



## **CITY OF KIRKLAND**

### **Police Department**

**11750 NE 118<sup>th</sup> Street, Kirkland, WA 98034-7114 425.587.3400**

**[www.kirklandwa.gov](http://www.kirklandwa.gov)**

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** Cherie Harris, Chief of Police  
Mike St. Jean, Deputy Chief of Police

**Date:** April 7, 2022

**Subject:** Proposed Community Gun Buy-Back Program

### **Recommendation:**

It is recommended that City Council discuss approving a "gun buy-back" program for the residents of the City of Kirkland, utilizing firearms safety funds as allocated in Police Proposition 1. A draft resolution (R-5531) authorizing the Department to engage the community in a buy-back program is included for Council consideration. If the Council concurs with the proposal, the Council could approve the resolution at the April 19<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. Alternatively, if the Council needs additional information prior to a decision, the Council can provide staff with direction on next steps.

### **Background:**

On November 6, 2018, Proposition 1 was approved by the voters of Kirkland. Funding was included in this ballot measure for both suicide prevention, firearms safety and safe storage training, including subsidized trigger locks and gun safes.

Since that time, the Department's Community Services Unit and Firearms Training Unit have developed an engaging and interactive presentation on the topic of firearms safety with the goal of hosting in-person training classes for the community. Unfortunately, due to the current pandemic, in-person training sessions have been postponed. As City buildings begin to re-open, the in-person training sessions will be offered to the public. In the meantime, a series of firearm safety videos were recorded and posted on the City of Kirkland website and shared on social media platforms. A third video was distributed in the first quarter of 2022 and free gun locks continue to be offered to the community.

In a continuing effort to reduce gun violence within the community, and to reduce the likelihood of accidental injuries and suicides by firearms, the Department is proposing to engage the community in a gun buy-back program. This program would encourage Kirkland community members to voluntarily relinquish ownership of unwanted firearms in exchange for pre-paid gift cards.

The Department is proposing to fund this program utilizing Proposition 1 revenue specifically allocated for firearm safety related programs. There is currently over \$86,000 in this budget for firearm safety related programs. The Department requests the City Council authorize the City Manager to spend the necessary funds out of this budget to support a gun buy-back program. The Department is proposing to provide participants relinquishing ownership of their firearms with pre-paid gift cards, purchased by the City of Kirkland in the following amounts:

- Obvious non-working firearms and pellet guns: \$25.00
- Bolt-action rifles and shotguns: \$100.00
- Handguns: \$200.00
- Rifles (AR or AK style rifles): \$250.00

Program events will be scheduled multiple times on weekends during 2022 at the Kirkland Justice Center. A robust advertising campaign will be undertaken by the Department in collaboration with the City Manager's Office. All the details have not been finalized, but a preliminary plan to take possession of relinquished firearms may include:

- Residents will queue in the driveway in front of the Kirkland Justice Center (KJC) in order to alleviate any back-ups onto the surrounding roadways.
- Residents will be instructed to bring their unwanted, and unloaded, firearms to the KJC in the trunk of their car or otherwise out of arms reach.
- Residents will be required to provide proof of residency within the city by way of a utility bill, identification card or other means showing a City of Kirkland address.
  - The Department believes the program will be the most successful if participants can remain anonymous. Staff will not record participants identifying information.
- An officer will contact each resident in front of the KJC, verify a Kirkland address and remove their firearms. Based on the type and number of firearms the participant is relinquishing, they will be given a pre-paid gift card in return.
  - The Finance Department will provide oversight and training to members of the Department to ensure adequate internal controls are in place for the pre-paid gift cards to include an independent accounting of the funds.
- All relinquished firearms will be tagged and entered into the Department's evidence system by Staff.
- At the conclusion of the event, the Officers and Evidence Technicians will check each firearm's serial number in a national database to ensure none are reported as stolen or are linked to a crime.
  - If possible, firearms that are reported stolen will be returned to their rightful owners.
  - Detectives will work with outside agencies as necessary to transfer custody of any firearms that are linked to crimes.
- The firearms that are not stolen or linked to other crimes will be melted as part of the Department's annual firearm destruction process.
- At the conclusion of this year's program, any leftover funds will be reconciled and returned to the proper budget line item.

**Justification:**

Research conducted by Staff into the effectiveness of a gun buy-back program found that the effectiveness varies widely. However, the Department recommends implementing the program as any firearm relinquished by a resident is one less gun that may be involved in a tragic accident, or a suicide, or to be stolen and later used in a crime of violence. Additional information considered by Staff includes:

- Nationally, almost 60% of gun deaths are suicides, according to 2017 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Firearm suicide attempts result in death 85% of the time, compared with suicide by drug overdose attempts resulting in death 3% of the time, according to a 2016 report from *Harvard Public Health*, the magazine of the T.H. Chan School of Public Health.
- According to the 2021 King County Firearm Violence Report, the total number of “shots fired” incidents across King County in 2021 was 1,405 of which 88 people died of gunshot wounds.
  - Compared to the previous four-year average (2017-2020), the number of shootings in 2021 in King County was up approximately 54%, and the number of overall shooting victims was up 70%.
- While Kirkland only had three shooting incidents in 2021, that involved only property damage, all are still considered serious incidents involving firearms and fortunately no one was hurt.
- For the years 2020 and 2021, Kirkland experienced six firearms related suicides, with one additional firearm related suicide attempt that was not successful.
- In 2020, the Department realized a noticeable increase in Firearms Transfers (new gun sales) by Kirkland community members:

Year	Firearms Transfers (new gun sales)
2018	1194
2019	1553
2020	3115
2021	2499

At the March 1, 2022, City Council meeting the Department included a 2021 Kirkland gun crime analysis as part of the Crime Dashboard report. The details of the analysis are listed below including the number of firearms related incidents, including stolen firearms, armed robberies and weapon violations that occurred within the city.

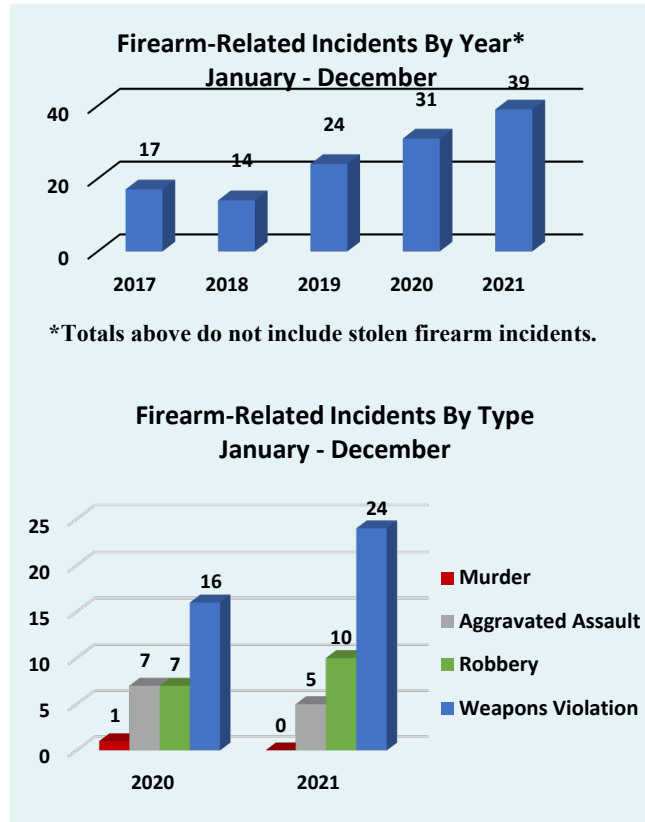
**2021 Kirkland Gun Crime Analysis:**

The following is an analysis of firearm-related incidents that have occurred within the City of Kirkland from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021. A firearm-related incident includes any crime in which a firearm was used, brandished, or implied. Data from 2017-2020 is included for comparison. Analysis does not include incidents involving a pellet or BB gun, and does not include

suicides, confirmed self-inflicted shootings, or officer involved shootings. Analysis was also conducted on incidents in which a firearm was stolen during the commission of a crime. The purpose of this report is to inform, shape discussions, and aid in the development of strategies to reduce gun violence throughout the City of Kirkland and neighboring jurisdictions.

**Key Findings:**

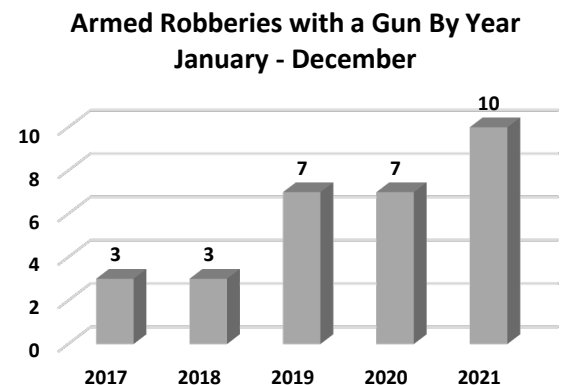
- Since 2019, there has been an overall upward trend in the number of firearm-related incidents occurring within the City of Kirkland.
- 39 firearm-related incidents have occurred from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, resulting in an 81% increase over the four-year average in 2017-2020.
- 44% of the total number of firearm-related incidents resulted in an arrest (17 out of 39 incidents).
- When broken down by incident type, Murders and Aggravated Assaults both decreased compared to 2020, while Armed Robberies with a gun and Weapons Violation incidents both increased.
- 29% of the Weapons Violation incidents were the result of road rage or a parking dispute (seven out of 24 incidents).
- 79% of incidents where a firearm was stolen, the firearms were unsecured inside a residence or vehicle at the time of theft (19 out of 24 incidents).



**Robberies with a Gun**

The total number of Armed Robberies with a gun have increased by 43% when compared to the average of the previous two years (from 7 to 10 incidents).

- There were eight commercial robberies where the suspect either displayed or implied a firearm.
- One commercial robbery was part of a regional series involving the same suspect. He was eventually arrested and charged.
- One robbery involved a dispute over a puppy in which a gun was pointed at the victim.
- One robbery involved a suspect with a gun who attempted to steal the victim’s vehicle and ran away with his keys.

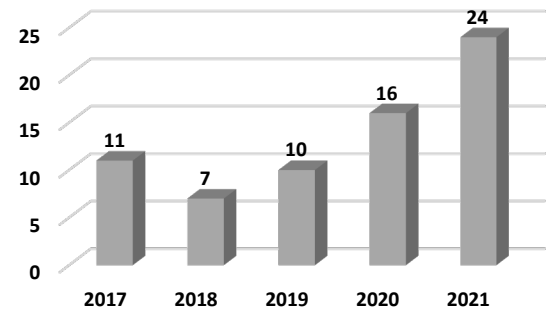


## **Weapons Violations**

The total number of firearm-related Weapons Violation incidents have increased by 50% when compared to 2020 (from 16 to 24 incidents). Compared to 2019, Weapons Violation incidents have increased 140% (from 10 to 24 incidents).

- 12 out of the 24 incidents resulted in an arrest (50%). Five of these arrests involved a convicted felon in possession of a firearm.
- Seven of the 24 incidents were the result of road rage or a parking dispute (29%).
- Four of the 24 incidents involved a suspect brandishing a gun during an altercation outside a bar (Juanita Pub - 1, Whiskey Mile - 1, Lime Bar - 1, Central Tavern - 1).

**Weapons Violation Incidents By Year  
January - December**

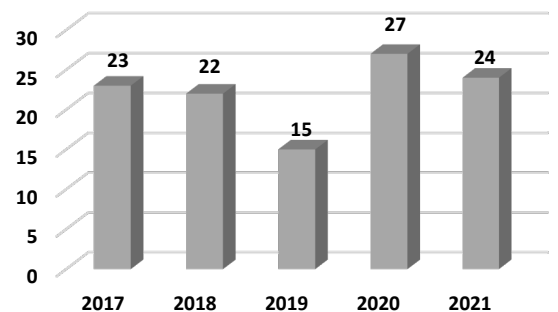


## **Stolen Firearms**

In 2021, there were 24 incidents where a firearm was stolen in the City of Kirkland. This is a 10% increase compared to the average of the past four years. When compared to 2020, there has been an 11% decrease in incidents where a firearm was stolen (from 27 to 24 incidents).

- 50% of incidents where a firearm was stolen were Motor Vehicle Prowls (12 out of 24 incidents). Most of the vehicles were unlocked or unknown if locked (no signs of forced entry) at the time the firearm was stolen (9 out of 12, or 75%).
- Firearms were stolen from inside a residence in eight incidents. In six of these incidents, the firearms were unsecured, resulting in ten firearms out on the street.
- A total of 31 firearms were stolen during the reporting period (handgun - 27, rifle - 2, shotgun - 1, assault style - 1).
- Of the 31 firearms stolen, nine have been recovered as of the date of this report. Only one was recovered within the City of Kirkland.

**Stolen Firearm Incidents By Year  
January - December**



## **Next Steps:**

The City Council decides whether to approve Resolution R-5531 authorizing a "gun buy-back program" utilizing Proposition 1 funding or whether additional information and/or public outreach is necessary.