

Lincoln Heights / Evendale Gun Range Relocation Project

History

The Cincinnati Police Department has operated its firing range for officer training in the Village of Evendale since 1947. The firing range is in a location that sits between Evendale as well as the Villages of Woodlawn and Lincoln Heights.

Impacts

The nature of the gun range entails that, when it is being utilized, the sound of firearms is evident throughout these neighborhoods – particularly in Lincoln Heights – an 88% black community. As of the 2010, Lincoln Heights had a population of just over 3,300 with 1,207 of those residents aged 15 or under. The residents of Lincoln Heights not only struggle with a high poverty rate of just over 46%, and violent crime (crime data forthcoming on Tuesday).

The residents, particularly the children of Lincoln Heights have been forced to endure the trauma of gun fire in their neighborhood for decades. The facility is utilized for training approximately 300 dates per year leading to increased levels of psychological stress and the exacerbation of the feeling that there is no escape from the violence plaguing the community.

Despite being a geographically small area, there is persistent violence in Lincoln Heights. Raw incident counts of UCR violent crime are provided in the table below. Unfortunately, there has been consistent and increasing violent crime in Lincoln Heights for the last three consecutive years. Overall, Lincoln Heights accounted for anywhere from 25-75% of homicides, 8-10% of rapes, 8-16% of assaults, and 4-13% of robberies across all HCSO jurisdictions between 2017 and 2019.

Type of Crime	2017	2018	2019
Homicide	1	3	3
Rape	5	5	6
Assault	14	14	27
Robbery	7	6	1

In addition, Lincoln Heights crime levels can be compared to state and national levels using crime rates per 100,000 residents, which accounts for small population size of Lincoln Heights. The Table below shows crime rates for Lincoln Heights, the State of Ohio, and the U.S., using the UCR Crime Data Explorer Tool's most recent year available (2018).

	Lincoln Heights	Lincoln Heights	Ohio	United States
Type of Crime	2018	2019	2018	2018
Homicide	30.30	90.91	4.8	5.0
Rape	181.82	181.82	45.3	42.6
Assault	424.24	818.18	151.2	246.8
Robbery	212.12	30.30	78.6	86.2

The above table presents a clear trend; Lincoln Heights’ crime rates per 100,000 residents are drastically higher than those of the State of Ohio and United States as a whole. Compared to Ohio and the United States in 2018, Lincoln Heights’ 2018 and 2019 homicide rates were roughly 6-18 times larger, rape rates were roughly 4 times larger, assault rates were roughly 2-5 times larger, and robbery rates were roughly twice as large in 2018. It is anticipated that these numbers will remain constant or continue to grow in the future due to the lack of cooperation with law enforcement.

Since May 2019, roughly year-to-date, there have been 42 gun-related incidents with 23 cases of shots fired. Two of the shots fired incidents involved an incident in which 71 casings were recovered during the investigation and the other incident recovered 54 from just one street block in Lincoln Heights.

The continual presence of gunfire in the community, due to the location of the gun range, exacerbates this situation by continually exposing residents and children to the sounds and experience of crime and threats to safety and livelihood. The gunfire also has a physical impact on the residents as exhibited through the noise study results in the following table:

Sound level measurements in Lincoln Heights using the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Sound Level Meter Application. Completed by Brian R. Earl, PhD

Location	Date & time of measurement	Max decibel level (dBA)	Peak Noise level (LCPeak dB)	Interpretation
Near playground of Marianna Terrace Apartments	9/9/2020 11:30–11:45 am	86.5 dBA	103.5 dBC	Disturbance to vocal communication and risk of hearing loss with prolonged exposure (e.g., 8 hours)
Near north entrance gate to CPD Gun Range	3/10/2021 9:10-9:25 am	81.1 dBA	102.5 dBC	Disturbance to vocal communication and risk of hearing loss with prolonged exposure (e.g., 8 hours)
Hunter’s Court near Marianna Terrace Apartments	3/10/2021 9:50-10:05 am	72.7 dBA	92.9 dBC	Minimal disturbance to communication and risk of hearing loss with prolonged exposure (e.g., 8 hours)

Community Input

The following information summarizes community input on the current location of the gun range and excerpts from a recent media article on this matter

<https://www.citybeat.com/news/blog/21145206/will-a-cincinnati-police-firing-range-in-lincoln-heights-finally-move>

Stakeholder Voices (from article):

- **Residents**

Alicia Franklin's 4-year-old son is terrified to go outside most days during the daylight hours due to the almost constant sound of gunfire and occasional shouting coming from a location about 500 yards from their Lincoln Heights home. Her oldest son, who is 10, struggles to concentrate on the schoolwork he is doing remotely during the pandemic due to the noise.

"For more than 30 years, I've heard these gunshots," Franklin says. "My kids have to deal with this all day, every day. They can't just go out and play when they want to. I'm a stay-at-home parent who works from home. I hear these gunshots while I'm on calls all day. This is unfair to the community. It's time for this gun range to go."

- **Center for Closing the Health Gap concerns:**

Center for Closing the Health Gap President and CEO Renee Mahaffey Harris is concerned about that potential.

"Lincoln Heights' gun range has not been assessed in 80 years," she says. "Lead poisons the soil, poisons the water and emits particles into the air."

- **Lincoln Height's Elementary School is nearby – Princeton Schools Superintendent is quoted:**

Princeton City Schools Superintendent Tom Burton has similar concerns. Some of the district's students live near the range.

"Each one of our students deserves an environment that is conducive for learning," he says. "Our students are hearing gunfire throughout the day. That's not OK. We know the trauma that causes."

- **Dr. Brian Earl's comments were also included in the article:**

University of Cincinnati Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders Professor Brian Earl calls the noise from the range so close to residential areas "too much." Earl says he took a sound meter on a tour of the area around the range and found noise regularly exceeded 85 decibels — the level at which sound becomes harmful to human ears.

"I was able to be an ear witness when I got a tour of the neighborhood," he says. "We have an acoustic reflex when our ears tell us it's too much. My ears were doing that."

Earl said he was concerned about the psychological effects of the shooting sounds on young people around the range. Many residents and elected officials have raised concerns about the trauma of hearing gunfire so regularly, saying it likely causes what experts call adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs. Those experiences contribute to behavioral and learning challenges throughout a person's lifetime. "If the children can be accustomed to silence, to family laughter, we've done something," Earl says.

Summary

An opportunity exists for Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati to partner, through a shared service framework, to relocate the current gun range to the County Sheriff's firing range located in a rural area of Hamilton County. The County and City have had initial discussions on the concept which have focused on relocating the City's range as well as potentially consolidating, the K-9, sniper, driving and SWAT training facilities of each organization. Not only would this represent an incredible shared services effort for an urban County and its largest municipality, but it would address the long-standing social justice issues associated with the location of the current firing range. In addition, it would allow the Village of Evendale to use the current property for a higher and better use – potentially bringing jobs and investment to the local community.

From a population perspective, it should be noted that the proposed co-located gun range currently has a population of xxx within a half-mile radius. The current gun range in Evendale has a population of

The County and City have worked cooperatively to develop a preliminary cost estimate for the relocation and redevelopment of a consolidated gun range. Initial costs are anticipated to be approximately \$18 million and the County has already proposed allocating \$5 million in ARPA funding to the project as a means of improving the health of the childhood environment and addressing this long-standing problem on a disproportionately affected population.