Every great undertaking requires a vision. The most critical component of my vision for Wilmington exists within our city’s neighborhoods, and more specifically our distressed neighborhoods.

Too often, elected leaders respond to symptoms of poverty and crime rather than causes. This is like treating obesity by loosening one’s belt; it may offer temporary reprieve at best, but ultimately nothing of value is accomplished. Our elected officials have long neglected to fulfill their responsibility to foster and sustain strong neighborhoods. We are now paying the price for that neglect.

The U.S. Department of Justice ranked Delaware 4th in the nation for rate of violent crime and 3rd for rate of incarceration. Wilmington now has a national reputation as one of the nation’s deadliest cities. Yet statistics alone can’t capture the full story told through the faces of exhausted and frustrated citizens for whom acts of violence have become daily occurrences.

Our newfound national reputation as a crime capital has also created enormous drag on the city’s economic momentum. Employers are nervously watching the City’s response to crime and its effect on employee morale and recruitment. Losing any employer would represent a significant setback to the City’s budget and ability to provide basic services. For these and many other reasons, immediate action is required.

Crime itself is a symptom of flawed public policy and of broken neighborhoods, where blight is rampant, joblessness is pervasive, and opportunity is lacking. The cure is not simply more arrests, but rather a plan that will yield fewer arrests because our people are living full, more productive lives. We must improve policies whose failure has contributed to our problem, and we must continually and aggressively invest in our neighborhoods and our people in order to reach our greatest potential as one healthy city.

The answer to almost every problem facing the city, including crime, involves economic growth and vitality. No strategy to improve our crime-ridden neighborhoods will be successful without an effective jobs creation program and place-based investments. The strategic objective is to provide work in communities where joblessness and incarceration have been normalized.
We must demand that our youth remain in school and are not allowed to fall through the cracks that form the school-prison pipeline. Among our prison population, the average educational attainment is sixth grade, with only 25% having graduated high school. For too many years the Department of Corrections did little to truly reform incarcerated men, leaving them no better prepared to function in society upon release than before admission. Fortunately, these outcomes are beginning to change as the Department of Corrections is now working with organizations like the Hope Commission’s Achievement Center, which I am proud to have led for eight years as chairman.

Wilmington’s public safety leadership will be largely responsible for dictating the specifics of a public safety plan. As this leadership changes, so will the plan, but there are certain elements of the strategy that are not negotiable. In addition to standard policing practices, the overriding theme of crime reduction in my administration will be the development and strengthening of our poorest neighborhoods, the removal of blight, strict code enforcement directed at irresponsible landlords, and the building of relationships between communities, the police and the mayor’s office.

We must also work urgently to strengthen trust between Wilmington law enforcement officers and communities they serve, especially in light of escalating tensions at the local and national levels. If our officers are not viewed as having legitimate authority within our communities, their ability to protect and serve becomes compromised.

Wilmington leaders have developed countless plans in the past, but execution typically falls short. According to the Public Safety Strategies Commission, “Wilmington has a history of seeking out proven models of community-based violence prevention and failing to follow through on effective implementation.” I’ve spent decades executing complex multi-year plans and coordinating with City, County, State, and Federal officials to make Wilmington a better place. Plans are important, but above all else, an executive must execute, especially when the unforeseen occurs.

The following public safety plan represents the foundation of my larger strategy to rebuild Wilmington. Through these initiatives, my administration will work to restore public safety and create opportunity in every neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Mike Purzycki
YOU CANNOT FIX WHAT YOU DO NOT MEASURE

1. My administration will follow a data-driven approach to executive governance that begins with the Wilmington Police Department. I will establish a data-based deployment mandate using real time crime stats within defined policing districts to ensure district integrity and accountability and improve outcomes for the police department and our communities. The success of this approach will largely depend on our ability to measure and track departmental progress using quality data, implement and maintain efficient and effective administrative practices, and pursue continuous improvement.
   a. District commander accountability for well-defined crime reduction and community outreach goals.
   b. The mayor will attend weekly review of crime stats.
   c. There will be minimum staffing levels, and officers will be assigned to policing districts. These officers will all be community-based and directly responsible for service calls and community contact. Every officer will be accountable for this.

TAKE MURDERERS AND VIOLENT OFFENDERS OFF OUR STREETS

2. Improve the WPD homicide clearance rate. It is unacceptable that so many of our most violent crimes remain unsolved for so long that they become cold cases while the perpetrators continue to walk our neighborhood streets, free to inflict violence again and again in our communities. There must be steep consequences for such acts of violence. The WPD homicide clearance rate was 12% in 2013 and 37% in 2014. The nationwide clearance rate is 64%. To assist in improving the clearance rate, I will leverage my strong relationships at the County and State levels to request the assignment of State Police and County Homicide Detectives for an initial period of 2 years.

ATTACK GUN VIOLENCE BY ATTACKING ROOT CAUSES: DRUG TRAFFICKING AND GANG ACTIVITY

3. Implement a comprehensive anti-drug and anti-gang strategy to weaken the central causes of violence and criminal activity that proliferate in our most dangerous neighborhoods. For the WPD to be effective in this approach, I will develop additional resources for criminal intelligence, generate resources for WPD drug and gang units to include an undercover capability, gain long-term commitments from the County and State to add resources to this effort, and continue to emphasize and expand partnerships with Federal agencies such as the FBI, ATF, and DEA.
CUT OFF THE SUPPLY OF ILLEGAL FIREARMS ENTERING WILMINGTON

4. Work with our congressman and U.S. Attorney General to increase federal resources for the identification and prosecution of trafficking illegal firearms into Wilmington. This is critical to the stabilization of our most dangerous neighborhoods.
   a. Ensure effective prosecution of weapons violation.
   b. Publish follow up to gun arrests.

ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A TRUE COMMUNITY POLICING APPROACH

5. Reestablish WPD dedicated Community Policing Units. Community policing needs to be in the neighborhoods. Maintaining the same officers in each district and ensuring regular foot patrols wherever possible will allow our law enforcement officials and private citizens to begin peeling away at layers of distrust and building strong relationships.
IMPROVE WPD EFFECTIVENESS

6. Improve training, policies, and accountability for the WPD and **advocate for pay parity** as professional standards increase. Continually exploring ways to improve the ability of our law enforcement officers to do their job will not only yield a more efficient and effective WPD, it will also signal to our private citizens that we are serious about restoring and maintaining trust, especially in communities where relationships are strained today.
   - a. Ensure accountability in defined police districts.
   - b. Reassign Mayor’s security detail to provide two additional police officers in highest need areas.
   - c. Continue to improve camera coverage and monitoring, both forensically and proactively.
   - d. Modernize technology wherever possible – radios, reporting, body cameras, 911 coordination.
   - e. Revisit WPD training frequency and content. In Washington D.C., police-involved shootings dropped 85% after officer training increased to every 6 months instead of every 2 years.
   - f. Emphasize de-escalation in use of force policies.
   - g. Explore ways to ensure tipsters and informants remain publicly unidentified. A large share of the Wilmington population will not talk to law enforcement officers today for fear of retaliation.
   - h. Revisit policies dictating how police interact with individuals suffering from mental illness.
   - i. Strengthen the relationship between the WPD and the Mayor’s office.
   - j. Appoint a chief or commissioner with extensive crime reduction experience to develop this strategy and prepare the next generation of WPD leaders; along with the mayor, this individual will have ultimate accountability.

CREATE NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION UNIT

7. Create a Neighborhood Stabilization Unit (NSU) to be deployed in the highest crime and complaint areas in order to deter criminal activity, block by block if necessary. The NSU will coordinate with key departments including L&I, Public Works, Real Estate and Housing, and Parks and Recreation. Its purpose will be to manage delivery of services to build community capacity.
As we attack negative influences in our city’s neighborhoods, we must simultaneously invest in strategic and cost-effective ways to create value for residents. Punitive approaches alone will not yield the positive results that Wilmington needs.

a. Return foreclosed properties to productive use by removing delays in the foreclosure process.

b. In coordination with the Land Bank, develop a comprehensive strategy for vacant land management to include a temporary maintenance program for vacant lots modeled on Philadelphia’s Land Care program, which “cleans and greens” overgrown, trash-strewn lots and converts them into neighborhood assets that are used in healthy, positive ways; provides community service jobs to residents in need of work; and has been shown to reduce crime rates and increase property values.

c. Emphasize strict code enforcement for residential and commercial properties, particularly in communities battling high rates of violent crime, with the intent to gain compliance or closure if necessary for nuisance properties.

d. Drawing from my extensive experience creating world-class public spaces along the Riverfront, my administration will improve parks and public spaces through regular maintenance and capital upgrades where needed so families in every neighborhood have access to safe and healthy recreation opportunities.

REVERSE BLIGHT AND DECAY THAT CONTRIBUTE TO NEIGHBORHOOD DECLINE
EXPAND PATHWAYS FOR POSITIVE PERSONAL GROWTH

9. Aggressively interrupt recidivism cycles that destroy lives, excessively burden our law enforcement and corrections efforts, cost a tremendous amount of money, and leave our returning citizens no better than before. 77% of all Delaware ex-offenders are re-arrested within three years, one of the highest recidivism rates in the country. In Wilmington’s three poorest zip codes, 62% of men over 18 years of age have spent time in prison or are currently on probation, and 1,200 men each year will return from prison to these neighborhoods. This is unsustainable by any measure.

   a. Create community service jobs for highly localized reinvestment into distressed neighborhoods through maintenance of parks, public spaces, and commercial corridors; these jobs will provide opportunities for our returning and chronically unemployed citizens.

   b. Create a comprehensive blue collar workforce development plan to create employment pipelines into entry-level careers such as food service, security, and landscaping, as well as careers with strong potential for upward mobility, including health services and construction and building trades.

   c. Leverage the power of the Hope Commission, the Challenge Program, DelTech, and other existing organizations to maximize the potential for successful re-entry, quality job training, and gainful employment. We must adequately fund institutions where formerly incarcerated men are given the support necessary for successful reintegration into society.

   d. Explore best practices for “hire local” policies and incentives to ensure our citizens have an opportunity to find local employment.

   e. Partner with Widener Law School to expand pro-bono expungement and other legal services.

   f. Create a comprehensive employment and activities program targeted at high-school age youth.

   g. Establish incentives for businesses to locate in and adjacent to distressed neighborhoods to increase the supply of local jobs available.
IMPROVE DETECTION AND SERVICES FOR YOUTH HAVING VIOLENT CRIME RISK INDICATORS

10. Youth who drop out of school, are admitted to a hospital following an altercation, receive DHSS services, or were involved in a previous police incident have a statistically higher likelihood of someday being involved in violent criminal activity. By improving records and coordination between schools, hospitals, and state agencies, we can utilize predictive methods to offer highly targeted outreach and improve outcomes for high risk individuals before they enter the corrections system.

   a. Improve evening and weekend recreational and employment opportunities for at-risk youth.
   b. Improve records keeping, data management, and inter-departmental coordination.
   c. Improve counseling services and mentorship for at-risk youth.
SOURCE MATERIAL

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