



TOWN OF GILBERT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE

FINAL REPORT

TEEN VIOLENCE ADDENDUM

DECEMBER 17, 2024



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Historical Context and Council Request

Originally, the Council created the Community Engagement Task Force to address key areas of social well-being impacting Gilbert. From this, the Task Force focused on domestic violence, human and sex trafficking, mental health, suicide prevention, homelessness, low-income challenges, and ensuring Gilbert remains a kind, welcoming, and inclusive community.

However, following widespread concern after the tragic loss of a 16-year-old and further reports of teen violence, the Council took steps to involve the community. A subcommittee was formed to gather input and ideas, which then led the Community Engagement Task Force to take on the effort.

The task force was expanded to 11 to better address concerns about teen safety and other community challenges.

Mission, Vision, and Values

The Community Engagement Task Force (CETF) provides a forum where matters of social welfare and community concern may be presented, discussed, and collaborated upon to address concerns within the Town of Gilbert.

The Task Force Values, in alignment with the Mission and Vision, were developed as:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Transparency
- Communication
- Listening
- Unifying

Focus Topics

Teen Violence: The Task Force was charged with reducing/eliminating teen violence by

- Considering existing resources (including recent school survey results)
- Town of Gilbert programs
- Partnerships with schools and non-profits
- Identifying gaps
- Preparing recommendations for the Council in the areas of Resources, Education, and Awareness.

Task Force Framework

- Appointees - eleven (11) members and four (4) alternates, to include a no fewer than four (4) teens; plus two adult alternates and one teen alternate.
- Advisory members - Six (6) advisory members to represent schools and the police department
- Member Criteria:
 - All members must be Gilbert residents.
 - Be passionate about addressing teen and young adult violence in the community.
 - Focus on recommendations and improvements through exercises and dialogue.
 - In addition, teen applicants are required to attend a school within the Gilbert boundary and not be seniors in the 2023–24 school year.
- Service Requirements: Monthly meetings
- Scope of Authority: Recommendations by the Task Force shall be advisory and are not binding upon the final action of council.
- Length: The expectation is the task force would be in effect for 7 months (June – December). The term will end after advising is completed on the assigned projects and issues if no other tasks are assigned by the Council.
- Public Meetings: Meetings will comply with the State of Arizona’s open meeting laws.

Engaging Citizen Involvement

On April 16, 2024, the Town Council called for the formation of a Community Engagement Task Force (CETF) to address Teen Violence. Gilbert then opened the application process for the reconstituted Task Force, receiving submissions from 25 adults and 4 teens.

Council appointed eleven (11) members and four (4) alternates at the June 4, 2024, meeting. Of those members, five (5) were teens. The first meeting of the Community Engagement Task Force (CETF) was held on June 10, 2024.

Appointed Members

- Natosha Ash, Chair
- Justin Fink, Vice Chair
- Marc Beasley
- Bradyn Bredemann*
- Owen Formoyle*
- Lisa Ulibarri Hatlen
- Deena LeBio
- Maxwell Udall*
- Katy Walter
- Kelly Westerberg

* Indicates Teen Members

Alternate Members

- Nneka Aguwamba
- Isabelle Brice*
- Andrew Lewis*
- Courtney Salamon Fejt

Other Representatives

- Susan Cadena - Gilbert Public Schools
- Holly Garza - Gilbert Christian High School
- Mark Huish - Chandler Unified School District
- Levi Leyba - Gilbert Police Department
- Dan Provonsha - American Leadership Academy
- Stefan Reid - Higley Unified School District

Council Liaison

- Kathy Tilque

Report Purpose

Contained within this report are 12 recommendations from the Community Engagement Task Force on the topic area of Teen Violence, divided into the three areas of Education, Awareness, and Resources. These recommendations were developed from 108 ideas generated by the task force.

Methodology

The CETF participated in training, meetings, presentations, and literature reviews. The task force received insights into the town's current initiatives and heard from community partners and subject-matter experts in the focus area.

Trainings

- Open Meeting Law
- Roles & Responsibilities



Meetings

Six (6) meetings were held over the course of six months, resulting in 15 hours of meeting time.

Education/Presentations

The task force received eight (8) detailed presentations aimed at educating members on the town's current state and community challenges. Subject matter experts provided in-depth insights on each focus area to deepen their understanding of the issues.

Background Information Shared

- **School Resource Officer Program:** The School Resource Officer (SRO) program discussed several key areas of focus, which include Safety and Security, Emergency Response, Education and Prevention, Collaboration and Community Relations:
- **Police Department – Case Updates, Process, Laws:** Provided the definition of teen violence, discussed factors influencing justice, outlined proactive measures and special operations underway, and highlighted laws such as curfew regulations.
- **Gilbert Youth & Adult Resources (GYAR):** Emphasized their 24/7 crisis intervention, counseling, and juvenile diversion programs, including therapeutic groups and Teen Court. Highlighted their ability to assess treatment needs, make referrals, collaborate with schools, law enforcement, and organizations, and maintain strong community resource connections.
- **Report, Don't Repost:** Learned about the campaign Against Teen Violence. The largest collaborative effort in Maricopa County brought together 13 local law enforcement leaders, united in their mission to curb the spread of teen violence.

Methodology Continued

- **Youth Survey Results:** Dustin Pardini, Ph.D. – Professor, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Director of Research Administration, Arizona Youth Survey, presented Strategies for Evidence-Based Prevention Programming using the Arizona Youth Survey results specific to Gilbert.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Overview of current opportunities for youth ages 12-17; past teen programs, community engagement efforts, surrounding city offerings, and ideas for the future
- **Gilbert PD Youth Engagement:** Current youth challenges, proactive initiatives, youth community engagement efforts and parks and recreation engagement efforts.
- **Teen Resources:** Overview of non-profit resources offering services for behavioral health, mental health, mentorship, parents, etc.

Literature Review

The members read and reviewed six (6) documents, surveys, and reports on topic areas.

Compression Planning

The task force employed Compression Planning, a fast-paced strategic process, to drive conversations and develop recommendations. This approach guided discussions on key topics, generating actionable ideas through presentations, breakout sessions, and individual input. The process culminated in dot prioritization, the creation of an impact/effort matrix, timeframe setting, and final recommendations.

The task force identified a total of 108 ideas and overarching themes as outlined below:

30 – Educational

- Parenting classes
- Teen Education & Action
- Business education
- Community Education
- Surveys
- SRO's

41 – Awareness

- Information sharing
- Parks and Recreation engagement
- Social media campaign
- Cross-community efforts

37 – Resources

- Recreational options/Safe Spaces
- Program support
- Staffing

Listed below is a summary of the final recommendations of the CETF for the topic area.

Topic Area: Teen Violence

The goal of the recommendations from the CETF is to promote awareness of the issues, identify resources and provide education of teen violence.

What do we know?

- From Feb 2022 to Mar 2024, 42 investigations related to group teen violence, resulted in 52 arrests (Gilbert PD).
- Gilbert youth are similar to or below state averages in bullying, physical fighting, serious violence, intimate partner violence, and exposure to community violence (AYS Survey).
- There has been a significant increase in violent juvenile crime in Maricopa County, which includes Gilbert (Maricopa County Attorney's Office).
 - Submittals for first-degree murder in Maricopa County involving juveniles increased from 6 in 2022 to 27 in 2023, a 350% increase.
 - Submittals for aggravated assault in Maricopa County involving juveniles increased from 12 to 25 from 2022 to 2023, a 108% jump.
 - Total referrals of juveniles in Maricopa County charged as adults rose 32% from 2022 to 2023.
- Delayed reporting, social media posts without police reporting, victims not desiring prosecution, and lack of probable cause for arrests affect justice (Gilbert PD).

What is already being done by Town of Gilbert?

1. Adopted an ordinance that bans persons under 18 years of age from possessing brass knuckles.
2. Adopted an unruly gathering ordinance, which will ensure that responsible person(s) face civil or criminal penalties for such a gathering.
3. Selection of Gilbert PD Youth Community Engagement Officer.
4. Approved funding for additional unarmed security guards at downtown parking garages.
5. Participation in Report, Don't Repost Campaign.
6. Created a dedicated Teen Violence investigations web page.
7. Developed a Gilbert online [Submit a Crime Tip](#).
8. Created a social media campaign around curfew,
9. Increased patrols of high traffic areas often frequented by teens, including areas in and around the mall and Gilbert's Downtown Heritage District.
10. Development of a [Teen Resources Webpage](#).

TIME FRAME: Short = 0-12 months; Mid Term = 1-2 years; Long Term = 2-5 years

Resources – Teen Violence

ACTION	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)
<p>Teen Ambassadors: Explore the establishment of a comprehensive support system for Teen Ambassadors to enhance their awareness and effectiveness and hold quarterly meetings with town officials to discuss progress and initiatives.</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>Local nonprofits and community organizations (Boys and Girls Club), Educational Institutions, Mental Health and Wellness Organizations, MYAC, Gilbert Chamber</p>
<p>SROs at All Junior High and High School Campuses: Collaborate with schools to expand School Resource Officer (SRO) presence at all junior high and high school campuses in Gilbert, including charter and private schools, while prioritizing ongoing funding and recruitment to secure qualified candidates for these roles.</p>	<p>Mid Term</p>	<p>Charter and private schools, Department of Education, Department of Justice</p>
<p>Events for Youth That Include Food: Proposed initiatives include hosting youth events like game nights and field trips, creating teen nights at recreation centers, and collaborating with schools and Teen Ambassadors to sponsor contests and activities. Additionally, reduced entry rates for teens at recreation centers were suggested to promote engagement.</p>	<p>Short Term</p>	<p>Business community, Gilbert Chamber, Educational Institutions, Parks and Recreation Foundation, Cultural organizations</p>
<p>Social Media: Develop a social media strategy to share key information with teens and adults, support programs teaching teens to manage accounts and gain followers, and leverage teen influencers, QR codes, and diverse perspectives to boost engagement.</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>Youth focused organizations, Local influencers and Content Creators, Educational institutions, technology companies, digital marketing agencies, Local businesses</p>

Education – Teen Violence

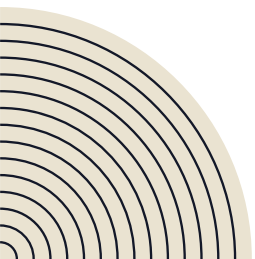
ACTION	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)
<p>School Ambassador Program for Anti-Violence: Partner on or support the implementation of a school ambassador club program involving junior high and high school representatives from each grade level.</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>Community Organization – Community Matters (offers Safe School Ambassador Program), Educational Institutions, Mental Health and Wellness Organizations, SRO’s, Advocacy Groups</p>
<p>Educational Classes: Propose offering in-person and pre-recorded educational sessions at recreation centers or libraries, exploring mandated classes for parents of teens involved in violence. Topics could include school violence, bullying, recognizing warning signs, and strategies for safely managing escalating situations.</p>	<p>Mid Term</p>	<p>Educational institutions, Libraries, local counseling centers, AZ Dept. of Education – Bullying Prevention Program, Non-Profits & Advocacy Groups, Technology and Media companies</p>
<p>Community Education on Ordinances, Laws, and Consequences: Offer or partner on education for teens and adults on current ordinances, laws, and consequences to foster a law-abiding, safe, and proactive community.</p>	<p>Short Term</p>	<p>Legal professionals, non-profits focused on civic engagement (Gilbert Talks), Gilbert Chamber, Educational institutions, Technology and Media Companies</p>

Awareness – Teen Violence

ACTION	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNER(S)
<p>Cross-community efforts: Explore the formation of an East Valley coalition aiming to foster community-wide engagement in preventing teen violence.</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>City councils, Public Safety Departments, Maricopa County Attorney’s office, Chambers of Commerce, Educational Institutions, Non-profits and Advocacy groups focused on conflict resolution and community safety</p>
<p>Webpage Development: Develop a dedicated webpage on the town's website to update the community regularly on the impact of implemented measures, such as curfew enforcement and other recommendations.</p>	<p>Short Term</p>	<p>Youth Ambassadors or Influencers, Digital Marketing companies, Community organizations</p>
<p>Social media campaign by teens, for teens: Explore and support the launch of a social media campaign designed and led by teens</p>	<p>Mid Term</p>	<p>Local teen ambassadors, Educational institutions, Social media platforms, Digital Marketing Agencies, Media Outlets</p>
<p>Parks and Recreation partnership with schools: Strengthen collaboration between Parks and Recreation and schools to increase awareness of community programs, including visits to junior high and high school campuses to inform students about available resources.</p>	<p>Mid Term</p>	<p>Educational institutions, Parent Teacher Associations, Youth focused non-profits or organizations (4-H), Non-profits, Civic Organizations, College and University Students (volunteers)</p>

The Community Engagement Task Force (CETF) was formed by the Town of Gilbert to address teen violence following community concerns and tragic incidents. The task force, consisting of 11 members (including 5 teens) and 4 alternates, was tasked with identifying gaps, leveraging resources, and providing recommendations in the areas of Education, Awareness, and Resources to reduce or eliminate teen violence. Over six months, the CETF held meetings, received presentations from subject-matter experts, and reviewed relevant literature to develop 12 actionable recommendations.

Gilbert will continue implementing these recommendations, prioritizing initiatives that address teen violence to foster safety and well-being among youth. The town will collaborate with community partners to ensure the effectiveness of these programs and their alignment with community needs. Staff will actively monitor progress and make necessary adjustments to address the evolving challenges faced by teens and the broader Gilbert community. The overarching goal remains to create a more inclusive, supportive, and thriving environment for all Gilbert residents, with a special focus on empowering and protecting its younger population.



Appendix A - Linkages to Relevant Information

The CETF was asked to review the topic areas and was given "homework" or resources for further study.

1. Board and Commissions Handbook online at <https://www.gilbertaz.gov/departments/clerk-s-office/boards-commissions/member-resources>
2. Report, Don't Repost Campaign: visit maricopacountyattorney.org/RDR to access social media content, posters, newsletter templates, and video PSAs (available in both English and Spanish).
3. [2024 Arizona Youth Survey Report](#)
4. Review of 2022 Arizona Youth Survey Report & Dashboards
 - a. [2022 Arizona Youth Survey Report](#)
 - b. [Arizona Youth Survey Dashboards](#)