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KENOSHA NEWS SPECIAL REPORT

Taking on local violent crime

Mayor, interim police chief talk curbing the increase

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On the morning of Dec. 10, 2021, as students were being dropped off at school, 35-year-old Maximillion Moore was shot to death in his pickup truck at his

home, in the area of 26th Street and 23rd Avenue.

Moore was the 14th and final homicide/non-negligent manslaughter victim of 2021, the capstone to what was the city's deadliest year in decades.

With a referendum to add 10 new police officers to the Kenosha Police Department on Tuesday primary ballot and five candidates currently vying to become Kenosha County Sheriff, policing and

public safety are in the spotlight.

Mayor John Antaramian and Interim Kenosha Police Chief Eric Larsen recently sat down with the Kenosha News and weighed in on the causes of the spike in violent crime seen in recent years, what to expect in the future and their



Antaramian



Larsen

plan to help address and reduce violent crimes.

The years 2020 and 2021 saw an uptick in some types of violent crimes compared to the previous two-year period.

Robberies increased by more than 60% between 2019 and 2020, assaults by a more moderate 34%,

and homicides/non-negligent manslaughter by just 16%, a single additional death.

Please see **CRIME**, Page A5

■ **INSIDE:** Local KCOR group offers way to curb violent crime. **Page A6**

■ **MORE:** See detailed breakdown of where crimes committed in Kenosha. **Pages A5-7**

PEACETREE MUSIC FESTIVAL



SEAN KRAJACIC PHOTOS, KENOSHA NEWS

Above: Georgia Rae plays with a hula hoop during the Peacetree Music Festival at the band shell in Pennoyer Park on Friday. **Below:** Honey Cellar performs on stage during the Peacetree Music Festival at the bandshell in Pennoyer Park on Friday.

'Peaceful energy' flows

Event helps raise funds for Kenosha Achievement Center

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The Peacetree Music Festival, bringing music lovers and "peaceful energy" to Kenosha, wrapped up its fifth season at Pennoyer Park Saturday, with music and fundraising efforts running well into the night.

Bridgit Rallo, the owner of jewelry store Peacetree Originals for over two decades, said the festival was her way of thanking the community for their support. The event brings like-minded

Please see **FESTIVAL**, Page A9

LOOK: See more of the Peacetree Music Festival by pointing your smartphone camera at the QR code and then tapping the link [NEWSVU](#)



Police, fire referendum on ballot Tuesday

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City of Kenosha residents will vote Tuesday on whether to approve an increase in the tax levy so the city can hire additional police officers and firefighters with associated equipment.

City leaders are hoping to exceed the state's statutory levy limit on what it can legally tax property owners in 2022 for enhanced protective services and then collect in 2023. The current levy limit is 2.654%, or \$75,763,738. Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian wants it increased to 3.3%, which would increase the levy by \$2.5 million for a total of \$78,263,738.

If the referendum is approved, the owner of a \$200,000 home would pay roughly an additional \$5.50 per month, or \$66 a year.

Kenosha citizens will be asked the following question Tuesday, the same day as the primary:

"Under state law, the increase in the levy of the City of Kenosha for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2023, is limited to 2.654%, which results in a levy of \$75,763,738. Shall the City of Kenosha be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2023, for purpose of additional police and fire protection services, by a total of 3.3%, which results in a levy of \$78,263,738, and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$2,500,000 for each fiscal year going forward?"

Earlier this year, voters in the Village of Pleasant Prairie

Please see **REFERENDUM**, Page A9

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Crime

From A1

In 2021, while the number of robberies plummeted, dropping by 66%, and aggravated assaults went down slightly while remaining higher than in the past, homicides/non-negligent manslaughters doubled.

Larsen said some of that could be explained by the pandemic, when lockdowns and layoffs upended people's lives.

"People need structure in their lives, and if you take those structures out and have a lot of free time, you can run into issues," he said.

Larsen expected a decrease across the board for 2022 as people's lives return to normal. So far, for homicides at least, that has held true, with just three homicides as of early August, although Larsen warned even a single incident could bring those numbers up quickly.

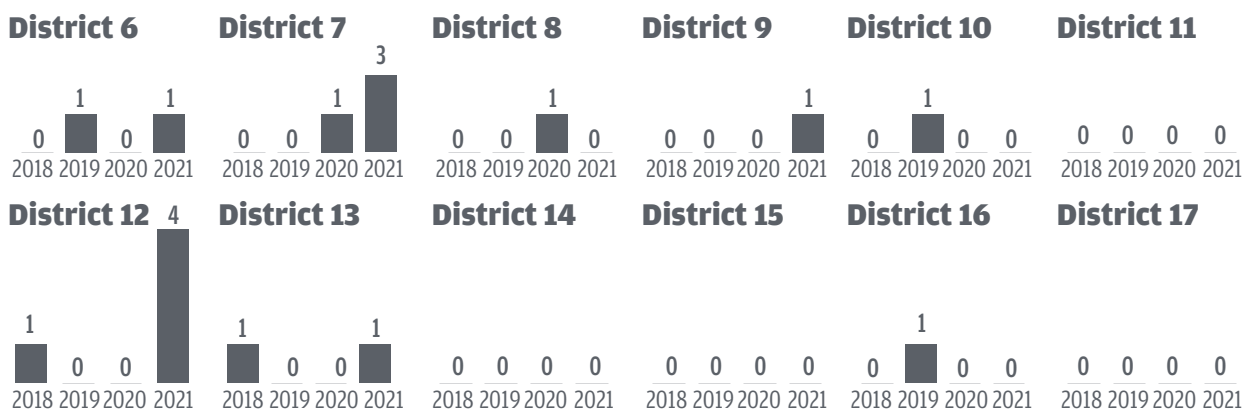
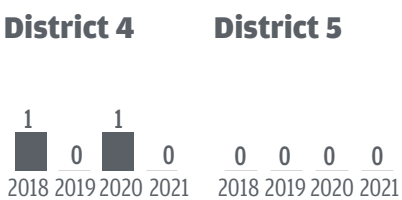
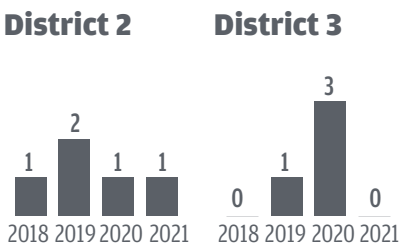
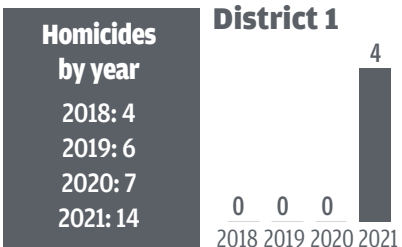
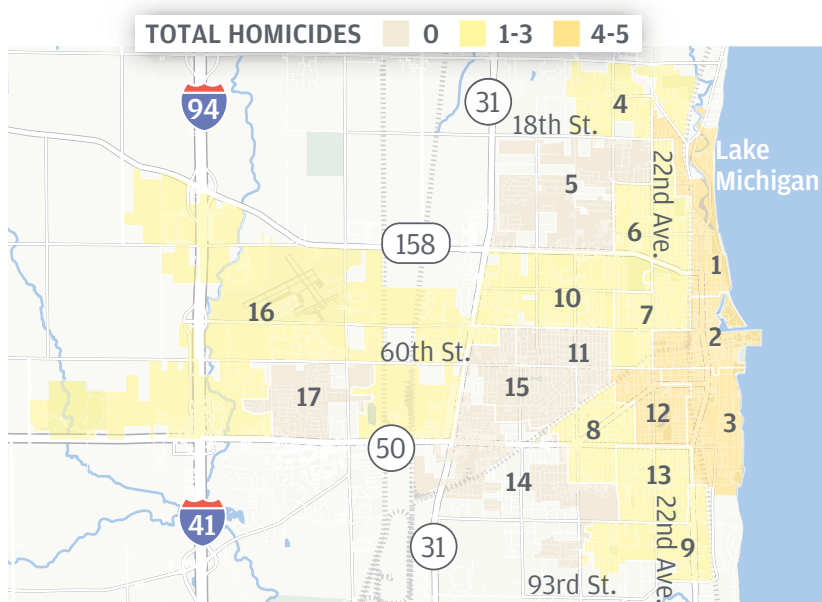
Antaramian also expected the jump in deaths and aggravated assaults to be an outlier going forward, but he said that gun violence was increasingly becoming a greater threat in the city.

"The problem is, we're in a society right now that is facing a lot more gun violence than ever before," Antaramian said. "Law enforcement is doing a lot of aggressive things to try and stop that, but they can't do it all by themselves."

Larsen said that more cases of aggravated assaults have begun to involve guns. People "used to settle things with their hands and fists," but have increasingly turned to guns as they become more available.

Homicides in Kenosha

The past few years have seen an uptick in homicides in Kenosha. Shown is the total for each aldermanic district from 2018 to 2021.



Source: City of Kenosha

maps4news.com/©HERE, Lee Enterprises graphic

Addressing violent crime

To Antaramian, reducing violent crimes in the city requires both a short-term and long-term approach. In the short-term, he argued, the 10 additional police officers requested in Tuesday's referendum would help get more officers on the streets responding to and investigating crimes.

Ten new officers would be a roughly 5% increase in

the police force, which currently has about 211 sworn members.

Larsen said that beyond the growing personnel needs of the department over the years, more police officers mean more time for positive interactions with the public.

"One of the best ways to build relations is just to get out and talk to people," Larsen said. "Those little interactions can create great relationships."

After the unrest in 2020

following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, Larsen said he's worked to build those relationships between the department and community leaders. To this day, Larsen said he still talks directly with community advocates about their concerns.

"One of the things we sought to do is create relationships where we didn't have them before," Larsen said. "What we started doing was reaching out to different

groups that we normally didn't do."

A broader approach

But both said long-term reductions in violent crimes would not come simply from increased policing or officers.

"It requires a holistic approach. The police do certain things: we investigate crimes, we make arrests," Larsen said. "But what led this person to commit crimes? What brought them

About the graphics

The graphs and maps shown were created using data provided by the Kenosha Police Department.

For aggravated assaults, multiple types of assaults against a single victim, such as using a different weapon, were counted just once. In cases with multiple victims, each victim was counted. Many homicides begin as assaults, and are counted in both if applicable. For robberies, each victim was counted separately. Any business that was listed as a victim in the data was only counted if it was the only mention of the incident in the data.

Although data exists on the three types of crime focused on here from before 2018, the crime reporting standard used by the KPD switched in 2018 to the Wisconsin Incident-Based Reporting System, a Wisconsin-specific version of the FBI's reporting system, making comparison difficult and sometimes misleading.

to that point that they could commit crimes?"

Antaramian said the city has been working with various organizations to provide summer programming and work with youths to help get them to college and careers. At the former Chrysler lot, the city joined with the school district and the Kenosha Area Business Alliance to bring a STEM high school.

"Things like that are definitely trying to get young people at an early age," Antaramian said. "We're trying to create a situation for people to succeed."

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