



Rashi Kesarwani  
Councilmember, District 1

CONSENT CALENDAR  
December 1, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Author), Mayor Jesse Arreguin (Co-Sponsor), and Councilmember Ben Bartlett (Co-Sponsor)

SUBJECT: Budget Referral to Prioritize Enhanced Lighting in Areas of Elevated Violent Crime

RECOMMENDATION

In an effort to immediately address safety concerns in blocks where elevated levels of violent crime--including robbery, aggravated assault (including shootings), rape, and homicide--have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, adopt the recommendations listed below:

- Refer to the City Manager to prioritize resident requests for enhanced lighting when such requests come from blocks where elevated violent crime has occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Refer to the City Manager to perform an environmental safety assessment of areas where gun violence has been concentrated specifically in South and West Berkeley, including but not limited to:
  - Tenth, Ninth, Eighth, and Seventh Streets between Bancroft Way and Dwight Way;
  - Residential streets in the area from Russell Street to Carrison/Tyler Streets between San Pablo Avenue and California Street;
  - Other blocks where elevated violent crime is found to have occurred during the period from March to November 2020 based on Berkeley Police data.
- Refer costs for additional lighting and environmental safety assessments to the mid-year budget process for FY 2020-21.

FISCAL IMPACT

Allocate a total of \$200,000 in order to ensure that blocks where elevated violent crime has occurred may receive prioritization for enhanced lighting, if requested and if meeting the necessary threshold for neighbor agreement (100 percent of neighbors for

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a block of single-family homes and 60 percent of neighbors for a block that includes multi-unit buildings). We note that installing a streetlight on an existing pole can cost up to \$5,000, including materials, labor, and PG&E connection fees; and installing a new metal streetlight pole can cost up to \$20,000. Costs are site-specific and can vary significantly depending on the location.

Berkeley Police staff time would be needed to conduct the environmental safety assessments.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Following regional and national trends, the City of Berkeley is experiencing an uptick in shootings. According to Berkeleyside, Berkeley saw 20 shootings in 2018, 28 shootings in 2019, and 37 confirmed incidents of gunfire so far in 2020 with several more weeks remaining in the calendar year.<sup>1</sup> According to the 2019 Crime Report presented to the City Council on October 13, 2020, aggravated assault and homicides increased in the period from January to August 2020 compared to the same time period last year, with aggravated assault increasing 17 percent and homicides growing from zero last year to three over the first eight months of this year.<sup>2</sup>

Recent studies demonstrate that lighting can be a useful mechanism for reducing criminal activity. The United States Department of Justice Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Response published a 2008 in-depth guide noting that “reductions in crime can be achieved by improvements in street lighting and that these reductions will be most worthwhile in high-crime neighborhoods.”<sup>3</sup> Significantly, the University of Chicago’s Harris School of Public Policy conducted a randomized-control trial--considered the gold standard in scientific research--at New York City public housing projects, which found that increased levels of lighting led to a 36 percent reduction in so-called “index crimes,” a subset of serious felony crimes that include murder, robbery, and aggravated assault, as well as certain property crimes that took place outdoors at night, with an overall 4 percent reduction in index crimes (that is, crime was reduced during the day as well).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Annual crime report sees shootings rise for the third straight year,” Oct. 15, 2020, [https://www.berkeleyside.com/2020/10/15/2020-berkeley-crime-report-shootings-rise-use-of-force-stop-data?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1603673460.1734480857849121093750](https://www.berkeleyside.com/2020/10/15/2020-berkeley-crime-report-shootings-rise-use-of-force-stop-data?doing_wp_cron=1603673460.1734480857849121093750)

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the Berkeley City Council Agenda for the October, 13, 2020 Meeting, Item #19: [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City\\_Council/2020/10\\_Oct/City\\_Council\\_10-13-2020\\_-\\_Regular\\_Meeting\\_Agenda.aspx](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2020/10_Oct/City_Council_10-13-2020_-_Regular_Meeting_Agenda.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> Clark, Ronald V., “Improving Street Lighting to Reduce Crime in Residential Areas,” Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Response Guides Series No. 8, Dec. 2008: <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p156-pub.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Chalfin, Aaron, Hansen, Benjamin, Lerner, Jason, and Parker, Lucie, “Reducing Crime Through Environmental Design: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment of Street Lighting in New York City,” April 24, 2019, The University of Chicago Urban Labs Crime Lab, 2180 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704 • Tel: (510) 981-7110 • Fax: (510) 981-7111  
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## BACKGROUND

Currently, the City of Berkeley's system for processing residents' requests for increased street lighting includes filling out an online application that collects information on the applicant, the proposed location for additional lighting, and a letter of approval signed by neighbors surrounding the proposed installation. The form indicates that City approval for placement of new street lighting is based in part on the following factors:

- Current existing City lighting (as measured in lumens by the City's Public Works staff)
- Condition of existing poles at the proposed location
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Traffic
- Impacts to ADA Path of Travel
- Proximity to BART, Public Transit, Schools, and Hospitals
- Utility conflicts

This item refers to the City Manager, in conjunction with the Berkeley Police Department, to map violent crime data in order to identify City blocks experiencing elevated levels of violent crime and intends to provide a mechanism for these residents to receive prioritization for enhanced lighting.

In addition to developing a mechanism for residents of high crime areas to receive prioritization for enhanced lighting, the item requests that Berkeley's Police Department conduct Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessments for specific neighborhoods experiencing elevated levels of gun violence and/or other violent crimes. Such assessments include design recommendations such as increased lighting, maintenance of properties, and landscaping and signage that can be used to deter criminal behavior. The National Institute of Crime Prevention notes: "The proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and to an improvement in quality of life."<sup>5</sup>

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This item has no impact on environmental sustainability.

## CONTACT

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[https://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu/attachments/e95d751f7d91d0bcfeb209ddf6adcb4296868c12/store/cca92342e666b1ffb1c15be63b484e9b9687b57249dce44ad55ea92b1ec0/lights\\_04242016.pdf](https://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu/attachments/e95d751f7d91d0bcfeb209ddf6adcb4296868c12/store/cca92342e666b1ffb1c15be63b484e9b9687b57249dce44ad55ea92b1ec0/lights_04242016.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> National Institute of Crime Prevention, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, <https://www.cptedtraining.net/>.

