

From: [Kathryn Hedges](#)
To: [BoardOperations](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Agenda Item 4.1
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 12:14:33 PM
Attachments: [911 Events Report one pager.pdf](#)
[Summary graphic on organized retail theft case study from the Center for Media Justice.pdf](#)
[Evidence-on-Noncarceral-Safety-DOJ_V4.docx \(1\).pdf](#)

Regarding BoS Agenda Item 16

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Kathryn Hedges
Date: Tue, Feb 27, 2024 at 10:27 AM
Subject: Fwd: Agenda Item 4.1
To: BoardOperations <BoardOperations@cob.sccgov.org>, Ellenberg, Supervisor <supervisor.ellenberg@bos.sccgov.org>, Cindy Chavez <cindy.chavez@bos.sccgov.org>, <supervisor.lee@bos.sccgov.org>

Dear Board President Ellenberg, Supervisor Chavez, and Supervisor Lee:

I am a resident of D2 in Downtown San Jose and a former resident of Sunnyvale. I am also a member of both Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) and Racial Equity Community Support (RECS) who are advocating for the expansion of the TRUST program. TRUST has been so successful that demand is pushing the limits of its current capacity, even though it's "the best kept secret in Santa Clara County." The most recent times I have called TRUST, it has taken an hour for the team to arrive.

Thank you for approving the direct line to TRUST on December 12, 2023. This will make a real difference when people can reach TRUST without going through the 988 screeners.

I hope that you can coordinate the expansion of TRUST and 988 with the City of San Jose. The City is receiving a lengthy analysis of 911 Events today, and it is clear that a large proportion of 911 calls could be better handled by TRUST because they involve mental illness or homelessness but no actual crimes. If 911 starts transferring calls to TRUST via 988, the current systems can't accommodate that much increase in call volume--in contradiction of the report that Bruce Copley gave to the joint PSFSS and DPS meeting on February 15, 2024.

I urge you to meet with your colleagues in the City of San Jose to encourage them to include additional funding for TRUST in the FY 2024-25 City budget. They would appreciate having their peers reach out on this type of policy decision.

Thank you again for your support of TRUST.

Kind regards,
Kathryn Hedges
158 E Saint John St Apt 516
San Jose, CA 95112

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Kathryn Hedges

Date: Tue, Feb 27, 2024 at 2:12 AM

Subject: Agenda Item 4.1

To: <mayoremail@sanjoseca.gov>, <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>, <district1@sanjoseca.gov>, <district2@sanjoseca.gov>, District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>, <district4@sanjoseca.gov>, <district5@sanjoseca.gov>, <district6@sanjoseca.gov>, <district7@sanjoseca.gov>, <district8@sanjoseca.gov>, Office of Councilmember Pam Foley <district9@sanjoseca.gov>, Councilmember Johnny Khamis <district10@sanjoseca.gov>

Dear Mayor, Vice-Mayor, and Councilmembers:

I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) and Racial Equity Community Support (RECS) at Sacred Heart. I am also a registered voter in District 3 who lives downtown in an area where I see many people suffering from mental health crises. This makes me glad that we have a non-police alternative to SJPd for mental health calls because I don't want to call 911 to help someone and end up getting them killed. This has happened so many times in San Jose and it needs to stop. **We need to send the right responders**, not someone in a uniform with a gun whose basic training is to shoot if people don't comply with orders.

Two points stood out for me in the 911 Event Report. First, how many calls required no report by SJPd. Second, how rarely were crimes involved or arrests made when SJPd responded to calls for mental health, substance use, or homelessness. (Those arrests were typically associated with warrants or probation violations. For the calls where a violent crime was in progress, of course SJPd would be the right responder.) **Clearly there are thousands of mental health crisis calls each year that could be handled better by alternative responders such as the Trusted Response Urgent Safety Team (TRUST)--if they had the capacity to handle thousands of additional calls.** Co-response teams such as PERT and CERT would be appropriate for the few situations that pose a safety threat.

TRUST has been operating successfully for almost a year and a half and has expanded from one pilot team to four teams to cover Santa Clara County. Unlike PERT and CERT, it operates 24/7. Teams include a medic, a psych professional, and a peer supporter but no police (which is current best practice). However, they would need to expand capacity to take over thousands of additional calls per year diverted from 911. **San Jose already accounts for 2/3 of TRUST's calls;** teams assigned to other areas (North County, South County, West County) are often diverted to San Jose to meet current demand. (The West County team is designated primarily for calls west of San Jose, although it also covers parts of District 1.) **Travel time from these other bases of operation adds to their response time in San Jose.**

Current demand for TRUST may be artificially low because there is no direct line yet and 988 gatekeeps calls. Because TRUST is not listed on the 988 menu, callers must know in advance to request TRUST and pass the 988 triage process to be transferred. Also, 911 has only been transferring a limited number of mental health calls to 988. If that policy changed, demand for TRUST would skyrocket, based on the current 911 mental health call numbers.

Budgeting \$2 million for a second San Jose team would allow TRUST to respond to over hundreds of calls per month where SJPd is currently dispatched, provide a more beneficial outcome, and reduce settlements paid when SJPd kills or injures mental health subjects. If the four current TRUST field teams can handle around 600 calls/month, then each additional team for San Jose could handle 150 calls/month and SJPd officers could

respond to 150 more crimes where an armed response is the right response.

Would San Jose be able to hire enough sworn officers to make that much of a difference for only \$2 million per year?

I understand there is a public perception that we need more police to fight a growing crime wave. However, crime is much lower by historical standards compared to, say, the 1990s. We merely have more press coverage and more social media broadcasting news about crime. When my car was broken into multiple times in the 1990s in San Diego, I probably told a few friends and coworkers. My neighbors might have seen broken glass in the street, but only those who happened to walk by. Nowadays, Nextdoor lets people broadcast their break-in, catalytic converter theft, or auto theft to the entire South Bay. **Crime is also covered more by the press in an election year, and here we are a week before Super Tuesday with eight months left before the general election.** So people have an impression that crime is higher than it has been in the past even though it is not.

More police may make it easier to file crime reports, but criminals assume they won't get caught so they don't care whether SJPd arrives 5 hours or 5 minutes after they're gone.

All the research has shown that alleviating poverty reduces crime. Spending money on social programs to ensure people have good education, affordable housing, vibrant public spaces, and access to healthcare, mental health care, and substance abuse treatment is what lowers crime rates. Yes, these are programs that conservatives find offensive because they don't like seeing their tax dollars spent lifting people out of poverty when they didn't benefit from it themselves. But these programs work.

People don't turn to a life of crime because they decided it was a better idea than getting the skills for a good job. They don't have those options, or their lives fall apart and those options are no longer available.

But for today, let's start with budgeting \$2 million for TRUST alternative mental health and substance use response in line with the 911 Event Report recommendations.

Kind regards,

Kathryn Hedges

San Jose, CA 95112

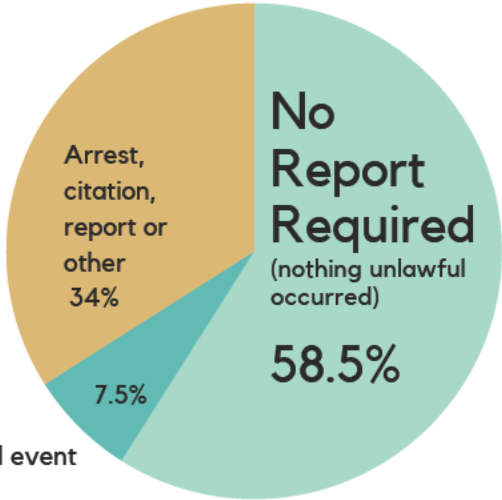
The city of SJ studied three years of police interactions to identify categories that could be diverted to more appropriate responders. Here is what they found:



In a given year, there are tens of thousands of such situations.

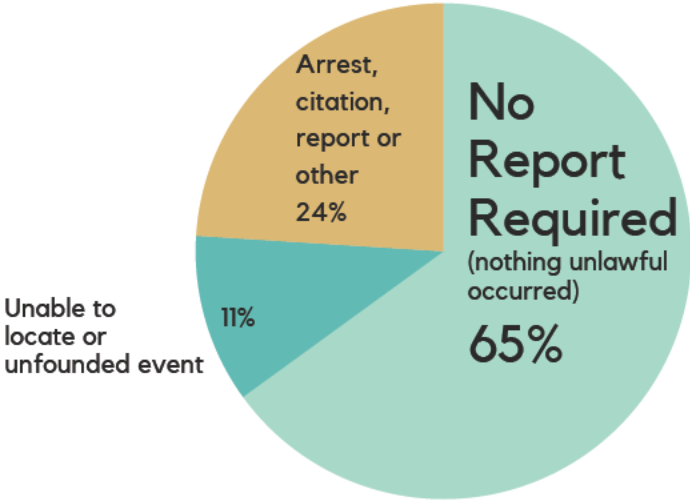
Outcome of **Mental Health** Related Police Events

Jan-Sept 2023, 9462 total mental health related police interactions



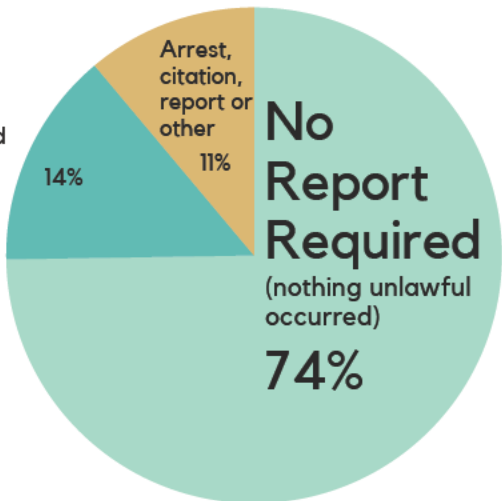
Outcome of **Unhoused** Related Police Events

Jan-Sept 2023, 14479 total unhoused related police interactions



Outcome of **Welfare Checks** Police Events

Jan 2021-Sept 2023, 52499 total welfare checks conducted by police



If so many of these situations don't actually involve unlawful behavior...



"The city should "work in partnership with the County to identify opportunities to expand existing County alternate response services for mental health...Capacity of these programs will need to be expanded to meet the need."

Evidence on Non-Carceral Safety Investments

Research consistently demonstrates that holistic, non-carceral investments can produce dramatic improvements in community safety—while avoiding the devastating consequences of jails, prisons, and police contact. The following memo surveys some of the research that shows the promise of these non-carceral, non-punitive approaches.

Investments in Social Capital & Urban Design

- According to one national study, every additional ten [non-profit community organizations](#) tackling violence and building stronger communities results in a 9 percent drop in the homicide rate.
- In Seattle, a program that provides matching funds to community organizations to work on [neighborhood improvement projects](#) was found to substantially decrease violent crime, especially in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- [The design of urban spaces](#) can have crime-reducing effects. Recent studies in multiple jurisdictions, including [Philadelphia](#), [Baltimore](#), and [Youngstown](#), have found that maintaining green space reduces certain types of crime.
- In New York City, research demonstrates that [streetlights](#) can reduce “index crimes”—including murder, robbery, aggravated assault, and some property crimes—by more than a third.
- A [rigorous study](#) found that restoring vacant land in cities significantly improves both local residents’ perception of their safety, as well as their actual physical safety. Restoration projects produced large reductions in crime, including a 30 percent reduction in gun violence.

Investments in Education & Opportunities for Youth

- Increasing students’ [educational attainment](#)—i.e., ensuring students stay in school longer—decreases the likelihood of future incarceration by 16 percent. Improving [school quality](#) also reduces the probability of serious crimes and incarceration, particularly for at-risk youth.
- Programs to support students’ [social and emotional well-being](#) have been found to reduce total arrests by as much as 35 percent, violent crime arrests by as much as 50 percent, and, for program youth in juvenile detention facilities, recidivism by 21 percent.
- Robust research shows that correctional education programs are [one of our most effective ways](#) to reduce recidivism and increase employment opportunities upon reentry.
- Socioeconomic [segregation of schools](#) has been found to increase violent crime, suggesting that promoting more diverse and integrated schools could reduce violence.

- Youth-focused sports and therapy programming can reduce the [likelihood of future arrests](#) for a violent crime by 50 percent.
- [Safe Passage to School](#) programs—which place civilian guards along specified routes to keep students safe on their way to and from school—have been found to reduce violent crime by 14 percent.
- High-quality afterschool programs have broadly positive impacts for children. By providing a safe space that promotes students’ health and development, these programs [can reduce drug use and decrease arrests](#) and other forms of criminal-legal involvement among children.
- Increasing [youth employment](#), such as through summer jobs programs, has been found to reduce violent crime by 35 percent—with long-lasting, positive effects.
- Robust research has shown that [violence prevention programs in schools](#) significantly reduces violent behavior among students at all grade levels and in all school environments. Many of these programs also have the added benefit of improving academic performance and reducing substance abuse among youth.
- Early childhood intervention programs, as well as nutrition programs for newborns, are [likely to reduce crime](#).
- Programs focused on wraparound education services in high risk areas [have been shown](#) to reduce juvenile arrests as well as child abuse cases.

[Bolstering Economic Security & Tackling Inequality](#)

- [Emergency financial assistance](#) for those experiencing economic insecurity, one study showed, reduced total arrests, including a 51 percent reduction in arrests for violent crimes. Short-term financial assistance, especially when [combined with cognitive behavioral therapy](#), has been shown to decrease violence and crime. Many studies have demonstrated that [cash transfers reduce domestic violence events in particular](#).
- [Decreasing unemployment](#) has been shown to reduce property crime. In fact, much of the reduction in property crime seen during the 1990s can be attributed to the declining unemployment rate.
- Economic inequality predicts homicide rates “[better than any other variable](#).” A simple measure of inequality predicts approximately [half of the variance](#) in homicide rates between American states and between countries. Data from 39 countries shows that even small [decreases in inequality](#) would reduce homicides by 20 percent and cause a 23 percent long-term reduction in robberies.

- Local inequality drives property and violent crime. Looking at neighborhoods within major American cities, property crimes are much more common in areas that have [higher median income gaps](#) between adjacent areas. The researchers suggest that reducing localized inequality would reduce the incentive for property crime. Other researchers [found that](#) “within-tract”—that is, within income tract—inequality was associated with higher Uniform Crime Reports of violent and property crimes. This held when the comparison was not within tracts, but between neighboring tracts.
- [Decreasing the gender wage gap](#) has been found to reduce domestic violence against women. Reductions in the gender wage gap can explain 9 percent of the domestic violence decline between 1990 and 2003, as measured through hospital admissions.

Investments in Health & Treatment

- One study shows that [Medicaid expansion](#) reduced crime by 3 percent annually, producing crime-related cost savings of \$13 billion each year.
- Further research has shown that Medicaid expansions led to significant reductions in robbery, aggravated assaults, and larceny theft. This was primarily due to increased [uptake of substance use disorder treatment](#) through Medicaid coverage.
- Additional research demonstrates that when the number of substance abuse treatment facilities increases in a particular area, [violent and financially-motivated crimes decrease](#) locally.
- Expanded access to [mental health treatment](#), and to psychiatric treatment in particular, has also been found to reduce violent crime.
- Targeted [interventions for children who have suffered from lead poisoning](#)—including lead abatement, medical care, and public assistance—have long-term positive impacts, including a reduction in future arrests for violent offenses.
- [Decriminalizing marijuana](#), specifically through allowing access to medical marijuana, was found to decrease violent crime, particularly in Southwestern border states.

Investments in Housing

- At the local level, increasing [access to affordable housing](#) by building more low-income housing units results in significant reductions in violent crime.
- [Reducing socio-economic segregation](#) of neighborhoods—such as through housing vouchers that enable low-income families to move to neighborhoods of opportunity—has been shown to reduce youth arrests for violent crime.

Making up a "crime wave":

The "organized retail theft" case study (research by the Center for Media Justice)

February 2021

One reporter for the SF Business Times publishes the first of 12 articles, repeating anecdotal claims by 3 business owners about retail theft that alleged that less policing and prosecution was the cause of rising property crime. Progressive DA Chesa Boudin and Prop 47 are blamed. Press includes unsubstantiated claims that there were "organized crews" committing theft.

October 2021

Congress introduced the INFORM Act (Integrity, Notification, and Fairness in Online Retail Marketplaces for Consumers) after lobbying by big retailers, claiming online fencing due to 'organized retail theft' was cutting into their profits. (This bill took effect in 2023.)

November and December 2021

The SF Chronicle, Guardian and The Atlantic publish stories debunking the existing of an 'organized retail theft' crime wave. Property crime rates were at historic lows and Prop 47 did NOT cause a rise in crime. These stories do not get picked up by other outlets and do not go viral.

January 2023

Biden signs bill for billions to fund 100K more cops.

September 2023

CA governor signs bill to give \$267 million to police departments in 55 cities to combat organized retail theft. Governor says "When shameless criminals walk out of stores with stolen goods, they'll walk straight into jail cells."

November 2022

Matt Mahan wins SJ mayoral race.

October 2023

SJPD receives nearly \$8.5 million for new retail theft detail

July 2005

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) drafts the "Organized Retail Theft Act." Walgreens was a member.

December 2019

Walgreens announces plans to close 200 stores in the U.S. to "cut costs" and "focus on profitable locations." There is no mention of 'organized retail theft' as a factor in these closures.

October 2020

Walgreens spokesperson implies that 'organized retail crime' is why they were closing stores. SF Chronicle repeats this claim unchecked, despite the 2019 announcement of store closures, and other national press outlets amplify it. Inside Edition pushes a video of a dark skinned young man shoplifting into virality. Meanwhile, internal Walgreens earnings calls blame store closures on pandemic erosion of customer traffic.

May 2021

Republican federal Congressional leadership publish a memo claiming that there was rampant organized retail theft in SF caused by "defund the police" rhetoric.

June 2021

SF Business Times blames Boudin for Walgreen's 'organized retail theft ring' and claims retail theft is a national problem. A Heritage Foundation publication invents the term PINOs--prosecutors in name only, and blames closure of 17 Walgreens stores on Boudin's unwillingness to prosecute low level shoplifting. Another shoplifting video goes viral. The 21 second clip generates over 300 news stories in one month. National press amplifies these talking points. Right wing press outlets take up rhetoric about 'lawlessness' due to progressive reforms. Democratic leadership condemn 'organized retail theft.'

June 2022

SF District Attorney Chesa Boudin was recalled.

September 2022

Congress introduced the bipartisan Combatting Organized Retail Crime Bill. (This bill has yet to be passed.)

October 2022

CA legislators introduce two different bills--one to weaken Prop 47 and the other to repeal it. (Both bills failed.) Meanwhile, in SJ a NextDoor user posts a firsthand report of theft at a Walgreens on The Alameda (it was actually a CVS and the story could not be corroborated by new sources or public records). The post and comments circulate, focusing on Prop 47 and also blaming unhoused people for crime. The CVS store closure was blamed on crime rather than the actual reasons-- the end of its lease and a company wide move towards health care. Matt Mahan campaign materials use fearmongering about crime and pro-policing rhetoric.

Summer 2020

The murder of George Floyd sparks massive racial justice uprisings around the country.

There were 792 stories about 'organized retail theft' between 2021 and 2022, half of them mentioning Walgreens, but only 195 between 2018 and 2020. They disproportionately mentioned minimum sentencing for theft under \$950 and used language eerily similar to ALEC's 2005 proposal.