



By Chris Burrell | May 30, 2023

Shootings at Revere Beach prompt search for answers beyond just more police

Police stepped up their presence at Revere Beach in the wake of fights and two shootings there Sunday evening. But some open space advocates say there may be better ways — beyond law enforcement — to curb violence in these urban retreats.

As summer beach season begins, these groups suggest that promoting the area's urban beaches as gathering spaces for all generations could have a calming effect.

“One of the ways we're looking at this is that multigenerational idea that community investment and presence on the beaches on a regular basis can set the tone that this is a place for everybody,” said Chris Mancini, executive director of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. “And so when you come here, leave the fighting, leave the interest in violence somewhere else, because you are sharing this space with everybody.”

Save the Harbor/Save the Bay runs the Metropolitan Beaches Commission for the state, helping oversee Revere and 14 other urban beaches from Nantasket in Hull up to Lynn and Nahant.

Initial police reports suggested that Sunday's violence in Revere involved teenagers. Two of the people injured were teens, and police arrested one young person for alleged illegal possession of a firearm.

Neenah Estrella-Luna, a sociologist in East Boston — who co-authored an Amherst College study last year about inequities in access to open space — said more multigenerational beaches is a good idea.

She urged the beach commission and the State Department of Conservation and Recreation to go a step further, hiring older staff skilled in youth social work.

“If they had people who've experienced detention and experienced incarceration, who are doing more anti-violence, anti-gang social healing work, they're going to have those calming presences on the beaches and in the park spaces that would help mitigate some of this [violence],” Estrella-Luna told GBH News.

A report on beach accessibility released earlier this month by the Metropolitan Beaches Commission highlighted public safety but also concerns that heavy-handed police response could “unfairly target groups of young people who are simply trying to beat the heat and have some fun.”



A woman walks on Revere Beach in Revere, MA with her granddaughter her golden retriever on October 18, 2021. Boston Globe/Boston Globe via Getty Images Boston Globe

Revere resident Jacqueline Monterroso, who participated in some of the commission's hearings last year, told GBH News she appreciates seeing the police because she's grown increasingly concerned about safety at the beach.

“I think we really need to address this,” said Monterroso. “If this is how it's starting and it's not even summer yet and schools aren't out yet, I'm really fearing what's to come in the next months.”

In a [series of stories last year](#), the GBH News Center for Investigative Reporting documented the uneven access to the state's shoreline, partly because state law allows private property ownership of beachfront down to the low-tide line. Many coastal communities also impose parking and residency restrictions that dramatically limit beach access for non-residents. Such restrictions historically kept people of color from getting [access to the shore](#) and continue to do so, GBH's report found.

That leaves public beaches and those nearest public transportation, like Revere, as the only beach option for many city residents.

Mancini and Monterroso both said they'd like to see improved transportation systems that could bring people to other beaches in state that are otherwise off-limits due to municipal restrictions. Such efforts could take some of the pressure off the urban beaches where parking lots often hit capacity early in the day.

“These are in-demand places,” Mancini said. “They're being loved to their very limits.”

Link to article: <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local/2023-05-29/shootings-at-revere-beach-prompt-search-for-answers-beyond-just-more-police>