

# Denver Task Force To Reimagine Policing and Public Safety

**Overview:** The Denver Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety is a community-based initiative that was formed in response to the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 and the protests that followed. In Denver, as across the country, demonstrators gathered in solidarity to demand structural transformation of policing. This Task Force is the result of conversations from recent town halls with community members, faith leaders, service providers, elected officials and Denver Department of Public Safety to move toward action and healing.

Denver is one of the many cities across the nation that are engaging in similarly vital work, but the Denver Task Force is unique in its leadership: it is completely community led. This initiative is a collaboration of over forty community organizations, covering a wide range of people groups and areas of expertise. The Task Force also consists of every member of Denver City Council; representatives from Denver Police, Denver Sheriff, and the Department of Public Safety; as well as representation from the Denver District Attorney's office.

**Goal:** The primary goal of the Task Force is to identify the best ideas and practices both from Denver and around the nation, and develop a comprehensive community-based approach to policing and public safety. Together, we will create policies and budget proposals for the city that invest in the community in order to increase public safety and community well-being. We hope to accomplish the following:

1. **Empower the Community** – The Task Force is engaging with and empowering the people of Denver to exercise their due right and responsibility to police and increase safety in their community. We are creating, redefining, and reimagining “public safety” in form and function.
2. **Support Policing Priorities** – The Task Force acknowledges that the current model of public safety places an undue burden on police officers, who are increasingly expected to act in the capacity of social service providers. Law enforcement officers are subverted from their sworn purpose of preventing crime in defense of the common good when they are forced to spend so much of their time as social workers, school monitors, addiction counselors, and caretakers. The Task Force is dedicated to identifying evidence-based approaches to reduce this burden, thus freeing police officers to focus on preventing crime.
3. **Empower Denver Taxpayers** – The Task Force seeks to identify and implement evidence-based programs, policies, and budgets that return the responsibility of public safety to the community, rather than expecting the government, or a centralized police force, or taxpayers to bear the entire burden. We are empowering Denver residents in determining the most responsible and efficacious use of taxpayer dollars in the pursuit of public safety.

4. **Allocate Resources Strategically and Responsibly** – The Task Force recognizes the immense value in proactive crime prevention strategies that address the root causes of criminality. We find that improving access to high-quality education, economic opportunity, and addiction treatment are all more effective than incarceration in preventing crime and reducing recidivism among offenders. We want to allocate resources where they will have the greatest impact in reducing crime, increasing safety, and promoting community well-being.

**Method:** The methods to achieve this goal will be through convening a community-based task force, consulting with subject matter experts, identifying research-based solutions, creating comprehensive public policies, generating and disseminating a report of findings and recommendations, and advocating for public policy changes.

## **Phases To Progress**

### **Phase 1 – Community Organizing (June – September 2020)**

1. Assemble project staff to engage the community around policing and public safety.
2. Organize and convene community town hall meetings to discuss how public safety should look in Denver..
3. Develop and disseminate community surveys to
4. Compile feedback from surveys and town hall meetings. Identify, recruit, and conduct orientation of members of the task force.
5. Share community feedback with the Task Force and city officials.
6. Consult subject matter experts to advise the Task Force on best practices in Denver and around the nation.

### **Phase 2 – Convening the Task Force (September – October 2020):**

1. Organize Task Force
2. Develop norms, best practices, and processes
3. Joint meetings with experts to discuss best practices in Denver and around the nation
4. Establish common framework for work of Task Force
5. Create subgroups

### **Phase 3 – Developing A Roadmap (October – December 2020):**

1. Identify problem subgroup is seeking to address
2. Identify resources needed to address those problems
3. Complete roadmap to policy creation for each subgroup
4. Collaborate with other subgroups

5. Identify data and other research materials necessary for best policy, budget, and community program creation
6. Engage in conversations with content experts
7. Develop initial outline for policy recommendations

#### **Phase 4 – Creating Community-based Solutions (January – March 2021):**

1. Brainstorm and create possible policy and budget proposals that address the problems identified in Phase 2
2. Brainstorm and create possible community-based program that help improve public safety
3. Begin strategic collaboration between Task Force and the Public Safety Transformation and Policy Director's office.
4. Develop community program proposals that address public safety
5. Collaborate of larger "Assembling Team" to:
  - a. Ensure work of separate subgroups form comprehensive and intersectional outcomes through proposed policies, budgets, and programs.
  - b. Ensure comprehensive stakeholder buy-in to the proposals outlined above.
  - c. Ensure financial and logistical feasibility of the proposals outlined above.
6. Meet with City Council, other city officials, and Public Safety Transformation and Policy Director's office regarding implementing policy proposals.
7. Deliver the first round of policy and budget proposals to key stakeholders and agencies for implementation.
8. Compile and distribute task force reports with policy, budget, and community programs proposals.
9. Convene community meetings to gather additional input from the community.
10. Reevaluate project next steps.

#### **Phase 5 – Strategic Implementation (April – June 2021)**

1. Coordinate partnership between Task Force and Executive Director of Safety, Public Safety Transformation and Policy Director's office, and other city officials to strategically implement community proposals:
  - a. Develop timelines for implementation.
  - b. Coordinate with City Councils for proposals that need Council vote.
  - c. Identify proposals that would be ballot initiatives and create strategies to get them on the ballot and approved.
2. Convene community meetings to gather input from the community.
3. Reevaluate project next steps.

## **Phase 6 – Creating Sustainability**

1. Create a leadership transition plan.
2. Reorganize Task Force to ensure continued community engagement.
3. Create models for ongoing community engagement, community collaboration, and dialogue between city officials and community organizations.
4. Develop a community-led think tank that continues to create programs and proposals to improve public safety.

## Statements of Support

I have been impressed with the work of the Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety. Having these conversations with the community and city representatives is critically important as we strive to improve our criminal justice system and earn the trust of the community. I look forward to some positive suggestions from this diverse and inclusive group.

~District Attorney Beth McCann, Denver Colorado

As a participant in the Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety, I have appreciated the tremendous task undertaken by SWG UnBoxed to align the groups mission with purpose. As the current climate in our country has called for us to rethink how we in uniform perform our duties, you have done an outstanding job with bringing together people from all walks of life to do so. As we move forward with this momentous work, we are fortunate to have you steering us in the right direction.

~Sheriff Elias Diggins, Denver Sheriff Department

I am grateful to be representing my part of the community on the Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety. While parts of our community are even more siloed than usual by the pandemic, SWG has done something so meaningful for our community by bringing together key stakeholder groups that are not connected to candidly discuss such an important issue.

~Joseph Dubroff, Director of External Affairs: Jewish Colorado

It has been the Harm Reduction Action Center's pleasure to work with Seasoned With Grace as they initiate and continue to pave the way to reforming public safety and policing in our community. The intentionality, respect, and dedication SWG brings to hosting a diverse and inclusive space for reform is inspiring and motivating to all involved.

~Kat Humphries, Programs Director: Harm Reduction Action Center

SWG UnBoxed has worked tirelessly and thoughtfully to bring together the community to address the vital issues of policing and public safety and reimagine what's possible. They model community-based leadership by being open to feedback, tweaking and changing as necessary while staying focused on the larger purpose.

~Beth Yohe, Executive Director: The Conflict Center

Project VOYCE appreciates the intentionality with which Dr. Davis and the SWG UnBoxed team are approaching the work of the Reimagining Policing and Public Safety Task Force. Their efforts to collaborate across the city and county with numerous organizations, coalitions, and individuals representing a diversity of perspectives is commendable. Most importantly, Dr. Davis and the other task force leaders are willing to respond to feedback and adjust accordingly. This is essential to the project having a lasting impact on our communities.

~Vanessa Roberts, Executive Director: Project VOYCE