Message from Mayor Landrieu

We must all get involved to improve outcomes for youth in America. Since 2010, my administration has made reducing homicide in the City of New Orleans its number one priority. Last fall, I accepted President Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper Community Challenge, and we held our local action summit – the NOLA FOR LIFE Symposium. The Symposium was designed to educate the greater local community about the NOLA FOR LIFE strategy, highlight the accomplishments we have seen to date, provide greater insight into the hard-hitting issues that contribute to violence in our community, and set actionable goals to address those issues. We are happy to leverage the urgency and resources of My Brother’s Keeper with the work of NOLA FOR LIFE and our recently launched Economic Opportunity Strategy in order to continue our focus on improving the lives of Black men and boys and making the City of New Orleans a safer place for all of our citizens.

Sincerely,

Mitchell J. Landrieu
Mayor, City of New Orleans
MY BROTHER’S KEEPER Community Challenge

The My Brother’s Keeper Community Challenge is a national call to action for communities (cities, counties, and Tribal Nations) to develop and execute a cradle-to-college and career strategy to improve life outcomes for all youth, and ensure that all young people can achieve their full potential regardless of who they are, where they come from, or the circumstances into which they are born.

By accepting the My Brother’s Keeper Community Challenge, communities commit to convene key stakeholders to get involved locally, to implement proven strategies for improving the life outcomes of young people, to measure their successes and setbacks, and to share their plans to help communities learn from one another. The challenge asks local leaders to implement a strategy using existing, evidence-based programs to develop a sustainable action plan. New Orleans accepted this challenge in September 2014 and it aligns well with NOLA FOR LIFE, the NOLA FOR LIFE PLAYbook, and the Mayor’s Economic Opportunity Strategy.

The City of New Orleans is committed to enacting sustainable change in our community across the following key milestone areas...
NOLA FOR LIFE: 
A Comprehensive Murder Reduction Strategy

In response to a decades long struggle with one of the highest homicide rates in the country, Mayor Mitch Landrieu launched NOLA FOR LIFE: A Comprehensive Murder Reduction Strategy. The strategy is an aggressive approach to drastically reduce the murder rate among young African American males (16-24) in the City and aims to address the complex needs of New Orleans’ highest risk youth. Drawing from the experience and knowledge of service providers, national and local crime experts, law enforcement and youth, the City realized early that it could not arrest its way out of this problem.

To truly change the culture of violence in New Orleans, it became necessary to address the myriad of challenges. To develop NOLA FOR LIFE, we engaged key national and local crime experts, community service providers, law enforcement and youth, and also conducted a rigorous review of pertinent data. Promising initiatives were generated through a review of existing city efforts, best practice research, ongoing participation from many community partners and focused conversations with stakeholders.

Thus, education, judicial alternatives, employment, trauma services, and mentorship—leapt to the forefront of the conversation. To facilitate thoughtful and effective systems reform and to construct a continuum of services tailored to the needs of the NOLA FOR LIFE population, the City also convened a group of community based service providers to join in collective action across three areas of need: 1) prevention 2) intervention and 3) rehabilitation.

Since the launch of NOLA FOR LIFE, we are making progress. Nationally, in 2012, murder was on the rise, while in New Orleans, murder was down. In 2013, murder was down 19 percent compared to 2012, and down 22 percent compared to 2011. 2014 saw the third year in a row with fewer murders in New Orleans, experiencing the lowest number of murders in over forty years, since 1971. While we are seeing results, it is not nearly good enough. Ending murder in New Orleans will not be easy and it won’t happen overnight. We each have to play our part. We are implementing 35 initiatives under 5 pillars:

• Stop the Shooting
• Invest in Prevention
• Promote Jobs and Opportunity
• Get involved and Rebuild Neighborhoods
• Strengthen the NOPD
In late 2013, the City of New Orleans worked with the Civil Service Commission to implement a “ban the box” policy that removes the requirement for applicants to disclose prior convictions on initial job forms, and established new guidelines for screening candidates before a final hiring decision is made.

Approximately 6,500 offenders are under probation or parole supervision in New Orleans. An estimated two-thirds of this population will commit new crimes and one-third will be re-incarcerated within three years of their release. Working with community partners, the City of New Orleans has developed a comprehensive reentry strategy to reduce the recidivism rate in Orleans Parish.

In addition, the City was awarded funding under the Second Chance Act Technology Career Training Program for Incarcerated Adults and Juveniles providing an opportunity for the City to oversee a program that will provide workforce training for incarcerated individuals between the ages of 16-30 years old will be served by this grant, which will provide telecommunications job training aimed at helping participants secure jobs with broadband, cable, and telephone providers. Upon exiting the correctional facility, participants are provided with job placement assistance, wraparound services such as life skills training, mental health and substance abuse programs.

In 2010, New Orleans had the largest jail population per capita in the country. Since then, key criminal justice stakeholders have worked to implement reforms to reduce overuse of detention. The police department has diverted low-level and municipal offenders from the jail through the use of summonses, a pretrial services program assesses all felony defendants to determine those that can be safely released, and several working groups have collaborated to reduce inefficiencies in case processing. Since 2010, the jail population has been reduced 45% due to these types of reforms, but it still exceeds the norm for a small city. In 2015, Mayor Landrieu tasked a Jail Population Management Committee with reducing jail population even further, focusing on equitable arrest practices and reducing length of stay for pretrial detainees.

The CeaseFire model uses violence interrupters and outreach workers with street credibility to interrupt and resolve potentially violent situations before they escalate. The CeaseFire Violence Interrupters also seek to prevent retaliatory shootings by mediating ongoing conflicts between groups. In addition, CeaseFire New Orleans aims to change community norms about violence by mobilizing support services and the larger community to demand a change in behaviors that lead to shootings and killings.

NOLA FOR LIFE includes the following key initiatives:

### Group Violence Reduction Strategy

Implemented in New Orleans in 2012, the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) is designed by criminologist David Kennedy and targets geographic areas of high crime and the groups that commit violent acts. This strategy is grounded in empirical analysis that a small percentage of people in violent street groups and gangs drive the majority of violence in troubled neighborhoods. GVRS targets known, chronic, violent adult and juvenile offenders by combining enforcement attention to all violent group members with a genuine offer of help.

In New Orleans, GVRS includes three major components:

- Collaborate with respected members of affected communities to deliver a single message to violent groups: stop the shooting.
- Organize and build the capacity of social service providers, clergy and community members so they can provide support and services to those who no longer wish to engage in violent lifestyles.
- Focus enforcement to specifically deter violent behavior and ensure consequences for those who continue to commit violence.

### CeaseFire New Orleans

Based on the CURE Violence model (formerly CeaseFire Chicago), CeaseFire New Orleans specifically aims to reduce street violence in the Central City neighborhood of New Orleans. In the fourth quarter of 2013, CeaseFire New Orleans expanded to include a new Hospital Crisis Intervention Team at the Interim LSU Hospital Trauma Unit.

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### Reducing Unnecessary Use of Detention

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) is a national movement to reduce local jurisdiction's overreliance on juvenile detention by creating meaningful alternatives. In New Orleans, the JDAI executive committee is co-chaired by a juvenile judge and a parent advocate. Membership includes the prosecutor, the juvenile public defender, the Mayor’s Office, City Council, and a wide array of advocates and community-based organizations. Implemented alternatives include use of objective screening instruments to determine risk at arrest, electronic monitoring in the community, shorter turnaround to court dates, and community programs offering supports and supervision. JDAI was initiated in 2006 and in that same time, juvenile arrests have fallen 40%.

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Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career

The NOLA FOR LIFE PLAYbook: Promoting Life for All Youth

Supported by the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, the NOLA FOR LIFE PLAYbook: Promoting Life for all Youth is a strategic plan for action to prevent youth violence. Nested within the existing “Invest in Prevention” pillar of NOLA FOR LIFE, the PLAYbook’s aim is to improve youth safety by addressing risk and protective factors for youth violence.

Addressing this issue requires a coordinated response that draws on the strengths of partners citywide. No one agency alone can solve this problem; when we unite our efforts, we amplify our impact. Therefore, the PLAYbook takes a collective impact approach to addressing youth violence. In addition, the PLAYbook emphasizes the tools of public health: a focus on prevention, data-driven strategies, collaboration, and a population-level scale for action.

The PLAYbook helps advance New Orleans toward that goal in three key ways:

1) Designating a structure for youth violence prevention – The PLAYbook ensures that youth violence prevention activities are inclusive of diverse partners, coordinated, and sustainable.
2) Coordinating and integrating youth violence prevention activities under a set of shared priorities – The PLAYbook targets resources toward young peoples’ most pressing needs.
3) Establishing benchmarks and fostering accountability – The PLAYbook sets a benchmark to track the impact of youth violence prevention on young peoples’ lives.

The PLAYbook is the result of a strategic planning process led by the New Orleans Health Department together with a planning team of City and community representatives through listening sessions with over 150 stakeholders. Listening sessions included focus groups with small groups of young people; roundtables with stakeholders in areas such as school mental health, juvenile justice, and out-of-school time; and larger discussions with community partners. To conclude the planning process, the Health Department convened a Youth Violence Prevention Summit, which brought together over 60 partners to discuss priority risk and protective factors for youth violence and to develop an asset map of current youth violence prevention activities.

The PLAYbook presents a series of goals, objectives, and strategies that were considered to be the most important actions to prevent youth violence in New Orleans. Working with our schools was determined to be most critical in achieving this goal. According to the Louisiana Department of Education, 83% of New Orleans schools were failing in 2005 and the graduation rate was just 68%. Since Katrina, the number of failing schools has decreased 55% and graduation rates are up to 73%.
The NOLA FOR LIFE PLAYbook includes the following key initiatives:

Expanding the Use of Restorative Approaches in Schools

Restorative approaches are an alternative discipline strategy that emphasizes the reparation of harm and relationship-building over punitive discipline. Recognized as a best practice by President Obama’s Supportive School Discipline Initiative, restorative approaches have been shown to reduce suspension rates and improve school climate.

The City of New Orleans worked with the Center for Restorative Approaches and Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools to promote the use of restorative approaches at Andrew H. Wilson Charter School. As a product of this collaboration, the City of New Orleans published Implementing Restorative Approaches: A Start-Up Guide for Schools, which will support efforts to expand the use of restorative approaches.

Over the past two years, the Health Department (NOHD) has partnered with CRA to provide training to school staff in restorative approaches, such as community conferencing.

Going forward, this project will focus on the expansion of restorative approaches to new schools. CRA will train up to 20 community members as volunteer facilitators of restorative circles in schools. CRA and CRA-trained volunteers will then facilitate 60 restorative circles at schools around New Orleans.

As an incentive for incorporating system change processes that lead to the development of a more restorative school, at the conclusion of the 2014-15 school year, the top three referring schools will compete for an opportunity to receive assistance in the implementation of whole school restorative approaches during the 2015-16 school year.

Supporting Schools in Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches

Childhood exposure to violence is all too frequent. Exposure to violence is damaging to youths’ growth and development and increases the likelihood for involvement in violence later in life. Schools can play an important role in providing aid to students who are experiencing psychological trauma, thereby preventing future violence.

In 2012, the New Orleans Health Department worked with New Orleans’ schools to create a process that links schools with counseling and victim assistance resources following a student-involved homicide. The City’s coordinated response to the tragic murders of children will continue, ensuring that schools have the critical resources they need to respond to students’ grief and trauma.

Building on this, the Health Department is convening local experts in trauma to support schools in implementing trauma-informed approaches. This collaborative effort will provide assistance to schools to become trauma-sensitive — aware of the prevalence of trauma and capable of responding to traumatized students’ unique needs. Through this initiative, schools will be able to share resources with one another and learn best practices for supporting traumatized students.

Promoting Positive School Climates with the Use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in Schools

A young person’s connection to school is an important protective factor for youth violence. Over the past year, activities have focused on promoting positive school climates through Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative approaches in schools.

Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based framework for promoting positive school climate. PBIS helps make schools safer, more engaging, and higher-achieving places for students. Three high schools - Lake Area New Tech Early College High School, Crescent Leadership Academy, and Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School - are receiving assistance in enhancing the use of PBIS. Through an examination of school-wide policies and practices, schools are preparing action plans to promote positive school climates.
Successfully Entering the Workforce

The Mayor’s Economic Opportunity Strategy

According to a report by the Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy, 52% of working-age African-American men are not working. In order for New Orleans to reach her full potential, all New Orleanians must participate in the city’s economic growth. The City decided to focus on disadvantaged job seekers and businesses and engaged employers, workforce and small business training providers, job seekers, nonprofits and faith leaders to participate in making the difference. In order to design a strategy to address this critical need:

- Focus groups were held, engaging disadvantaged job seekers, social service providers, educators, job training providers and employers helped clarify employment barriers
- A detailed analysis of a citywide survey of unemployed, working age African American males was completed to create a primary data source regarding the challenges faced by this population
- Interviews with local anchor institutions helped identify new opportunities for disadvantaged job seekers and businesses
- Collaborative design sessions brought together disadvantaged job seekers, social service providers, educators, job training providers and employers to design new solutions that work for New Orleans.

In partnership with committed employers and implementation partners, the Mayor prioritized initiatives, evaluating feasibility and impact. Together, a diverse set of public and private partners have crafted a radical approach meshing together new and tested strategies that connect disadvantaged job seekers and businesses with opportunities available through local anchor institutions and major infrastructure projects.

The work of Economic Opportunity Strategy has received funding from The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Living Cities. The City has also leveraged funding for workforce and community development initiatives from the Greater New Orleans Foundation, New Orleans Works Funders Collaborative, United Way, Capital One, J.P. Morgan Chase, Surdna Foundation, Foundation for Louisiana and Baptist Community Ministries to support the economic opportunity portfolio.
Opportunity Centers
The City of New Orleans is working with five Opportunity Centers that have committed to meet a shared set of service standards to prepare job seekers for employment opportunities. These Opportunity Centers are established workforce development agencies that provide case management, foundational skills training, and supportive services for job seekers that need preparation for quality job opportunities. Through our Opportunity Centers, youth and adults with varied levels of work readiness now have access to an array of workforce assistance, with a special focus on the needs of African-American men and boys.

The Opportunity Centers share a commitment to economic justice through equal and equitable access to the job, asset building and wealth creation opportunities afforded by the City’s unprecedented economic growth. They will adhere to established standards of service and quality to meet the needs of employers in a manner that ensures that unemployed and underemployed job seekers in New Orleans are the beneficiaries of both public and private sector investments in infrastructure, capital and business development.

Sector-Specific Customized Job Training
The City of New Orleans is coordinating customized training programs to prepare job seekers for in-demand careers. All Opportunity Center participants will be prepared to embark upon a career pathway within a partnering anchor industry or elsewhere through one of these programs. The City has developed career pathways for local job seekers, in cooperation with anchor institution leaders and local training providers including Delgado Community College and local labor unions. They were developed after extensive research proved these careers to be the most in-demand current and projected jobs – with career pathways – for area hospitals, hospitality-related businesses, the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport terminal project, and the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans. In addition to Healthcare and Infrastructure opportunities, career pathways are being developed within the Hospitality and Petrochemical sectors.

Worker-Owned Cooperative
The City of New Orleans is currently exploring models for worker-owned cooperatives that could provide anchor institutions large-scale locally procured services while creating worker-owned enterprises that produce and keep wealth within New Orleans communities. Nation-wide, successful worker cooperatives are concentrated in the retail and service industries, though successful models are also found in manufacturing and the skilled trades.

Anchor Collaborative
Anchor Institutions are classically defined as institutions that are so well established within an area, it is unlikely they will ever move and, most often, they are also among the region’s largest employers, including hospitals and universities. Over the course of the past year, the City of New Orleans has worked in partnership with the New Orleans Business Alliance to advance existing relationships with anchor partners and foster new ones, including co-hosting an anchor “boot camp”, with support from the German Marshall Fund and the Surdna Foundation. Over two days and with panelists from peer-cities already benefiting from anchor-based community development strategies, local business leaders, non-profits, and anchor representatives were introduced to the benefits these institutions receive in partnering with and investing in the surrounding community.

The Democracy Collaborative conducted one-on-one interviews with hospital, university, airport, and Sewerage and Water Board executives, identifying anticipated job openings, job skills, requirements, and procurement needs. The City of New Orleans, with assistance from the New Orleans Business Alliance and the Greater New Orleans Foundation, will continue to foster the invaluable partnerships already forged with our leading industries and institutions and establish a sustainable and local skilled workers pipeline.