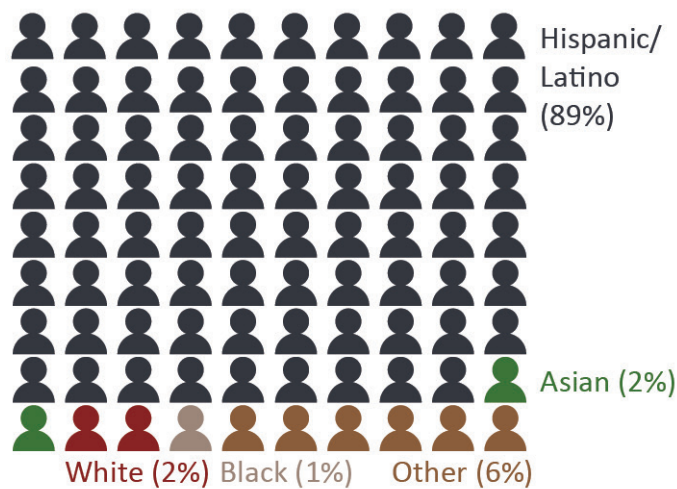


Figure 18: Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

## a. Adult Survey

According to the community survey, the top community safety issues for adults include:

- Homelessness
- Immigration Enforcement

- Drug sales/Drug use
- General Disorder
- Gang and Gun Violence

The lack of engaged public officials and lack of parks and open spaces were also ranked high as contributing to community safety concerns.

	Not a problem at all	Rarely a problem	Sometimes a problem	Often a problem	Always a problem
a) Lack of police presence	14%	14%	28%	21%	23%
b) Over-policing of community	32%	26%	18%	12%	9%
c) Gang Activity (intimidation/recruiting)	9%	13%	21%	26%	29%
d) General disorder (trash/graffiti, noise)	4%	9%	21%	27%	37%
e) Family Stress and Instability	7%	18%	28%	22%	22%
f) Police harassment	19%	25%	22%	16%	14%
g) Domestic Violence	16%	21%	22%	20%	17%
h) Lack of services for ex-offenders	10%	15%	21%	22%	27%
i) Too Many Liquor Stores	11%	15%	18%	20%	34%
j) Homelessness	4%	6%	14%	20%	54%
k) Drug Sales/Drug use	6%	8%	16%	21%	48%
l) Gun violence	8%	14%	19%	18%	38%
m) Mental health/Trauma	9%	14%	23%	20%	31%
n) Lack of Jobs	6%	12%	28%	23%	28%
o) Poor Quality Schools	7%	21%	25%	20%	23%
p) Fear of deportation	6%	7%	14%	18%	52%
q) Lack of parks and open spaces	9%	11%	20%	20%	36%

r) Too much surveillance	26%	20%	19%	13%	15%
s) Too little surveillance	9%	14%	21%	20%	31%
t) Access to healthy food	14%	13%	23%	23%	24%
u) Lack of engaged public officials	6%	10%	22%	24%	34%

Table 4: Community Safety Issues (Adults)

Per the survey results, homelessness was the top community safety concern with 74% of respondents reporting it as often or always a problem. The second top issue was fear of deportation or immigration enforcement with 70% of respondents reporting it as often or always a problem. Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported drug sales and drug use as often and always a problem. Sixty-four percent of respondents reported that general disorder was often a serious problem. Gang and gun violence were reported as the top fifth concern with 55% indicating it as often or always a problem. Though these safety concerns may represent different issues, the conflation of homelessness, drug sales and use, general disorder, and gun and gang vio-

lence are interrelated. Immigration enforcement and fear of deportation is a salient issue in Santa Ana and reflects the distrust and fear experienced by residents in the city.

### b. Youth Survey

According to the youth survey, top safety issues include:

- Homelessness
- Drug sales/use
- General disorder
- Gang and gun violence
- Fear of deportation

	Not a problem at all	Rarely a problem	Sometimes a problem	Often a problem	Always a problem
a) Lack of police presence	24%	22%	36%	8%	10%
b) Over-policing of community	30%	27%	21%	15%	6%
c) Gang Activity (intimidation/recruiting)	12%	13%	23%	27%	25%
d) General disorder (trash/graffiti, noise)	11%	15%	20%	27%	25%
e) Family Stress and Instability	24%	24%	24%	14%	14%
f) Police harassment	33%	19%	17%	12%	19%

g) Domestic Violence	29%	18%	21%	13%	18%
h) Lack of services for ex-offenders	24%	14%	30%	12%	21%
i) Too Many Liquor Stores	30%	27%	17%	13%	13%
j) Homelessness	12%	11%	17%	20%	40
k) Drug Sales/Drug use	12%	14%	18%	26%	31%
l) Gun violence	16%	13%	21%	22%	29%
m) Mental health/Trauma	21%	19%	28%	12%	21%
n) Lack of Jobs	19%	20%	23%	21%	17%
o) Poor Quality Schools	33%	21%	22%	10%	14%
p) Fear of deportation	20%	15%	14%	17%	34
q) Lack of parks and open spaces	25%	16%	25%	14%	20%
r) Too much surveillance	26%	25%	25%	12%	12%
s) Too little surveillance	19%	22%	28%	16%	15%
t) Access to healthy food	25%	17%	23%	15%	20%
u) Lack of engaged public officials	23%	15%	30%	13%	18%

Table 5: Community Safety Concerns (Youth)

When comparing top safety issues between youth and adults, gang activity is seen as a larger issue among youth than it is for adults, while for adults immigration enforcement is rated much higher as a safety concern. Although youth and adults may share similar safety concerns, this data highlights the unique perspectives of all residents. This also highlights the need for shared and targeted approaches to adult and youth safety concerns. Homelessness was a top issue with

youth responding it being 60% “often a problem” and “always a problem”, which matches the top concern for adults as well.

The same top concerns, gangs and homelessness, were expressed during focus groups with youth. Youth also felt unsafe at parks or in other public spaces because of gangs and the homeless population have taken over public spaces leaving youth feeling like they have no safe place to gather. On the

other hand, there were youth who shared that such occurrences were normal. One youth shared that it was normal to hear gunshots, helicopters, or police sirens in their neighborhood. The normalization of violence in certain Santa Ana neighborhoods is prevalent and as a result accepted.

Santa Ana middle and high school youth emphasized the need for more community cohesion and trust. When prompted with the question to define community safety, youth reported that they wanted to see “more trust in my community” and more “collaboration between the city and community.” Many youth said Santa Ana was unpredictable and would often avoid certain parts of the city often because of gangs or violence. During these conversations it was evident that youth know and understand which streets, alleys, and business corridors may pose potential violence, gang intimidation, and drug sales. As a result, youth have developed an understanding of how to navigate their neighborhood to arrive home and to school.

Youth also expressed that they would like to see more of an emphasis on positive law enforcement contact. This included wanting to see increased law enforcement presence in the community with better treatment and

more positive interactions with youth. Youth were asked: “What would you like to see differently or more from your local law enforcement officers?” responses included:

- “Be reasonable and don’t assume negativity based on one’s appearance.” -Youth, 17 yrs. old
- “I’d like to see them care more for today’s youth.” -Youth, 15 yrs. old
- “Be more friendly and have enough compassion to help out individuals no matter their background.” -Youth, 17 yrs. old
- “Being more involved with the community in a positive way.” -Youth, 16 yrs. old
- “Come more often to the neighborhood I live in.” -Youth, 12 yrs. old

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**“Over the years, Santa Ana has evolved in a more positive direction. However, there are some conflicts that have not yet been resolved that are leading the community in challenging paths such as the transient situation.”**

*– SA Resident*

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## 2. Residents’ Top Safety Concerns

The results of the community safety surveys provide quantitative data of residents’ concern. When aggregated, the top five issues included homelessness (73%), fear of deportation (69%), drug sales/use (68%), general disorder (63%), and gang activity and gun vio-

lence (56%). The combination of these issues in neighborhoods, parks, business corridors, and schools all affect residents’ perceptions and experiences of community safety.

## a. Homelessness

Issues related to homelessness were consistently identified by a broad range of stakeholders as among the most serious public safety issues facing Santa Ana. Survey data shows that 74% of adults and 60% of youth believe homelessness is often or always a problem. This is the highest percentage of any issue surveyed. Our research also suggests that homeless people, and homeless women in particular, suffer the most serious violence and trauma at the highest rates of anyone in the city. Furthermore, the increasing costs of housing and concerns about displacement and gentrification suggest that the threat of currently housed people becoming homeless is increasing. Participants in the Santa Ana College focus group were particularly concerned about their own housing insecurity.

In our interviews we found that the overwhelming majority of Santa Ana's homeless are people who have spent most of their lives in Orange County, though most were from cities other than Santa Ana. This is consistent with the city's finding that only about half of the homeless in the city are from outside Santa Ana.<sup>41</sup> This finding directly contradicts a common narrative that homeless people in Santa Ana are from outside the county or even the state. This is important because some have argued against providing services to homeless people because they fear Santa Ana will become a "magnet" to homeless people from outside of Orange County; in other words, homelessness in Santa Ana will increase as more homeless people move to the city to take advantage of those resources.

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**"Us women out here are scared every second of every day."**

*— Homeless SA Resident*

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Santa Ana streets are home to a disproportionate number of Orange County's homeless. Our data suggests this is mostly an effect of Santa Ana being the county seat; specifically, the city has a disproportionate number of homeless people because the county jail's Intake and Release Center is located within its boundaries and because surrounding cities have pushed homeless people into Santa Ana. For example, one homeless interview participant said he was from Costa Mesa but moved to Santa Ana to avoid constant harassment by Costa Mesa police. Once the streets and parks of Santa Ana became home to a relatively high concentration of homeless people, that concentration

became self-perpetuating as people seeking a community of peers in a similar situation found that community in Santa Ana. What our research did not find is that homeless people came to the city to take advantage of services provided only in Santa Ana. To the contrary, one family we

interviewed who was from Santa Ana had to travel to San Clemente to find a church who could shelter them and provide services to transition them back to stable housing, which they eventually found in an apartment in Santa Ana. The homeless people interviewed were grateful for the services that exist but it is either their roots in Santa Ana or a sense of community they have found with other homeless in the area, not services, that are the reason they stay.

The homeless people we interviewed consistently described a pervasive sense of vulnerability because of their status. One interviewee said, "when you're sleeping outside,



anybody coming by is bad news.” While there is no reliable data on rates of crime among Santa Ana’s homeless population, our assessment suggests a shocking rate of sexual violence against homeless women. Beyond that, homeless people complained mostly of petty theft and confiscation of their belongings by police, being pricked by discarded needles, and dehumanizing treatment by residents, business owners, and police. Homeless interview participants all stated that they have been victims of crime that they did not report to the police.

Women appear to be the victims of most of the serious crime against homeless people. One woman we interviewed broke into tears as she described being raped or subject to an attempted rape twice in the previous week. She gave no indication that was unusual for her. Advocates describe how some of the homeless women they work with avoid bathing and have intentionally poor hygiene to make themselves less attractive to sexual predators. While it seems, there may be an epidemic of sexual violence happening in the streets of Santa Ana at night, we did not hear this issue raised by city officials even once and the issue is almost entirely missing from discussions about homelessness.

Our interviews suggest the primary reasons for the underreporting of crime by homeless victims is a common belief that the police cannot or will not help homeless victims. This belief is undoubtedly exacerbated by the struggles of many homeless people to ever trust anyone. Additionally, some also

struggle with their own mental and emotional health issues. When asked why they might or might not go to the police when they are the victims of crime, most interviewees laughed or seemed to think the answer was too obvious. After some reflection, the common answers were that no one, including the police, cared about them or that nothing short of finding them a safe place to live would help. When pressed about why they thought the police did not care about them, several described how officers treated them in dramatically different ways, so they tried to avoid police entirely. Multiple interview participants described a particular officer, presumably

SAPD’s Heart program officer, as being caring and approachable, but they described most other officers as treating them in dehumanizing ways, such as yelling at them from inside patrol cars to stop digging through trash cans. One homeless resident pointed out how even a single confrontational

encounter with law enforcement can set a homeless person back “months of progress with their psychologist.” Homeless people also complained that they have been frequently ticketed by police and have had their possessions confiscated in the past, though no one reported tickets or property confiscation as having happened recently.

Homeless people are often perceived by other residents as a threat to public safety. As described above, survey data shows that 74% of adults and 60% of youth believe homelessness is often or always a problem. Focus group participants made connections

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**“Everyone sees the ugliness in the person instead of the ugliness of the situation.”**

— *Service Provider*

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between homelessness, gangs, and drugs. For example, one participant stated, “The streets are super dirty, a lot of vandalism and homeless, very dangerous, a lot of drug addiction is seen more with homeless and gangs.”

Residents perceived homeless people as public safety threats given their observations of and experiences with people who were mentally ill, addicted to drugs, or visibly suffering from disease. Also, many residents perceived panhandling by homeless people as intimidating. The increased numbers of homeless in the city led to the perception of increased disorder in the city, which in turn decreases residents’ perception of safety. Further reinforcing the perception of homeless people as a safety threat, public officials from the surrounding cities make blanket statements describing them as sex offenders and serious criminals.

In addition to sexual violence by homeless men against homeless women, there are undoubtedly some small number of homeless people who pose a significant threat to the safety of others. Increased homelessness also leads to increases in nuisance behavior and health and safety threats such as discarded syringes and human waste left in public spaces. Many residents complain of homeless people acting erratically, verbally assaulting people, and threatening each other. Some young people complain of “catcalling” and sexual harassment as they walk by homeless men. Increased homelessness also

makes it more difficult for communities to use public spaces like parks and libraries. Homeless people use the restrooms for bathing and washing clothes. Parents and SAUSD police officers described homeless people talking about drugs with children.

Homeless residents asked for permanent affordable housing or free and safe temporary housing where people can keep their dignity. Several interview participants said they were currently sleeping in public because they

found shelters too much like prisons or too unsafe. Homeless women preferred all-female shelters. Interview participants also avoided shelters because they worried about having their belongings stolen while they were sleeping, even in shelters where they were able to check their belongings for storage with shelter volunteers. Homeless interview participants also asked for more services such as access to free food. They complained that “feeds,” free food handed out by volunteers, were

becoming increasingly scarce as police had shut them down.

## **b. Immigration Enforcement**

Immigration enforcement and fear of deportation came in as the second highest safety concern at 69%. Given Santa Ana’s history of immigration and changing demographics, and in more recent years with President Trump’s narrative on immigration enforcement, there is a heightened sensitivity

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**“When GRIP was brand new, there was fear of deportation...people were scared because they witnessed negative encounters with law enforcement, they assumed that’s the way the police was with everyone.”**

*– SAPD Officer*

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towards immigration status and documentation that many individuals and families in Santa Ana face. For many residents and families in Santa Ana, this is a very real threat and daily struggle that has in some cases isolated individuals and families. Santa Ana became a sanctuary city in a unanimous vote by city council in December of 2017.<sup>42</sup> Santa Ana is the only sanctuary city in Orange County, though the County Board of Supervisors, with several cities, passed resolutions to oppose the California Values Act, known as California's sanctuary law.<sup>43</sup> Santa Ana is surrounded by perceived political opposition and has little external support to help immigrant residents. One resident noted "We are surrounded by cities who are anti-undocumented Latinos. It's like we are invisible and are not a part of Orange County, we don't get the same treatment as the other cities. When other cities don't want to deal with their issues, they pass them over. For example, our homeless issue increased because they were being dropped off in Santa Ana, that's unfair."

The Orange County Sheriff's has taken a stance on immigration, however not explicitly against Sanctuary State Law. The OC Sheriffs have turned over inmates to ICE by posting the release dates of inmates on jail websites which informs federal agencies to pick up ICE detainees as they walk out of jail.<sup>44</sup> In 2018 Orange County sheriff's handed off 717 county inmates to federal immigration authorities.<sup>45</sup> Reports from the California State Auditor indicated that Orange County spent 1.7 million more than in the previous year to inform ICE during the 2017-2018 fiscal year.<sup>46</sup> The Orange County narrative that law enforcement works with ICE has contributed to a heightened sense of fear among Latino residents in Santa Ana.

The role of immigration detention as portrayed and handled in Orange county has heightened Santa Ana residents' sensitivity towards Law Enforcement and has increased fear of local government. This can include a decreasing trust in service providers, local authorities and city services. One Service Provider noted, "There is fear - not using food stamps, [there's] fear of not opening the door, not attending events" because of fear of immigration enforcement and deportation. When referencing fear of immigration enforcement, residents were not specifically attacking Santa Ana Police department, but spoke about all types of law enforcement from the city, county, and ICE. This points to residents' mistrust of general law enforcement in uniform, which has led to severe underreporting of crimes or incidents and general lack of trust with local government.

Santa Ana has attempted to change city policies so that they can respond to the concerns of its residents. In 2016, Santa Ana began to phase out ICE, and in 2017 ICE itself decided to end their contract with the city, and in 2017 the city voted to set aside funds to provide lawyers for arrested and detained individuals.<sup>47</sup> The city council has recognized the impact of immigration enforcement on residents and responded by allocating a small legal defense fund for residents facing possible deportation by partnering with Vera Institute of Justice. Residents and many advocacy groups continue to urge the city to increase that budget so more of the community can receive help.

The fear of deportation was also lifted up as a concern by Santa Ana College students and echoed by Santa Ana College staff. Staff have seen a decrease in enrollment due to fear of being an undocumented student, both

on their main campus and among the adult education program. There is a concern from staff that those individuals who have had to leave school get stuck in a cycle of wanting to improve their lives but are limited because of the current political climate. Staff have also seen emotional issues from their students, as one staff member shared “a lot of students are resilient and want to better their community, but issues from immigration to housing—you see these issues come up in the classroom.” The looming and overarching fear of immigration enforcement and deportation has sometimes hampered students and families’ ability and willingness to act on their own goals.

### **c. Drug Use/Sales & General Disorder**

Sixty seven percent of respondents reported Drug Use and Sales and General Disorder as the 3rd highest community safety concern. Residents noted that drug sales and use as prominent in their neighborhoods, alley ways, and shopping centers and other public spaces.

Many residents and stakeholders shared stories of increased presence of drugs and paraphernalia in a variety of public spaces. Increased drug use and sales could also be due to the impacted and increased presence of persons experiencing

homelessness in Santa Ana and in Orange County at large. Residents and stakeholders also reported a prevalence of drug sales and use among known gang members in parks and in neighborhoods and expressed the decision not to go to parks because of the drug use. Public drug use has increased fear for Santa Ana residents and visitors alike. The conflation of drugs and general disorder such as trash, graffiti, noise and vandalism all contributed to residents’ perception of safety and sense of personal security and freedom. When asked to identify a particular place they would be afraid to go to alone at

night one survey respondent noted, “Anywhere. There are people harassing or stealing and selling drugs.”

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**“The community is not very safe. I usually get hit up by gangs when I am walking the streets.”**

– SA Youth Resident

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**“They got rid of most of the handball courts because gang members were using them, but do you want gang members playing handball or doing bad?”**

– SA Resident

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Due to the recent passage of California Proposition 64 legalizing the use and sale of marijuana—residents, schools, and community-based organizations all noted an increase in marijuana store fronts in and around Santa Ana. The ease of access had led to an increased presence of community use, primarily among youth. SAUSD personnel noted that “SAUSD School Police are seeing drug use in younger and younger kids, inside and outside of middle and high schools, but now even in some elementary schools.” There is “easy access” to drugs in schools and parks, which can deter families

and individuals wanting to utilize the parks and schools for programming or recreation.

#### d. Gang & Gun Violence

Gangs play a large part in shaping Santa Ana's reputation and identity. A broad range of focus group respondents said they deeply feared gangs and make no distinction between peripheral gang members and the gangs' most violent members. However, many of these interview participants also reported that they feel the role of gangs in Santa Ana is unfairly exaggerated. For example, one focus group participant who is a parolee and was formerly involved with a gang in a different city reported that he was urged by his parole officer to find a city besides Santa Ana to live after his release from prison. The focus group participant felt that his parole officer was wrong to think that gangs were so pervasive in Santa Ana that they were inescapable.

Fifty-five percent of survey respondents indicated that gang activity was "often" and "always a problem". California Healthy Kids Survey Santa Ana 2017-2018 yielded similar results with 44% of ninth graders, 46% of 11th graders, and 48% continuation/community day/alternative school types indicating gangs as a major problem in the neighborhood.<sup>48</sup> School staff were asked if gang activity was a problem and Santa Ana school staff reported it as moderate/severe problem 28% in middle school, 32% in high

school, and 82% in continuation/community day/alternative school types.<sup>49</sup>

While community members reported that they believe that law enforcement is primarily responsible for dealing with gang crime and violence, more community members described law enforcement's approach to crime as less effective (48%) compared to the number who described it as more effective (21%). Survey results were more positive for community-based approaches than law enforcement, with 28% rating community-based approaches more effective.

A broad range of interview participants stated they believe more prevention, intervention, and re-entry resources are needed to reduce gang membership and activity. Restorative justice programs in schools were held up by a variety of stakeholders as examples of effective conflict solving programs. Focus group participants reported that they believe there has

been a decline in programs offered to at-risk youth compared to decades ago. They also reported that the community needs to do more to support young people growing up in homes where there is domestic violence and drug-addicted adults and parents. These participants suggest that supports should come from sources other than from law enforcement, or in addition to law enforcement, in order to better reach youth who are attracted to gangs.

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**"People in gangs don't know the steps to get out. For example, some individuals are not given options and told the only way to succeed is school and sometimes school isn't their strong area. They get caught up in drugs and the wrong people."**

— *Service Provider*

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A focus group of formerly gang-involved individuals reported that what young gang members need to motivate them to leave their gangs is (1) exposure to the world outside their neighborhood, (2) opportunities besides drug sales to make money without sacrificing their dignity, and (3) role models who they feel they can relate to. However, our research discovered very few programs that attempt to meet

these needs for current gang-involved youth. Instead, the overwhelming amount of resources directed at stopping gang crime and violence are given to law enforcement, and the remaining resources are given to prevention programs for at-risk youth who have not yet joined a gang, and re-entry programs for people leaving jail and prison.

### 3. Responsibility for Safety

Fifty-six percent of respondents indicated that elected officials have been “totally ineffective” or “somewhat ineffective” in improving safety. This response reflected the lowest rated of all categories when asked how effective

different groups/agencies have been in improving safety in the neighborhood. The city and its elected officials play a vital role in keeping the city and its residents safe. The City should work jointly with the police department,

Over the past year, how effective do you think each of the following groups/agencies has been in improving safety in this neighborhood?

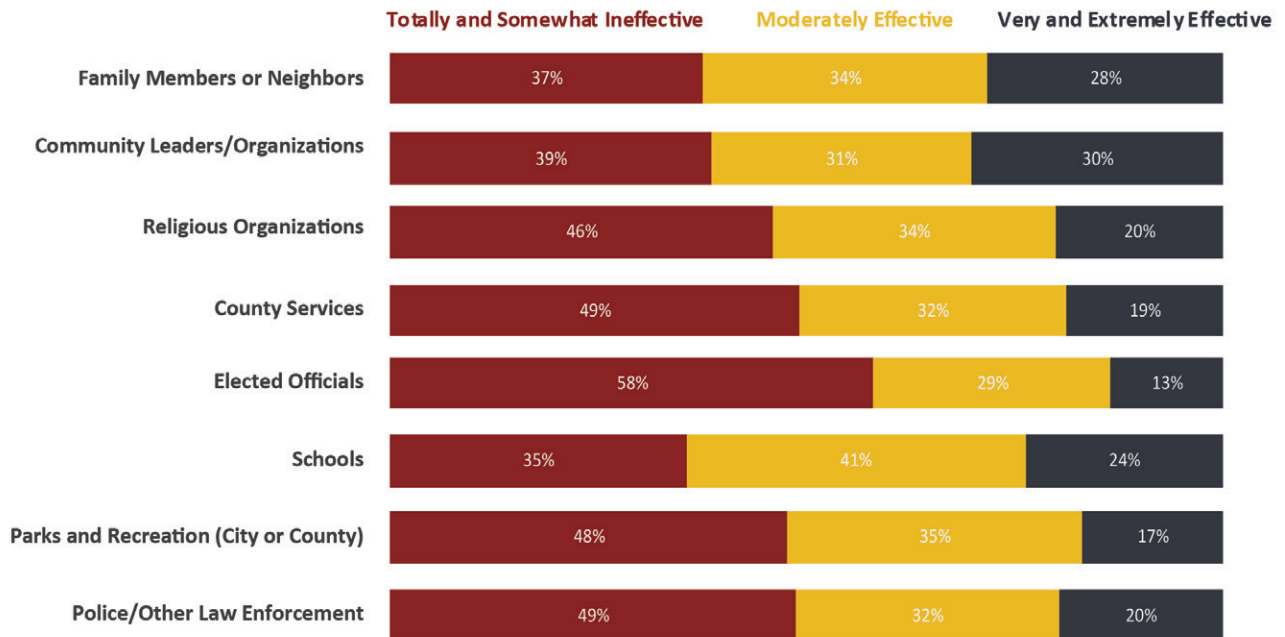


Figure 19: Effectiveness of Groups / Agencies in Improving Safety

community members, and service providers to address safety. Forty-eight percent of respondents also indicated that police/other law enforcement have been “totally ineffective” or “somewhat effective” in improving safety in Santa Ana, the second lowest rat. Participants during focus groups and interviews shared specific examples of either not seeing law enforcement present or when interacting with law enforcement, officers exhibiting poor community engagement and relational skills. Forty-nine of respondents indicated that county services have been “totally ineffective” and “somewhat effective” in improving safety. Participants spoke about Santa Ana being disproportionately impacted due to fragmentation of the County. For example, Santa Ana received a large amount of the homeless population even though many of those were not from the Santa Ana area. Some residents shared other city police departments were dropping off homeless in Santa Ana or since the county jail is housed in Santa Ana, when homeless were released they just stayed in Santa Ana. Therefore, the city became responsible for addressing a disproportionate amount of the County’s homelessness issues. Others expanded by mentioning a lack of collaboration with the city and county citing a “us versus them” dynamic.

Conversely, community leaders and organizations, family members and neighbors, and schools were noted as the top three

groups and agencies that were successful in improving safety in neighborhoods. These unique assets should be considered as local strengths that can be leveraged to increase safety. These assets can be leveraged by the City to increase trust and engagement with the community.

When asked whose responsibility it is when addressing gang-related problems such as crime and intimidation, respondents indicated that law enforcement, elected officials, and community-based organizations should play a more significant role in addressing safety concerns. This

potentially poses a unique opportunity to strengthen collaboration and coordination at the local neighborhood level, particularly for those organizations who serve residents based on geography and proximity. Although law enforcement and elected officials are expected to be most responsible for addressing problems related to gangs, respondents did not feel they were effective in actually improving safety (see Figure 380 above). This further exposes the gap between the expectations of community members and public sectors

agencies, especially with law enforcement and publicly elected officials. Through our qualitative analysis, working with law enforcement and elected officials have proven to be anything but harmonious. Respondents expressed and shared frustrations around communication, accessibility, slow response

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**“Calling the police makes it worse.”**

– SA Resident

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**“Police say they are here for the community, but it is the opposite and they criminalize anyone.”**

– SA Promotora

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times, customer service, and a general sense of being ignored by elected officials and law enforcement.

Issues and frustrations extend beyond residents; it is also perceived by service providers and city employees. During a focus group with city staff, participants expressed a need for more law enforcement, better response time, and improved customer service. Many city staff recognized that the capacity of law enforcement is limited, and there is a growing need for collaboration and communication to respond to community issues is needed.

Participants were concerned about how law enforcement treated youth and how often law enforcement was almost non-existent when threats to their safety did arise. Many parents shared stories of how youth have been stereotyped by law enforcement or have had three to four officers stopping an individual youth. Residents expressed their frustration with the lack of communication from law enforcement. They also expressed concern with situations that ranged from officers not being discreet regarding incidents involving youth or not demonstrating a welcoming presence to residents. Some residents reported that they do not reach out to law enforcement because they “don’t do anything.” This dynamic may contribute to a growing concern of underreporting throughout Santa Ana, and especially in neighborhoods where law enforcement presence was anything but helpful.

This data suggests there is a huge gap in the relationship between community and law enforcement. There is a urgent need to increase trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve for public safety to be achieved. Santa Ana requires policing that prioritizes community in different ways that are currently not working.

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**“There’s a need for more diplomacy from the city. There is a distrust within the community. As a city, we need to move forward together because I cannot engage in us vs. them.”**

*– SA City Staff*

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For example, when respondents were asked how likely they were to seek services from particular groups/agencies, they cited schools, community-based service organizations, and the County as the top three. Fifty-six percent of respondents indicated they would “usually” or “always” seek services from schools. Residents overwhelmingly reported a high level of trust and/or knowledge of the services available to them by schools.

As stated earlier, schools were seen as an asset in Santa Ana because of what is provided for students and parents— a place where services and programs were easily accessible to them and where they felt welcomed. A little over one third or thirty-six percent of respondents indicated they would “never” or “rarely” seek services from the police. This demonstrates the resident’s unwillingness to reach out to law enforcement. Instead of programs offered through SAPD for civic engagement or youth prevention, residents of Santa Ana choose to seek services from schools or community-based service organizations. Additionally, forty percent of respondents indicated they would “never” or “rarely” seek services from the Department of Parks. This also illustrates the low expectations residents have of city services.



## C. ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

	Never and Rarely Seek for Services	Sometimes Seek for Services	Usually and Always Seek for Services
a) Family members or neighbors	28%	29%	43%
b) Parks and Recreation	40%	29%	32%
c) Religious Organizations	27%	29%	44%
d) County Services (Social Services, Probation, Health Care Agency, etc.)	27%	28%	45%
e) Community-based service organizations	18%	30%	52%
f) Schools	17%	26%	56%
g) Police	36%	23%	42%
h) Other Programs	28%	19%	53%

Table 6: Agencies Most Often Sought for Services

### 1. Community Strengths

#### a. Social and Cultural Networks

When asked about community strengths, the word most often used was “culture.” Participants highlighted a strong shared culture among residents where there is a wide variety of cultural restaurants and events held by neighbors and the city. Santa Ana prides itself as a unique given its’ strong Mexican heritage that sets itself apart from other cities. Efforts have been made to celebrate the diversity of Santa Ana.<sup>50</sup> Residents noted the city hosted events such as Cinco de Mayo, Fiestas Patrias, and Dia de Los Niños that are centered around Mexican celebrations. Back in 2015, Santa

Ana designated an area on Fourth Street calling it “Plaza Calle Cuatro” as well as placing signs under the Fourth Street signs with new Calle Cuarto signs to acknowledge the historical significance of the street.<sup>51</sup> These are some of the examples residents provided on Santa Ana’s historical roots and how culture is embraced in the city. Santa Ana’s diverse and culturally aware community is a strength of the city and can be a driving force to increased community cohesion. The largest population in Santa Ana are Mexicans which represent 71.6% of the Santa Ana population.<sup>52</sup> Residents share similar customs and backgrounds which contributes to a unified community.

When asked if you agree or disagree if people in my neighborhood care about the neighborhood, 64% of respondents “somewhat” or “strongly agreed “with the statement. Sixty percent of respondents also “somewhat” or “strongly agreed” that people in their neighborhood generally get along with each other.

Many service providers interviewed mentioned youth as a strength of Santa Ana. With Santa Ana’s median age being 31 years, youth make up a large segment of the population. Service providers noted that in order to make Santa Ana more sustainable and healthier, youth programming and investment need to be prioritized. Service providers shared that youth are the driving force to change and were concerned about the direction the City of Santa Ana was heading towards. Youth are often seen at city council meetings, community forums, or workgroups and want their voices to be heard.

## **b. Schools**

### ***i. Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD)***

Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) covers most of the elementary, middle and high

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### **Words used to describe Santa Ana:**

- Full of hustle
- Working class
- Young
- Proud with deep cultural roots
- Diverse
- Good schools
- Everybody knows each other
- The people

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**“I interact with lots of parents who are prideful of their culture which is passed onto their children, they really want what’s best for their children, the community is starting to learn their voice and creating change”**

**– School Staff**

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schools with a few schools zoned in the Garden Grove Unified School District (GGUSD). SAUSD is the 9th largest district in California and the largest in Orange County. SAUSD served 54,505 students, and GGUSD served 9,648 Santa Ana residents in the 2017-2018 school year. It is important to note that Santa Ana Unified School District is also the 2nd largest employer in Santa Ana with close to 4,000 staff. Since 2010 SAUSD has seen an increase in graduation rates, Advanced Placement test taking, increase in SAT scores, and decreases in dropout rates, truancy, and expulsion. SAUSD has over 60 school sites with a student population comprised of 96% Latino, 2% Asian Pacific Islander, and 2% Other. Almost 90% of students are free and reduced lunch recipients, a proxy for poverty.

### ***ii. Community Engagement & Services***

When residents were asked who they would most likely seek services from, 56% of respondents noted that schools were the likeliest place, serving as the highest rated among others such as community-based organizations, county services, and religious based organizations. Parents and students

alike shared they felt safe and listened to at schools. One district staff mentioned, “They value parents here, they go out of their way to lift parent voices, really actually listen and react ... they want people to come in and talk.” Another staffer noted, “[Board members] introduce themselves, they go out into the community and introduce themselves to kids and families.” Over the course of the assessment, it became apparent that the school district along with its school staff prioritized community and parent engagement. This level of engagement has increased trust with community residents and community-based organizations thereby increasing participation in programming and referrals for services.

Innovative and evidence-based frameworks and programs like Positive Behavior Intervention Supports, Restorative Practices and Wellness Centers have become interwoven throughout SAUSD policies and practices, leading to decreases in expulsions and suspensions, equipping staff and students with conflict resolution skills, and reinforcing positive behaviors and relationships vertically as well as horizontally across the District. When asked what the strengths of the school district were, school staff mentioned that the district “want[s] to grow from within, not looking outside, to recognize its greatness” by investing in their students as leaders in their schools and communities. This inclusive attitude has helped parents better navigate the educational system as well as create a healthy space for discourse, accountability and advocacy. The district has also made investments

in summer enrichment programming and extended learning, engaging students and their families in more ways than in the classroom. Another district representative mentioned “we’re listening to parents and kids, seeing less suspensions, and more programs.”

Schools have also become safe havens from the safety concerns students and parents expressed throughout the assessment. When discussing safety concerns, a participant responded, the “City is on fire. School has become the safest place kids can be, on campus it’s a completely different story.”

By offering programming, partnering with community-based organizations, SAUSD schools have become a point of connectivity and coordination. Schools are where students, parents, community based organizations, businesses, and others have developed productive and positive relationships. As a result, one school staff noted “the city should be

thanking us, the more we do those things, the more safe it is.” Another service provider shared that it’s about “emotional safety... a lot of kids are in unsafe circumstances, there’s domestic violence at home, we are safe havens, dealing with things through implementing restorative practices and training staff to facilitate has really helped to support.” This added safety net for students, parents, and families has served as a valuable and reliable resource for the city’s residents.

The SAUSD school police serve as a positive resource and point of SAUSD contact for youth and families. Residents expressed

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**“Our schools are safe because we have relationships with kids and programs, all this stuff that’s making it safe.”**

*– School Staff*

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feeling welcomed and treated with respect by SAUSD school police and commented on prompt response times as well as positive customer service with school police. One SAUSD officer noted “They respect us for how we treat them, ... we get to know parents and kids, calling me over to see their baby, we do counseling with parents, kids... it’s different here, we have time...we offer them services, alternatives, more involved with community.” Officers have been encouraged to build relationships with students and families to refer them to resources to provide safety and support services proactively. It became evident that the District’s values are aligned and engrained through school police practices and initiatives. Another officer noted, “They love your presence, they won’t show it or say it...there’s lots of silent support, parents want to talk to me in private, they want a nice neighborhood too.” As a result, residents have increased trust with the district and by extension its school police officers who have demonstrated courtesy in action and increased safety in and around schools throughout the District.

Conversely when residents spoke about City services, they pointed out gaps in the city’s community and resident engagement. Residents and youth felt ignored by the city, their voice neglected, or that their opinions and views were not represented in public spaces. With schools seen as a safe and welcoming place in Santa Ana, residents critiqued city services because they had experienced what actual community engagement could look like. A community leader suggested, “The city needs to have community voice in decision making.” Because of the positive engagement experiences students and parents had with the district, residents expressed wanting to be engaged and invited

by the city to transform Santa Ana similar to how the district has been responsive to their concerns.

### ***iii. Santa Ana College***

Santa Ana College (SAC) is part of the Rancho Santiago Community District and the only college in the City of Santa Ana. In Fall of 2016 enrollment was 26,906 (credit) and 9,165 (non-credit) students.<sup>53</sup> SAC offers 273 degrees and certificates in credit programs and 28 Associate Degrees for its students, many of them residents of Santa Ana. In collaboration with SAUSD, Santa Ana College offers SAUSD graduates free tuition for their first year of college. This program has strengthened the institutional relationship between SAC and SAUSD and provided incentives for SAUSD students to graduate. This partnership has also demonstrated the value placed on education in Santa Ana.

## **c. City Services**

### ***i. Parks and Open Spaces***

In the City there are 47 parks which makes up 4.2% of the city land.<sup>54</sup> Parkland as percent of the city area ranges from 1.5% to 84.2%, with a median of 9.3%, within the 100 most populous U.S. cities.<sup>55</sup> Santa Ana falls below the median percentage for cities. For example, Anaheim’s park percentage is 8.2%. Parks play a vital role in community health, providing a space for residents to exercise, come together, and utilize park programs. There is a direct relationship between the level of park use and the perception of safety. Parks were often listed as spaces that residents would often avoid, because they were perceived as too dangerous because of safety concerns with gangs, homeless, drug

sales/use, and gun violence. The assessment survey asked residents if there were any particular places in Santa Ana where they would be afraid to go to alone during the day. One resident shared, “Most public parks, because of gangs, homeless, and stray bullets.” Several parks were specifically named for safety concerns such as Jerome, Centennial, Santiago, Memorial, El Salvador, Madison, and Heritage Parks.

In parks, some of the safety concerns voiced were drug use (used needles and marijuana use) and sales, drinking in public/intoxication, homeless encampments, lack of proper lighting, vandalism on walls and bathrooms, gang presence and intimidation, and past shootings between gangs. Residents felt less inclined to go to the park in the evening and avoided several parks because of the expressed safety concerns. Park staff mentioned after shootings, park usage and programming participation diminished. Shootings at parks was not a recurring issue, but the few that have occurred have scared away residents. That fear is heightened as a park staff shared about the level of participation at Jerome Park was low because there was shooting in the neighborhood. How safe a

park is has a direct relationship to its usage rate. There were some residents that mentioned they traveled to nearby cities to use parks because of Santa Ana’s negative park reputation.

In addition to the safety concerns noted by residents and park staff, other concerns raised were around park land space, cost of programs and activity participation, and types of programs offered. In the survey, residents were asked if they participated in park programming or services, 87% of adults said no and similarly, 92% of youth also said no. Park staff mentioned that there were many parks that did not “have enough room to kick a ball.” According to Trust for Public Land, Santa Ana came in 84th place out of 100 largest U.S. cities in percentage of park space.<sup>56</sup> Since 2012, Santa Ana has seen an increase in park investment by increasing park space in relation to the percentage of city area from 1.9% to 4.3% (TPL). The City has also installed more illumination or cameras at some parks. Though park land percentage and investment may be increasing slightly, it is nowhere near what it should be. Four percent of Santa Ana’s city land is used for parks and recreation, lower the national median which is at 15%. Neighboring

### How often do you or your family use the park?

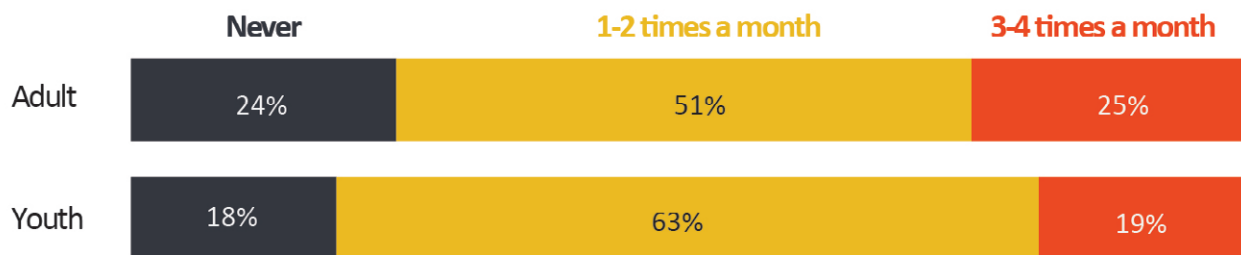


Figure 20: How Often Do You or Your Family Use the Park?

cities like Irvine spends \$251.55 and Anaheim spends \$99.39 while Santa Ana spends \$47.12 per resident for park space and services.<sup>57</sup>

Park staff and stakeholders expressed that they wanted to see more law enforcement patrol after hours when more illegal activity was present. Some residents shared that they would like to see “constant police presence at recreation parks” or “cops placed at parks and other places where I take my kids” which points to similar shared views from park staff and stakeholders. Most residents did not have negative experiences with law enforcement at the park, but residents experiencing homelessness voiced that SAPD used “scare tactics” on them often at the park to get them to vacate the premises. Some homeless respondents experienced or witnessed law enforcement confiscating

“People are afraid of public parks because there are a lot of people who do drugs.”

– SA Youth

“Avoid Townsend and Downtown Santa Ana because of gangs, violence, and homeless.”

– SA Youth

property and using force. One individual said, “When homeless are trying to get on track, PD can undo a lot of work when using force or aggression on individuals.” With an increase in the homeless population in recent years, coordinated resources and collaboration will be needed to effectively serve the homeless population in public spaces like parks and other parts of the city.

Upon exploring park infrastructure, a lack of departmental and institutional communication and coordination became very apparent. Residents also noted frustrations regarding lack of communication from the parks staff, even when they lived a few blocks away. Residents did not see any advertisements or flyers for park events. Internally the parks have a good relationship with SAPD, but noted some challenges with their response time. For example, individuals who are con-

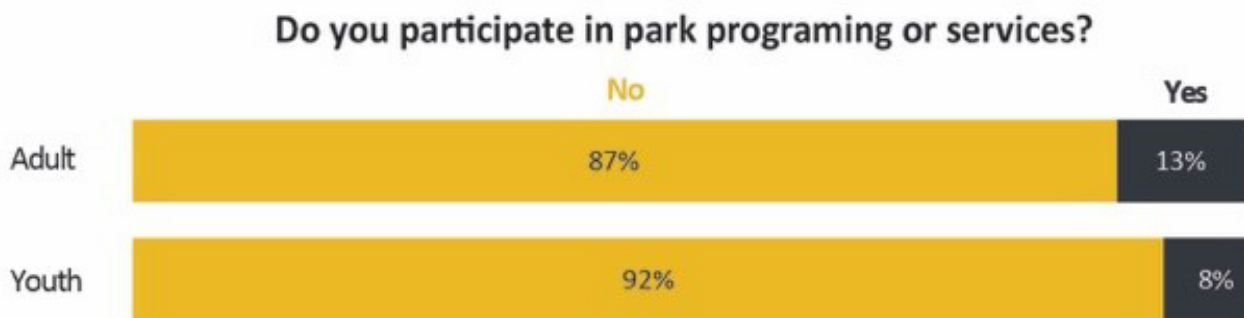


Figure 21: Do You Participate in Park Programming or Services?

ducting drug sales leave before law enforcement arrives and oftentimes those problems go unresolved. Respondents expressed that there needs to be more law enforcement presence and communication to prevent potential violent acts and incidents amongst park staff, park rangers, and law enforcement. Increased presence of park rangers can play a vital role in lowering crime especially in parks that are known for increased criminal activity or known as a drug park.

Parks were not the only public spaces of concern, other areas include the Santa Ana Civic Center, alleys near apartments, Main Library, and downtown area. Similar to parks, much of the concern centered around homelessness, drug use/sales, or lack of proper lighting, or gangs. Several intersections, neighborhoods, or areas were named as being unsafe or known for its quality of life issues such as: Harbor and Hazard, Bristol, McFadden and Center, McFadden and Standard, Raitt, First, Fourth, 17th, Santa Ana Bike Trail, and Townsend.

Some of the concerns at the Civic Center were homeless and encampments. After the Civic Center area was cleared other areas like parks and the downtown saw an increase of homeless individuals. These public spaces provided homeless people an alternative space to setup and use public restrooms and benches to clean up. Homeless were less inclined to leave Santa Ana as the area is the hub for meal distribution and social services. Park staff were unable to address the needs of the homeless population nor were they

trained to provide services. As a result, Santa Ana parks have been left to deal with different public safety concerns with no capacity to make parks a safe place for residents.

## ii. Neighborhood Associations

There are 64 neighborhood associations connected with the City of Santa Ana. The Community Development Resource Network was developed through a collaboration of community-based organizations and Santa Ana's Community Development Agency in an effort to "demonstrate the benefits of networking and recognition, strategic planning, information sharing and increased collaboration."<sup>58</sup> Two city staff split Santa Ana's geography as liaisons from the city to the neighborhood associations. The infrastructure and network of neighborhood associations has given some residents a platform to engage civically and influence decisions impacting their local neighborhoods. Through the network, residents can potentially be activated and notified of city events, information, new policies, and other convenings.

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**"Most alleys are dangerous. There are a lot of gangs and homeless people."**

— SA Resident

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The city has developed a neighborhood level community engagement plan that is able to reach out to most, if not all parts of the city. Neighborhood associations are opportunities for residents to engage and voice their concerns, while simultaneously serving their neighborhoods in capacities that best suit their interests. The Community Development Resource Network can serve as a means for education and awareness, dissemination of information, and general community outreach

for events. This network should be leveraged, activated and considered as it relates to community safety initiatives in a more coordinated fashion to inform residents. However, it is important to note that not all neighborhood associations are active. Some are more active and meet regularly around initiatives and at times fundraise and put on events, while others meet less frequently and according to need, while others not at all.

Not all neighborhood associations are created equally. In other words, some neighborhood associations have built more influence than others because of their history of civic involvement, their relationships to local businesses, non-profit organizations and elected officials, or because of the number of attendees in their meetings. This may also be because of their geographic location in the city that historically have received more attention from the City. As a result, some neighborhood associations have been able to leverage their relationships to get quicker and better responses while other associations do not yet have the capacity to adequately advocate their needs and concerns.

### iii. City Government

The City of Santa Ana operates under a ‘council-manager’ form of government, meaning that the council appoints the city manager, who is then responsible for the administrative

and staff-appointment duties. The City Council also appoints the City Attorney and the City Clerk, and makes appointments to City Boards and Commissions. This means the city council has more power than in other cities who may have a council-mayor system, where the mayor has more authority. Throughout the history of the local governmental system in Santa Ana, residents expressed that the current system has made it difficult to affect long term and sustainable change beyond the two-year election cycles with at large voting elections. The city has since pivoted and will be moving toward ward elections for city council members.

When asked how effective elected officials were in improving safety, 58% of respondents shared that elected officials were “totally ineffective” or only “somewhat effective”, while only 13% of respondents felt elected officials were “very” or “extremely effective” in addressing safety. One resident shared, “Our political representatives only represent their own needs.” This sentiment was echoed throughout our assessment in focus groups and interviews with residents, service providers, and other stakeholders. Another resident noted, “The ideology in Santa Ana is that they recycle the same people with the same ideas; nothing changes in Santa Ana.” This has created a lack of trust and confidence in elected officials to actually represent their needs. A service provider who en-

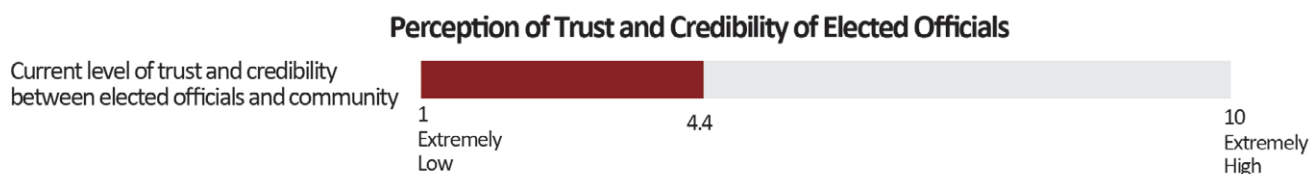


Figure 22: Perception of Trust and Credibility of Elected Officials



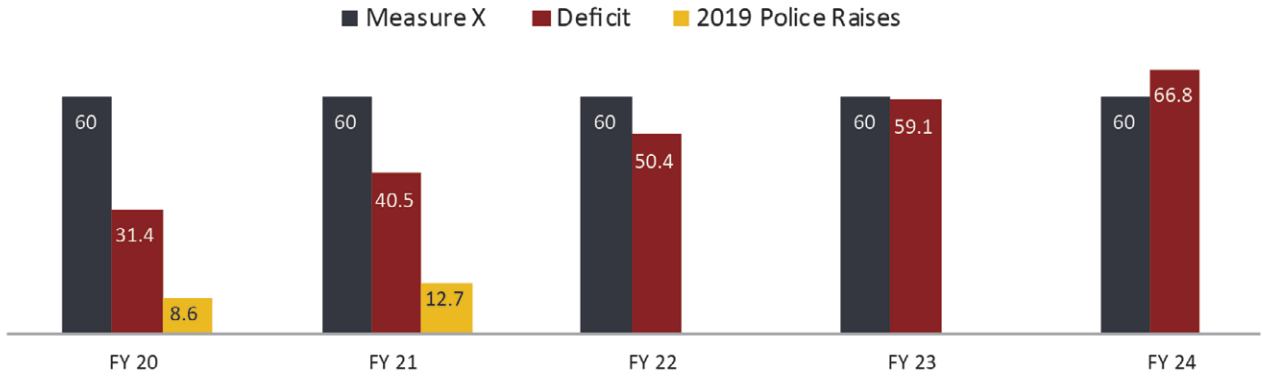
gages residents to increase civic engagement shared that “Santa Ana residents were living in a cloud—residents did not feel empowered or welcomed to participate.” When survey respondents were asked to rate the current level of trust and credibility between elected officials and their community, they rated them at 4.4 on a scale of one to ten. The city needs to engage and be responsive to residents, by providing spaces where residents can feel like they are heard.

Though resident civic engagement and advocacy has increased due to community-driven leadership, the city has remained steadfast in conducting “business as usual.” Special interest influence, closed meetings, and unproductive oustings and departures of high-profile city staff like the City Manager have been counter-productive. For example, the City Manager position has changed three times in the last six years due to the City Council removing them just after an election. The City Manager, Deputy City Manager, City Clerk, Police Chief and City Attorney to name a few have all changed from 2015 to 2018. Lawsuits and severance packages totaled nearly 1.1 million<sup>59</sup> in taxpayer dollars due to city council politics. The instability of high-profile city staff has demonstrated to residents and voters that city council cannot be trusted, and in fact has only further isolated city hall from actual city needs.

One service provider shared, “The systems need to recognize the reality of the city, they need to reflect the community and their needs.” Residents feel that they are not heard or authentically included in the decision-making process. There is a strong sense of frustration about how much actually happens in city hall when residents voice their concerns and share their suggestions. A service provider expressed, “The people leading the systems need to change, they need training not just to be culturally competent but respectful.” The need for authentic resident engagement resonated throughout the assessment process. It became immediately clear during the assessment process that special interests groups, such as the police union, maintain a disproportionate amount of influence in city politics thereby hindering progress and further entrenching “business as usual.”

There is also a perception that there is preferential treatment throughout the city. Some residents noted that business and special interests groups get what they want while community groups do not. A resident shared, “City hall does not distribute services equitably and does not support the areas that needs most help.” Residents overwhelmingly expressed their frustrations with the unbalanced influence of politically-connected groups leaving the most impacted areas of Santa Ana invisible.

### Measure X Revenues vs. Potential Expenditures (\$, millions)



### FY19 Expenditures by Department (\$, millions)

Total: \$263.5

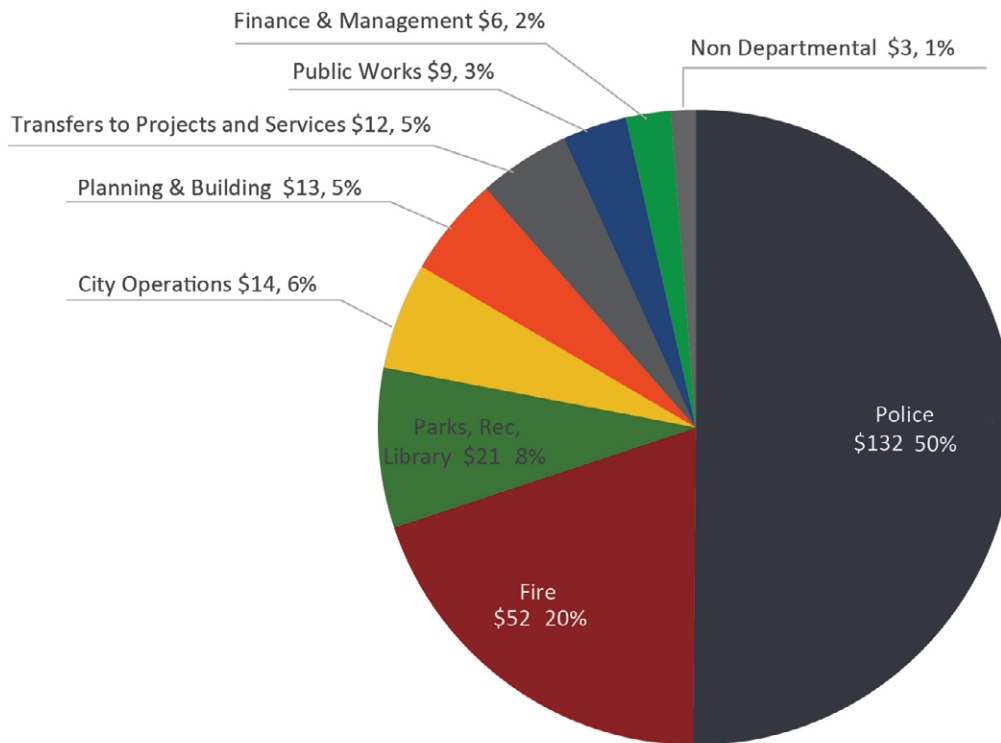


Figure 23 FY 19 Expenditures by Department (data source: Advancement Project)

The Santa Ana budget has historically been a point of contention and advocacy. Special interests have had sizeable influence over elected officials and budget decisions. For example, in February 2019, the city council approved the largest police raise in over a decade<sup>60</sup> taking advantage of Measure X, the recent voter approved measure that increased the city's sales tax—the highest in Orange County. This example illustrates the influence of the police union on the city council. Despite the recent passage of Measure X and the anticipated \$60 million in annual revenue, it is estimated that by 2020 the City's deficit will continue to balloon.

#### ***iv. Homeless Services***

City Council voted on and hired for the city position of Homeless Service Manager in February 2018. With this decision, the city has demonstrated prioritization around the issues of homelessness and the impacts of the increased homeless presence in the city's public spaces. Santa Ana is the only city within Orange County with a designated city position that specifically addresses the issues of homelessness and serves the specific population. There is also an assigned Santa Ana Police Officer that acts as the Homeless Coordinator to support these efforts. The city has created a Quality of Life Team (QLT) composed of different city entities to implement a coordinated response to request homeless services, while receiving over \$3 million in grant monies from state and federal departments to assist with service provision.

Many services are contracted out to local and countywide homeless service agencies that provide services for veterans, emergency food and housing, employment and legal services, behavioral and mental health, and

substance abuse programming. This demonstrates a level of collaboration and willingness to prioritize the issue while also investing in local capacity that can better serve the target population. Although only one publicly funded position, this type of city investment can often reap substantial return on investment through pursuing local, state, and federal grants to address this issue. This type of city position can serve as a model for community based organizational infrastructure investment to address the comprehensive nature of community safety. Working to leverage and build community capacity to address community safety needs through meaningful engagement can strengthen the city's ability to close the divide with the community. An over focus on law enforcement, currently under capacity with ballooning pension costs, is not enough to address safety efficiently or comprehensively. It would be prudent for the city and its stakeholders to create a comprehensive safety strategy that is authentically collaborative, coordinated and communicative that builds on the model that has been developed through positions like the Homeless Service Manager and the Youth Services Coordinator.

#### **d. Community Based Organizations & Faith Based Organizations**

Santa Ana has been both creative and resourceful in working with residents and neighborhood groups. In fact, there are hundreds of community-based organizations in Santa Ana. They include nearly 50 parent groups at schools, over 100 faith-based organizations, 25 service clubs and over 200 non-profit social service agencies not to mention the municipal agencies and private companies with an interest in civic engagement, community building, and economic development. This has

created a community-based infrastructure that has serviced residents in financial literacy, tutoring, parenting, immigration services support, counseling and much more. Throughout the assessment, many residents (52%) noted that community-based organizations are trusted entities. While there are a number of service providers and services in Santa Ana, our research suggests that the scale and scope of many organizations are quite small. Funding opportunities are few in Santa Ana, and organizations have had to be creative to be able to sustain themselves.

Though a large number of community-based organizations exist offering a number of services, some noted that there are tensions among service providers, jockeying for funding, program participation, and recognition. The lack of communication and cohesion has created rumors and gossip, distrust, and a toxic environment for some nonprofits.

Many community-based organizations offer a variety of services for the local neighborhoods and schools, some with better infrastructure than others. Some might focus on youth, some on seniors and families, while others offer services for other target populations. While offering quality services for some, the number of services and nonprofits still do not meet the scale and scope of the issues. A resident noted that

community engagement and outreach should be improved.

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**“Lots of groups are not coordinated, it’s tribalism.”**

– SA Service Provider

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Though services may exist, residents may not be aware of them. When asked about what services residents would like to see more of, one resident responded saying, “After hours centers (after 6pm); youth and young adults are free after 6pm, but there aren’t any programs open at that time.” This highlights the need for specific programming for youth, young adults and residents after normal business hours. Compounded by economic hardship, many respondents shared

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**“They need to do a better job at reaching out. There is a lack of communication and most people don’t know the services or programs provided in Santa Ana.”**

– SA Resident

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that parents and family members were working multiple jobs to be able to survive. Service providers also shared similar sentiments regarding residents and youth they were serving, stating, “I feel for them, they have no place to do homework, many times not eating or sleeping well in a two bedroom apartment. They stay on campus a lot longer hanging out in the quad to get free wi-fi. They are harassed by gangsters and homeless, by cops, have no parents, and raise themselves with their friends.” While service providers have come and gone, residents’ needs are still not being met, and safety concerns have gone unaddressed. Sustainable programming and funding are necessary components to building an appropriate community-based service infrastructure that can meet the demands of Santa Ana’s residents.

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## 2. Perceptions of Community Safety

### a. Resident Definitions of Community Safety

When asked to define “community safety,” focus group and survey respondents defined community safety as:

- “trusting my community”
- “go out during the day or night without fear”
- “free from harassment, evictions and deportations”
- “being comfortable”
- “walk safely in parks and public spaces”
- “feeling safe with no violence or fear”

About half the respondents defined the term community safety, while other respondents gave more descriptive and critical responses and expectations such as “honest and open connection with police department,” “reduction of violence as well as having resources such as community centers,” and “a lot of collaboration within city and community.” Many respondents indicated that safety has increased and not all of Santa Ana was dangerous, that it has “pockets” of increased vio-

lence where they often try to avoid or go out to at night.

Although many residents felt that there was a strong sense of Santa Ana culture, there lacked unity. Fifty seven percent of respondents indicated that they “strongly disagree” or “somewhat disagree” that people in their neighborhood share the same values. Residents felt as though there was trust among neighbors, but as one resident noted, “It needs improvement.” Residents spoke of the different community pockets of Santa Ana and how they were siloed and differed, sometimes comparing neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that had a high density of apartments were often described as more dangerous and the quality of life in those areas were not reflective of “their neighborhood”. Some residents even suggested that more law enforcement needs to be present in those neighborhoods to help in maintaining community safety as they needed more help. Respondents often defined what safety should be by comparing it to the safety of areas north of 17th Street.

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**“Santa Ana is a city full of culture, trying to unite as a community.”**

— SA Youth Resident

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**“I would define community safety as feeling safe, trusting that no one will hurt me, being able to cross the street after dark, and trusting my community.”**

— SA Youth Resident

—

**“Safety is a room with a door that locks behind you.”**

— SA Homeless Resident

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## Perception of Community Cohesion

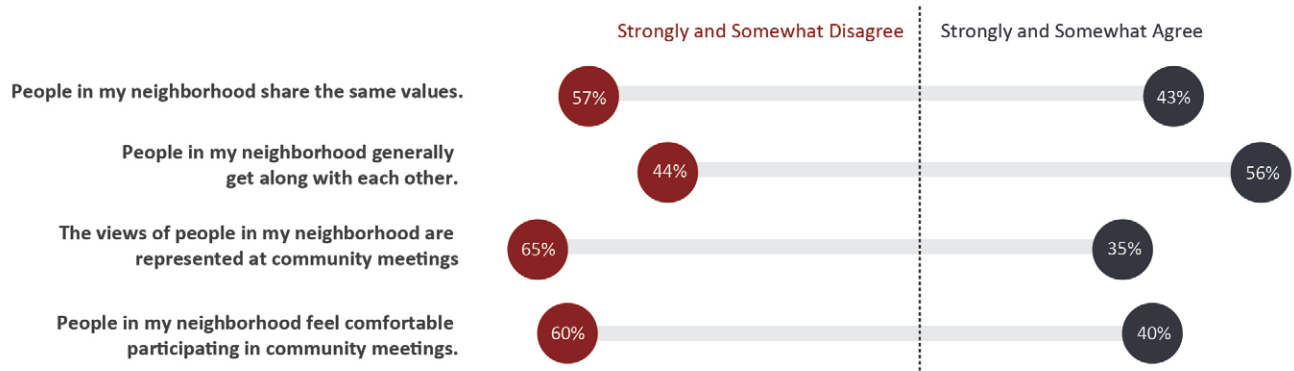


Figure 24: Perception of Community Cohesion

Survey results indicated that people in their neighborhood generally get along with each other, but 65% of respondents felt that the views of the people in their neighborhood were not represented at community meetings. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that they “strongly” or “somewhat disagree” that people in their neighborhood feel comfortable participating in community meetings. This exposes the obstacles to civic engagement, where residents might not feel comfortable being present in those meetings or city services not reaching out to the community. Residents also indicated that when they have attempted to engage with city officials, it was “same story” where nothing gets done. A focus group with monolingual Spanish speakers felt that public spaces were not culturally sensitive to their needs and would like to see more flyers in Spanish to participate, espe

**“You see poverty, overcrowding, you see the abuse. Our district has such a high level of poverty, we don’t even have to apply for grants, we are selected for them.”**

– SA Service Provider

cially from the city.

Residents envision a Santa Ana where residents are freely “able to walk outside during the day or night” and where there is “open communication and residents look out for each other.” They envision a Santa Ana that is safe, where residents from seniors to youth can thrive—a community that involves not just law enforcement keeping them safe, but neighborhoods and service providers “helping one another stay safe.” Many respondents reimagined a community that built off the positive efforts and safe spaces that Santa Ana had already possessed. In the reimagined community, there would be more open and public spaces and perceptions of safety would increase with residents feeling more comfortable taking their families to parks.

Conversely, during interviews and focus

groups, service providers indicated that there has been a shift from service provision to advocacy and, empowering youth and residents to participate and respond to their frustrations. Service providers want the community to recognize they have voice and power. Santa Ana must embrace the current service providers and CBO's in the area since they have worked to build trust among residents. By leveraging existing community-based capacity, a more comprehensive response to community needs can be developed.

**b. Resident Assessment of Safety**

Older residents often referred to the 1970's or 1990's as the height of violence in Santa Ana and noted that Santa Ana has become a safer city in general. Santa Ana has experienced a decrease in violence, but the fear of violence still lingers with many residents. Those fears revolve around homelessness, drug sales/use, and gang activity. They did not believe that all of Santa Ana was unsafe, but expressed that certain streets, areas, or alleys were to be avoided at night and sometimes during the day. Residents have developed a savviness around where and when to navigate their neighborhoods to avoid potential violence.

**“I don't think it's safe enough for me to go out at any time of the day. I love Santa Ana but it's not somewhere I would want to raise kids.”**

— SA Youth Resident

Youth	
Being outside at night:	% Response
1) Very Unsafe	21%
2) Unsafe	23%
3) Somewhat Safe	35%
4) Safe	16%
5) Very Safe	5%
Being outside during the day:	
1) Very Unsafe	6%
2) Unsafe	10%
3) Somewhat Safe	40%
4) Safe	33%
5) Very Safe	12%

Table 7: Being Outside in one's Neighborhood (Youth)

Adults	
Being outside at night:	% Response
1) Very Unsafe	10%
2) Unsafe	21%
3) Somewhat Safe	41%
4) Safe	17%
5) Very Safe	11%
Being outside during the day:	

1) Very Unsafe	3%
2) Unsafe	5%
3) Somewhat Safe	29%
4) Safe	40%
5) Very Safe	24%

Table 8: Being Outside in one's Neighborhood (Adults)

Economic instability was cited as a major cause of violence in those areas. The Santa Ana median household income is \$57,151, which is roughly \$24,000 less than the median income for Orange County (\$81,851). The high cost of rent and low wages was shared as contributing factors to the economic instability and hardship that many families and individuals face. This often led to several families living in one dwelling. In 2017, the average Santa Ana household size was 4.34 residents while in Orange County the average household size was 3.04.<sup>61</sup> In 2010, Santa Ana was the fourth densest city with a population of 324,628 within 27.3 square miles. The density of the Santa Ana's population could actually be higher given the numbers of individuals that are not counted in the U.S. census such as homeless, the undocumented, and other hard to reach populations. This only demonstrates the need for more adequate and affordable housing in Santa Ana.

When asked about community safety, forty-five percent of survey respondents

expressed that they felt "very safe" or "safe" being outside during the day while 44% respondents said they felt "very unsafe" or "unsafe" being outside at night time. Youth surveys yielded slightly different responses. When asked about being outside at night time versus during the day, 64% said they felt "very safe" or "safe" during the day and 31% said they felt "very unsafe" or "unsafe" at night. Also, 41% of youth respondents shared that they felt "somewhat safe" at night. The lower level of perceived fear can be attributed the lower number of violent crimes in Santa Ana or a normalization of community violence.

One safe haven that became evident for youth were schools which was viewed as a place where they can trust adults and were provided with different services. The California Healthy Kids Santa Ana 2017-2018

Survey results noted 74% of elementary, 58% of 7th graders, 55% of 9th graders, 51% of 11th graders, 57% of alternative/continuation students felt safe or very safe at school.<sup>62</sup> In Orange County as a whole 81% of elementary, 68% of 7th graders, 64% of 9th graders, 62% of 11th graders, 55% of alternative/continuation students felt safe or very safe at school.<sup>63</sup> One school staff

**"When police are involved with community safety, I believe they aren't doing their job. They terrorize our community, our youth, and our families."**

— SA Youth Resident

member shared that there needed to be more vigilance in neighborhoods, especially in neighborhoods that surrounded schools. The California Healthy Kids Survey also asked students "how safe do you feel in your neighborhood" 67% of 9th graders, 63% of 11th graders, 62% of alternative/continuation students felt safe or very safe.<sup>64</sup> The sur-



vey also asked students if “how safe is your neighborhood parks and playgrounds” and 46% of 9th graders, 41% of 11th graders, 49% of alternative/ continuation students felt safe

or very safe.<sup>65</sup> These results reinforced our findings that youth perceive spaces outside of school as unsafe.

### 3. Law Enforcement

#### a. Community Perception of Law Enforcement

Based on qualitative data gathered during the assessment there were five major themes that emerged regarding the current challenges and perceptions of law enforcement 1) Law Enforcement Credibility 2) Community Relations 3) Community Responsiveness 4) Policing Resources, and 5) Under-reporting

##### i. Law Enforcement Credibility

In community surveys distributed to residents, participants were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10, how important they think it is to have a high level of trust and credibility between the police and their community? Based on community responses they rated the importance at 8.9. When asked to rate the current level of trust and credibility

between police and the community, the response was 4.9, half of what is expected and desired by residents. When asked about police presence, 72% of respondents said lack of police presence was “sometimes, often, or always a problem”. This is important to note because residents not only feel there is not any physical presence of law enforcement, but a lack of engagement by them. A resident in the Delhi neighborhood said, “What is the quality of law enforcement? Since you don’t see them you can’t describe their quality.” Residents reported that they not only wanted to see law enforcement patrolling their neighborhoods, but to approach them and have conversations in order to build relationships and better understand their safety concerns. With more positive and consistent police presence, residents feel that crime and violence could decrease as their trust in law enforcement improves.

Perception of Trust and Credibility of Law Enforcement

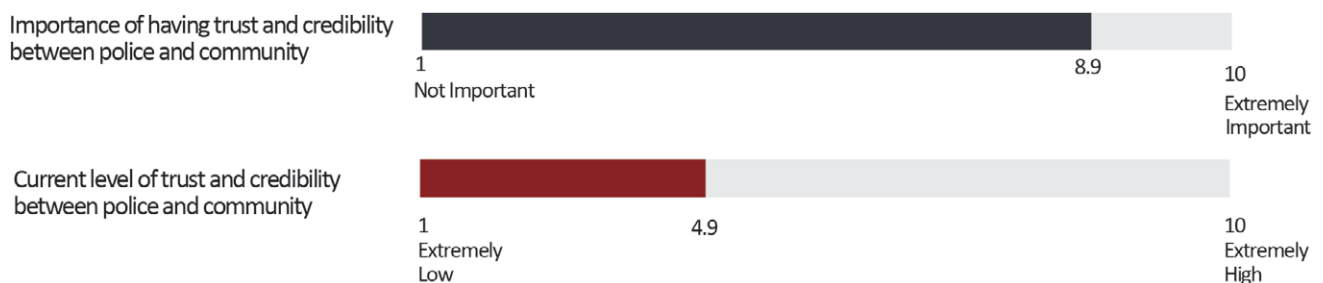


Figure 25: Perception of Trust and Credibility of Law Enforcement

When asked about over-policing of the community, 58% said it was “not a problem at all” or “rarely a problem”. Regarding perceptions of police harassment, 44% said it was “not a problem at all” or “rarely a problem” and 30% responded that it was “always or often a problem” with 22% reporting it was “sometimes a problem”. During focus groups and interviews, residents expressed that they had not personally been the victim of harassment or over-policing, but instead have seen police harassment on youth or over-policing in certain areas of Santa Ana.

Residents were also asked to rate overall effectiveness of police in addressing safety concerns. Forty-eight percent of respondents rated them as “totally ineffective” or “somewhat effective” while 31% rated them as “moderately effective.” Only 19% of respondents felt that law enforcement is “very or extremely effective” in improving safety. Other respondents indicated that law enforcement does not follow up with cases or that cases remain unresolved.

When asked what SAPD can improve on, residents overwhelmingly responded with better customer service and response times.

## **ii. Community Relations**

Residents and other stakeholders reported a number of concerns with law enforcement indicating a lack of trust and relationship with residents and SAPD officers.

One consistent complaint was that law enforcement has poor customer service which was explained as being “rude” or a “lack of communication with residents.” Residents felt that officers were rude, especially in instances where they felt they were cooperating and instead were treated with yelling and using phrases such as “shut-up” or “please cooperate or I’ll use my gun.” Many

parents expressed there was inappropriate communication from law enforcement when there were incidents on their street, property, or with family members. Residents felt this reinforced distrust and indicated that they “doubt

if police are actually telling the truth.” There was a specific concern from adult residents that law enforcement treated youth differently. They indicated that youth would be handcuffed and usually seen with four or more officers. Roughly one third of youth indicated

that police harassment was “always” or “often a problem” while 17% indicated it as “sometimes a problem”. One youth expressed, “Law enforcement needs to stop pulling over young men just because they look gang related.”

When asked what they would like to see more or less of from law enforcement, respondents expressed they would like to see more law enforcement in public spaces, “walking the streets and seen more frequently” in their neighborhood. Survey respondents emphasized that increased presence in public spaces would help residents feel safer and allow residents to build trust with officers.

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**“Police harassment is an obstacle.”**

– SA Service Provider

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**“The biggest gang in Santa Ana is the police.”**

– SA Resident

Residents also shared that they would like officers to be friendlier, host or participate in community events, participate at school workshops or host educational and leadership workshops, and treating people fairly. For residents, “fairness” includes less racial profiling, harassment, equal and fair treatment for all individuals from seniors, youth, to undocumented or homeless residents.

See responses below when residents were asked: “What would you like to see from your local law enforcement?”

- “critical thinkers, compassionate, and determined to make a change in the community;”
- “trust, amiability, respect;”
- “patrolling the city making themselves present in a positive manner;”
- “more transparency;”
- “bilingual communication;”
- “police involvement in community to get to know the different programs”
- “more positive interactions with community members -- play sports with kids. Get out of the patrol car and into the park;”
- “connect more with the community culturally, linguistically and see the community as one they protect and not as criminals;”
- “arrive quicker when they are called on;”

**“Law enforcement needs to partner with community based organizations; they need to open the door, to be true partners.”**

– SA Service Provider

- “more trainings and less harassment and racial profiling.”

SAPD’s Community Oriented Policing (COP) Philosophy has a deep history within Santa Ana policing. Founded in the 1970’s, SAPD’s policing philosophy is rooted in “credibility between police and the community”.<sup>66</sup> COP has three strategies that focus on response to incidents, problem-oriented policing, and technology assisted policy.<sup>67</sup> SAPD has developed and implemented a number of community engagement activities including but not limited to Police Activities and Athletic League (PAAL), Coffee with a Cop, Annual Open House, and the Citizen’s Academy. The City of Santa Ana also participates in the county-wide initiative, Gang Reduction Intervention Partnership (GRIP), a county-wide program run through the District Attorney’s office. During the assessment period, SAPD also held four community meetings in collaboration with Orange County Human Relations Commission to inform residents and stakeholders on their policing philosophy.

Law enforcement programs that include community voice and engagement have higher rates of trust and credibility with community. Programs like Gang Reduction and Intervention Partnership (GRIP) and PAAL have officers that have developed positive relationships with residents.

This is an example of why police-community relations is beneficial for communities because it decreases distrust among residents. The PAAL program focus is a crime prevention program that employs educational, athletic, and recreational activities to create trust

and understanding between youth and law enforcement.<sup>68</sup> The program has 130 youth enrolled and the bulk of enrolled participants are elementary students; majority of the participants are within a two mile radius of the center. The program came up as a program that was able to connect well with elementary youth, especially in the neighborhood it serves. The PAAL program has worked to increase relationships with parents and their involvement which has helped in building trust to change perceptions of law enforcement. There is currently one PAAL center in the Townsend neighborhood of Santa Ana. GRIP officers stated that relationships with community have gotten better stating they hear less complaints from community and have been more inclined to thank law enforcement more often for their service.

### **iii. Community Responsiveness**

An overwhelming number of responses from residents indicated that when they call for help law enforcement response time has been slow. Residents shared that law enforcement often arrive two hours after a call is made, and when they do show up, they are “rude” and “don’t explain why they were late”. That has caused frustration among residents. Law enforcement were aware that the community felt frustrated and have communicated that they are understaffed. Law enforcement were running from call to call and have had to prioritize certain calls.

However, some residents indicated that response times were quicker in the downtown area and corridors. From our research, SAPD has four assigned officers for the downtown area.

### **iv. Policing Resources**

In the past year, SAPD has made efforts to improve their reputation and visibility by holding community events. Although activities like movie nights, Coffee with a Cop, and other events for the public have demonstrated community engagement efforts, SAPD remains untrusted. Residents shared frustrations around response time, poor customer service, and preferential treatment of some neighborhoods over others.

Conversely, residents would like law enforcement to be better trained and demonstrate more cultural competence to work with

the diverse population of Santa Ana. Specific issue areas that were mentioned for increased training include working with: working with Spanish speakers, individuals with disabilities, domestic violence victims and perpetrators, youth, and transgender/queer individuals.

### **v. Underreporting**

Underreporting of crime was a common theme among all respondents. Fear and intimidation by neighbors or gang members

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**“People feel over-monitored. Suggestion – SAPD does not all have to be cops, they can be community workers, it is about resource allocation; there are people in the system who could change the resource allocation but haven’t.”**

**– SA Service Provider**

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and their families was often stated as the main reason. This was a particularly prevalent circumstance for those residents living in gang territories. In addition to gang intimidation and fear of retaliation, there is also a lack of trust in law enforcement to appropriately respond because of the way residents have seen officers handle past situations, often keeping to themselves and not educating or informing victims of the investigation process or of support resources. Fear of deportation was also cited as one of the main reasons residents did not report crimes. Some residents indicated that if they did report, law enforcement would approach the caller's house exposing them thereby subjecting them to increased scrutiny and intimidation from their neighborhood.

Police legitimacy was a major concern shared by many participants given their experiences in the community. They did not have a high degree of confidence that law enforcement would respond adequately to address their needs or concerns, possibly jeopardizing their safety. This concern was expressed by seniors at local senior center, from their past

experiences with law enforcement arriving "two or three hours late". They were worried that when an actual life-threatening emergency came up, their well being would not be a priority.

Thirty-six percent of respondents "rarely" or "never seek services" from law enforcement while 42% "usually" or "always" seek services. This indicates an almost even split. While a portion of residents may feel comfortable reaching out to law enforcement, almost the same amount of the population does not seek services from law enforcement. It is likely, the crime is actually much higher than indicated. In focus groups and interviews, residents that lived in gang neighborhoods shared that they also do not report because of fear of retaliation from gangs. On the other hand, there were residents that expressed they did not report crime because reports go unresolved or "law enforcement don't do anything." A focus group with a service provider that focuses on victims' services stated that there is a lot of underreporting because individuals feel threatened or they don't understand the law.

	No help available at all	Very hard to get help	Sometimes available	Can usually find help	Help is always available
Finding a job	14%	22%	39%	18%	6%
Preventing youth from joining a gang	21%	30%	27%	15%	7%
Gang intervention programs that assist youth who are gang-involved	20%	30%	29%	14%	7%
Stopping gang violence	25%	39%	20%	11%	5%
Getting medical or dental care	16%	26%	29%	21%	8%
Getting family, mental health, substance abuse counseling	14%	28%	30%	19%	10%
Mentoring for youth	12%	19%	35%	22%	13%
Afterschool or recreational programs for youth	7%	17%	31%	23%	21%
Emergency housing and financial assistance	23%	33%	26%	13%	5%
Safe passage	14%	20%	34%	20%	11%
Finding a school	3%	8%	22%	37%	30%
Immigration services	15%	23%	29%	22%	12%

Table 9: Availability of Help

Seventy percent of respondents felt that law enforcement are most responsible in addressing problems related to gangs. Family members, community members, and schools were seen as the top three groups that were responding to crime and violence well.

Though law enforcement was identified as the highest rated agency to address the safety concerns, residents did not feel they were effective. Residents that live in gang neighborhoods instead turn to community members and schools to address these issues.

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#### 4. Resident Access to Services

When asked “How easy is it for people in your neighborhood to get help with the following?” respondents noted:

Most Difficult to Obtain Services for:

- Stopping Gang Violence
- Emergency Housing and Financial Assistance
- Preventing Youth from Joining a Gang
- Gang Intervention

Easiest Access to Obtain Services for:

- Finding a School
- After School or Recreational Programs for Youth
- Mentoring for Youth
- Immigration Services

Access to gang prevention and intervention services are critical to addressing violence, particularly for those who are at most risk of joining a gang. Programs, services, and resources can be provided by local gang prevention and intervention service providers who have established strong credibility and connections to families and individuals over the years. Santa Ana has dozens of prevention services but lacks appropriate gang

intervention infrastructure to service those already active in gangs. Gang intervention and outreach can play a vital role in preventing violence through mediating conflict and gang feuds, conducting rumor control, and actively responding to incidents of gang and gun violence.

Building upon the current infrastructure and network of trusted agencies and institutions, the City of Santa Ana would benefit from more intentional collaboration and coordination. When there is collaboration between city and non-city agencies to address gaps in service, a stronger safety net to address violence can be established. The City of Santa Ana has been closed off from a comprehensive approach to address violence which includes genuine collaboration with community residents, service providers, other public agencies such as SAUSD and the County. Santa Ana has isolated itself and has continued with business as usual privileging the voices of special interest groups. Santa Ana cannot afford to continue ignoring the concerns of residents and reinforce the current “us vs. them” mentality. It is not only counter-productive, but short-sighted as the voices of community leadership are gaining strength that will ultimately shift the current power dynamics forcing change.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

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*“Long term problems require long term solutions” – City Staff*

- 1) **Santa Ana is capable of new solutions to old problems. Stay the course and expand what is working.**
  - a) Continue to invest in city infrastructure, such as Homeless Services Manager and Youth Service Coordinator, that can leverage outside funding (i.e. County, State and Federal and Private Grants) to hire more staff and partner with non-governmental agencies with expertise on priority issue areas.
  - b) Expand current model beyond issue area (i.e. homelessness and youth services) to include immigration assistance and other community safety resources.
  - c) Reduce turnover of city executives and administrators so that city agencies will have the stability to engage in new projects with the assurance that they will be seen through to fruition.
  - d) Build on the potential of district elections to separate city electeds from the influence of special interest campaign donors by using neighborhood associations as democratic forums and incubators for future candidates.
  - e) Expand direct representation with Immigration Defenders and OC Justice Fund attorneys as partners with SAPD for immigration KYR sessions.
  - f) Formalize and strengthen the relationship with the school district. Leverage efforts of Santa Ana Unified School District and Santa Ana College who have developed strong relationships and engagement with families, students, and undocumented individuals.
  - g) By considering geography of schools, invest financial resources in schools and Wellness Centers as a point of access to residents in addition to and outside of City Hall. Leverage the trust and neighborhood access to residents built by School District efforts to provide more education, information, awareness, vocational investment, citizenship classes, etc.



- h) In coordination with the School District and the district's Restorative Program Manager, city should formalize Restorative Justice Program by adopting a policy that reinforces practices throughout city departments, including Parks and Recreation and the Santa Ana Police Department.
- i) Expand Summer Night Lights pilot to at least 1 more park with high crime and violence. Continue to evaluate results and develop multi-sector coordination infrastructure to support families in those neighborhoods. Leverage private partnerships with local business, sports teams, and community-based organizations for donations, services, and other strategic investments.

**2) Broaden the view and definition of public safety. Consider the comprehensive nature of public safety that not only responds to violence, but prevents, intervenes and treats violence.**

- a) Expand Sanctuary Advisory Board to create a strategic, coordinating and accountability space for immigration defenders, advocates, and Police Department officials to collectively make presentations to residents, city staff, SAPD officers.
- b) Create cite and release policy that fully implements the Sanctuary City Ordinance that actively and realistically decreases the fear of immigration enforcement,
- c) Adopt a city-wide definition of community safety that comprehensively coordinates with city and noncity entities to address prioritized issues. Formalize as part of city's strategic plan.
- d) When responding to certain types of crises or incidents (i.e. mental health, homelessness, gang involved, etc.), partner with alternative crisis responders such as social workers, gang prevention and intervention workers. Instead of law enforcement responding alone, according to types of services a family or individual might need, coordinate with community-based providers, social workers, mental health workers, etc. and allow partners space to operate with clearly defined roles and expectations.
- e) Utilize the existing community-based service infrastructure (i.e. youth and leadership development, gang prevention/intervention, adult civic engagement training, etc.) Expand gang prevention services and building/funding gang intervention services. Law enforcement alone is not the answer.

**3) Create targeted geographic areas prioritized by crime and violence rates, public health and social service indicators, and poverty that can activate a localized coordinated response system.**

- a) Prioritize at the neighborhood and school level to develop a coordinated incident response protocol similar to partnership among SAUSD, SAPD, and sheriffs for emergency incidents. This should include and utilize existing community engagement infrastructure (i.e. neighborhood associations, community-based organizations, churches, alternative crises responders, etc.).
- 4) Given the regionality of issues, leverage county-wide service infrastructure. Santa Ana is not alone.**
- a) Build off of County regional service infrastructure that might provide critical services the city cannot provide (i.e. Health Care Agency, Social Services Agency, Probation, District Attorney's Office, etc.).
  - b) Ensure county investment into county issues disproportionately impacting Santa Ana. As OC's homeless population came to Santa Ana and conversely, Santa Ana's homeless population is being moved into shelters across the county (for mental illness, service accessibility, documentation, funding purposes) county-wide issues require county-wide investment.
  - c) Partner and better collaborate with local county Supervisor to prevent silo-zation of resources and strategies.
  - d) With the majority of Orange County's Gang Reduction Intervention Program (G.R.I.P.) sites in Santa Ana, evaluate program, staffing and strategic validity and capacity to ensure desired outcome. Leverage private and public partnerships and investments to enhance pre and post GRIP program referral.
  - e) Strengthen Reentry Prop 47 at IRC release center, where money is being funneled to CBOs) who have capacity to work with individuals transitioning back to society.
  - f) Work with County government to ensure that the County reimburses Santa Ana when the city expends money on programs like violence prevention and homeless services that effectively reduce the cost to County programs like criminal justice and healthcare services.
- 5) Santa Ana Police Department needs to broaden and expand their current definition of community policing. Old solutions do not address 2019 issues, there is a need to evolve to be effective and efficient.**
- a) Recognize that Santa Ana's homeless women residents are the residents most in need of protection. Outreach to homeless residents must prioritize ending the rampant rape and sexual abuse of homeless women over preventing nuisance behavior.

- b) Increase community oriented/based policing that authentically builds and deepens relationships with residents from all backgrounds and geographies within the city (improving trust, presence, relationship building, activities, programs and events, HEART officers program).
- c) Consider adding national best practices around relationship-based policing, pre-arrest diversion, and referral as promotional metrics within the department.
- d) Increase training with trusted community-based organizations and other municipal law enforcement agencies to learn and share best practices around issue area (i.e. building trust and developing strategic community relationships, working with persons experiencing homelessness).
- e) Expand community engagement efforts beyond traditional community policing models (i.e. Coffee with a Cop, community engagement at schools with SAUSD PD). Require footbeats, community meeting attendance, and reporting on positive contacts.
- f) Make ride-along with alternative crisis responder partners mandatory for all officers (mental health, domestic violence, gang involved, homeless, etc.).
- g) Strengthen communication strategy with residents and partners. Be considerate of residual effects and unintended consequences when naming location, school, or landmark when releasing press releases. Increase and reinforce positive messaging around sanctuary city enforcement. Align SAPD and sheriffs around sanctuary city policy and enforcement, utilize Sanctuary Advisory Board as authentic and transparent accountability around sanctuary policy.

**6) Invest and build community capacity through strategic civic engagement, power and base building, advocacy, accountability, inclusion and representation.**

- a) Invest in community capacity leadership development/building and connect with partner agencies, strengthen neighborhood associations by providing incentives for leadership roles, provide pathways for leadership and civic engagement for all ages; from youth councils to neighborhood associations, etc.
- b) Connect direct service capacity with current advocacy efforts. Acknowledge and build on current campaigns and their networks to hear community issues, thoughts and recommendations.

**7) Strengthen multi-sector communication and collaboration to affect narrative change for the City of Santa Ana.**

- a) Develop a cohesive and comprehensive communication strategy that includes and unifies all sectors of Santa Ana. Through authentic community input and building on existing expertise, re-brand what and how the city operates.
- b) Demonstrate a cohesive communications strategy through a public education campaign around sanctuary city – this should include CBO’s schools, PD, city, immigration rights, and others to adequately and appropriately build trust with residents.
- c) Reframe discussions around homelessness to include discussions of housing insecurity for all Santa Ana residents below the poverty line and to recognize threats to Santa Ana’s homeless residents. Discuss threats to the community that arise from homelessness and within the homeless community, such as discarded syringes and erratic behavior, with data and with input from homeless residents and advocates for homeless residents.
- d) Utilize Youth Service Supervisor as a point of access to information– with built in access to activities/events, community meetings, education/awareness classes, civic engagement and service opportunities.

# V. APPENDIX

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## The State of Community Safety in Santa Ana

Join adult/youth residents, local organizations, City Staff and Santa Ana Police for a panel discussion on Community Safety in Santa Ana.

**Wednesday, September 26, 2018 6-8pm**  
Delhi Center at 505 E Central Ave, Santa Ana, CA 92707

### Panelist:

Moderator: Norberto Santana - Voice of OC

- Chief David Valentin, SAPD
- Chief Anastasia Smith, SAUSD PD
- Hafsa Kaka, Homeless Services Manager, City of Santa Ana
- Juan Plasencia, Youth Resident
- Steven Kim, Project Kinship
- Pastor Nati Alvarado, Neutral Ground

Child Care and Interpretation will be provided



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