

DENVER TASK FORCE TO REIMAGINE POLICING & PUBLIC SAFETY

Progress Report: June 2020 – January 2021

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Reporting Overview

The following Progress Report details the activities of the Denver Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety during the period from June 2020 through January 2021. The Task Force was convened for the purpose of providing to the Denver city government and the Department of Public Safety a series of salutary recommendations and proposals that are informed, actionable, and sustainable. The Task Force is committed to providing well-researched solutions and national evidence-based best practices that empower communities, minimize unnecessary police contact with vulnerable populations, and heal the wounds of injustice and systemic oppression. The first round of these recommendations is on track to be delivered in March but does not constitute a comprehensive whole of recommendations that the Task Force intends to provide. As of the end of January, the Task Force has compiled a preliminary list of 127 recommendations and is presently engaged in refining this list. This report does not include any of those recommendations.

This report is divided into three sections detailing: 1) the activities and progress of the Task Force as a whole; 2) the foci, discussions, and avenues of inquiry within seven substantive subgroups; and 3) the findings from the Task Force Community Questionnaire administered in June and July 2020. Pertinent documents are supplied in the following Appendix.

Demographics of Task Force

The representation of the Task Force centers the voices of those who have been most impacted by systemic injustices resulting from criminal justice policies and practices that fueled hyper-criminalization and mass incarceration of communities of color for generations. Specifically, the Task Force is an inclusive coalition comprised of 43 community organizations and government agencies.

Members represent a diversity of communities, including African American, Latino, Asian, indigenous American, Jewish, Caucasian, LGBTQ+, individuals with disabilities, and those with lived experiences with the criminal legal system. Members come from a variety of organizational backgrounds, including civil rights organizations, community activists, direct service providers, faith-based organizations, policy advocacy organizations, and youth serving organizations. Additionally, the Task Force has had consistent representation from Denver City Council, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and Colorado State Public Defender.

General Note

The Task Force operated entirely without financial support until November 2020. We thank Rose Community Foundation and Caring for Denver Foundation for their understanding, patience, and support as we navigate the challenges of this process.

Internal Challenges

The Task Force has more than 40 members in regular attendance; large group virtually presented challenges to remaining organized and focused, particularly within this tight timeline and with a limited budget.

A grant from Rose Community Foundation and Caring for Denver Foundation provided funding to cover administrative costs for six months, but the Task Force is fundamentally a volunteer-driven endeavor; accordingly, we have respected and operated within the boundaries of this generously donated time.

The Task Force enjoys a diversity of thought among its constituent members, particularly with regards to the institutional viability of policing, that, while both welcomed and necessary, nonetheless requires careful facilitation to ensure conversations remain respectful and productive.

External Challenges

The exceptional circumstances engendered by the COVID pandemic have necessitated the Task Force adapt in its approach to fostering the meaningful community engagement that is such a vital part of this process. Whereas in other times the Task Force would seek comprehensive community feedback through a series of town hall meetings in different neighborhoods across the city, the ongoing pandemic precludes such a traditional approach. Instead, the Task Force has sought to sustain engagement by hosting virtual town halls, recording and live streaming meetings, taking comments and questions over social media, and developing a website to collect additional feedback.

Maintaining the cooperation of the leadership of Department of Public Safety (DOS) has proved an additional challenge to the celerity of progress. Though the Task Force was launched with ostensible support from the Department of Public Safety, this did not manifest. Our requested funding was twice promised and twice withdrawn.

Most recently this occurred as part of a larger directive discontinuing all official Department of Public Safety participation in the Task Force; this directive was explicitly issued in response to the January 7, 2021 Task Force meeting from which three official DOS representatives were asked to abstain in the interest of allowing other Task Force members to more openly discuss their concerns of retaliation from the Denver Police Department and/or the Department of Public Safety. Whether these concerns were unfounded was not addressed in Executive Director Robinson's email formally withdrawing the support, cooperation, and participation of his department.

It should be noted that the individuals representing DPD and DOS were all exemplary in their engagement and dedication to our shared goal. We regret the loss of their voices and thank them for their contributions. Executive Director Robinson has indicated that he remains interested and receptive to our forthcoming recommendations. We remain optimistic about the future.

1. Task Force Activities and Progress

Background

The Task Force formed in response to the George Floyd protests as a community-led initiative to develop a comprehensive and sustainable community-based approach to policing and public safety. The process of convening the Task Force began in a June 4 meeting between Mayor Hancock and representatives from the Greater Metro Denver Ministerial Alliance and was launched with the full support and cooperation of Mayor Hancock, Denver City Council¹, and the Denver Department of Public Safety.

Objective

- (1) Empower communities with resources that ensure public safety and well-being.
- (2) Minimize community member’s interaction with law enforcement and the criminal court system.
- (3) Minimize the impact that police and courts have on individuals, families, and communities.
- (4) Strengthen oversight and ensure BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and those most impacted are part of law enforcement training, policy creation, and oversight.
- (5) Heal the wounds of injustice and systemic oppression.

The Task Force has entered Phase IV of the project timeline² and is on track to deliver an initial round of recommendations and proposals to Denver City Council during the Spring 2021 budget cycle.

Summary of Activities

During this reporting period, the Task Force completed Phases I, II, and III of the project timeline.

Phase I: Community Organizing (June – September 2020)

Planning and recruitment activities took place between June and September 2020. Feedback on community concerns and priorities for the Task Force was collected on June 30 and July 21, 2020 at two virtual town hall meetings hosted in collaboration with the Greater Metro Denver Ministerial Alliance, Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, Together Colorado, Conflict Center, and Project VOYCE. Additional feedback was collected using the *Task Force Questionnaire (TFQ)*, a survey that was implemented throughout Denver via multiple media platforms. More than 300

¹ Please see Appendix

² Included in the Appendix

responses were collected for analysis between June 30 and July 31, 2020. A full copy of the report can be found in section 3 of this document. Prospective members were recruited³ based on recommendations of the community; representatives from more than 30 civil society organizations and local government departments consented to serve on the Task Force⁴. Phase I concluded with a series of member orientation sessions during which the group drafted and codified a shared set of best practices, norms, and expectations for participating in Task Force meetings.

Phase II: Convening the Task Force (September – October 2020)

The first Task Force meeting convened September 3, 2020. All meetings have been held virtually and, in the interest of transparency, are streamed live and recorded⁵ on Facebook. During Phase II, our meetings were primarily focused on hearing from subject matter experts and creating a shared foundation of knowledge to ensure that all members were adequately informed on the history of policing practices in Denver and innovations in community policing practices more broadly. To that end, over seven weeks in September and October we heard from subject matter experts and representatives from the Center for Policing Equity (CPE)⁶, Vera Institute of Justice (Vera)⁷, the Denver Police Department (DPD), Denver Alliance for Street Health (DASHR)⁸, Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (CCJRC)⁹, and the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver).

In September, we hosted presentations and discussions with Dr. Tracie Keese (CPE) on the history of policing in America; Aaron Stagoff-Belfort and other representatives from Vera (“Long-Term Alternatives to Policing” and “A Different Approach to Public Safety: Best Practices from Across the Nation”); Tyrone Campbell (Technician, DPD) on the history of policing in Denver; and representatives from DASHR on transforming public safety by supporting and creating alternatives to policing and incarceration. In October, we hosted Christie Donner (Executive Director, CCJRC), for an overview of community reinvestment models; local community organizers regarding the proposed ballot initiative to establish a Peacekeeping Department within DOS and a discussion on considering public safety models specific to Denver; and CU Denver Criminologist Dr. Brendan Beck for additional perspective on policing in Denver (“Trends in Denver’s Police Spending, Crime Rates, and Arrest Practices 1990-2002”).

³ See Appendix for invitation letter

⁴ See Appendix for a list of participating organizations

⁵ https://www.facebook.com/pg/SWGUnBoxed/videos/?ref=page_internal

⁶ <https://policingequity.org/>

⁷ <https://www.vera.org/>

⁸ <https://dashrco.org/>

⁹ <https://www.ccjrc.org/>

Phase III: Developing a Roadmap (October – December 2020)

As we moved into Phase III, we created seven subgroups within the Task Force, each with a different substantive area of focus:

1. Internal DPD Policy Reform
2. Hiring, Oversight, and Accountability
3. Alternatives to Emergency Response through Community Based Models
4. Community Healing
5. Alternative Approaches to Public Health (e.g. mental health, housing, substance use)
6. Funding and Community Reinvestment
7. Judicial System Transformations

These seven foci were determined using findings from the *TFQ* survey to identify community priorities in Denver public safety. A description of the transformational focus in each group is detailed in the next section. Subgroup meetings began in October and, based on guidance from the Center for Policing Equity, each group created a “Reimagination Roadmap¹⁰” to set goals, identify priorities, clarify member roles, and prepare action items for the work ahead. An overview of each group’s activities and progress during this time is provided in the next section.

In December, the full Task Force hosted meetings with city officials from the Department of Public Safety (DOS), the Office of the Independent Monitor (OIM), and Denver City Council. Our meetings with Executive Director Robinson¹¹ and members of Denver City Council¹² took the form of structured Q&A sessions. Copies of the questions were provided to our guests in advance and can also be found in the Appendix. We hosted Nick Mitchell (Monitor, OIM), for a presentation and discussion on the findings and recommendations detailed in the report¹³ resulting from the OIM investigation into the police response to the George Floyd protests. During this month the Task Force also released a statement on trauma that defined, identified, and condemned instances of institutional revictimization.

Phase IV: Creating Community-based Solutions (January – March 2021)

In January, we reconvened and moved into Phase IV to begin drafting specific recommendations and solutions. We met with representatives from Dignity and Power Now¹⁴ and JusticeLA¹⁵ to discuss insights for Denver from their work in Los Angeles, principally their strategy in the

¹⁰ <https://policingequity.org/what-we-do/research/toolkit-for-equitable-public-safety>

¹¹ https://www.facebook.com/484369978763935/videos/293149912082339/?_so__=channel_tab&__rv__=all_videos_card

¹² https://www.facebook.com/484369978763935/videos/250166149772952/?_so__=channel_tab&__rv__=all_videos_card

¹³ https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/374/documents/2020GFPRreport_OIM.pdf

¹⁴ <http://dignityandpowernow.org/>

¹⁵ <https://justicelanow.org/>

recent passage of Measure J¹⁶ and the 114 recommendations for improving public health and safety detailed in the Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI)¹⁷ working group final report.¹⁸

Next Steps

The Task Force has compiled a preliminary list of 127 recommendations that are currently being screened for advancement using the following seven filtering questions:

1. Will this recommendation improve the quality of life for Denver residents?
2. Does this recommendation empower the community?
3. Does this recommendation resource the community to prevent citizens from interacting with law enforcement and the criminal court system?
4. Does this recommendation repurpose the role and function of law enforcement based on the needs of the community?
5. Does this recommendation strengthen community oversight of law enforcement?
6. Does this recommendation create healing from the harms of the current and past forms of policing?
7. Is it winnable?

The process of compiling, screening, and consolidating potential items for recommendation will continue through February. In March, we will suspend full-member meetings to enable the leadership team and a subsection of members with policy experience to focus on the intensive writing process. Progress will be shared with other members weekly leading up to March 25, 2021, the anticipated date of ratification for the completed report.

¹⁶ <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/measure-j-2021-spending/>

¹⁷ <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ati/>

¹⁸ <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/ati-documents-and-resources/>

2. Subgroup Activities and Progress

The following pages contain for each subgroup a summary, in outline format, of major discussion points and avenues of inquiry that were explored during Phase III meetings. As our pace has quickened appreciably since entering Phase IV in January, these summaries are intended as a retrospective and are not expected to reflect the most current progress of each subgroup.

Internal DPD Policy Reform

Focus: The subgroup on Internal DPD Policy Reform will focus on (but is not limited to) topics including education of police officers, policies around use of force and use of military grade weapons on civilians, and police reflecting the communities that they serve.

- I. What are the most immediately harmful policies/procedures/practices within the DPD?
 - a. Use of force - No-knock warrants, firearms, less-lethal munitions, lax standards
 - i. Can these procedures be changed without charter amendment?
 - b. Disciplinary procedures
 - c. No evaluation of effectiveness of training
 - d. Culture – need for change
 - e. Arrests where criminal enforcement unneeded or counterproductive
- II. How does DPD train its officers?
 - a. Who trains new police officers?
 - i. Does this training foster an insular, us v. them mentality (collective identity)?
 - b. How are officers audited/evaluated for operations fidelity/compliance?
 - i. What are the consequences for failing an audit or evaluation?
 - c. How often do officers undergo refresher training that is not remedial or disciplinary in nature?
 - i. Is this treated seriously or as a formality?
 - d. How are officers trained on updates in SOP?
 - e. How can we incentivize police to train and engage in de-escalation tactics?
 - f. How to ensure training is effective?
- III. What are the barriers and challenges to implementing positive change within DPD?
 - a. Which challenges are emotional/psychological in nature (i.e. related to mindset)?
 - i. What is the role of trust (or lack thereof) between police and community?
 1. How do we avoid exacerbating the extant us v. them dynamic?
 - ii. How do LEOs feel about reforms and recommendations from outside?
 1. What specifically makes them feel attacked?
 - a. How can we prevent or mitigate a defensive response?
 - iii. What issues derive from expectations of toxic/hyper masculinity?

- b. Which challenges are institutional in nature?
 - i. Closing ranks/protecting their own
 - ii. What is the internal political landscape of DPD? (e.g. relevant power struggles, old interdepartmental grudges, alliances/rivalries)
 - iii. Powers and influence of the police union?
- c. Presence/influence of white supremacy?
- d. What does mental health support look like in DPD?
 - i. What is the prevailing perspective/attitude/atmosphere regarding LEO mental health issues (e.g. ptsd, burnout) and help-seeking?
 - ii. What institutional support options are currently available?
 - iii. What institutional requirements exist regarding referral or mandated mental health support/treatment?

Hiring, Oversight, and Accountability

Focus: The subgroup on Hiring, Oversight, and Accountability will focus on (but is not limited to) topics including investigations of police misconduct and oversight, public policy, and diverse and inclusive citizen oversight models.

- I. What organizations are in charge of independent oversight and accountability?
 - a. Who serves on the Civil Service Commission, the Citizens Oversight Board and the Office of the Independent Monitor?
 - i. How are appointments made?
 - 1. How can the appointment process be changed to ensure:
 - a. True independence/autonomy from the DPD and the city government?
 - b. Diversity reflective of constituent demographics?
 - c. Adequate representation for those living in areas most negatively impacted by police?
 - b. What are the specific powers and responsibilities of each office?
 - i. Are CSC/COB/OIM empowered to ensure DPD **cooperates** with investigations?
 - ii. Are CSC/COB/OIM empowered to enforce DPD **compliance** with verdicts and/or recommendations resulting from investigations?
 - iii. Are CSC/COB/OIM empowered to independently advance **discipline** for officers they find guilty of misconduct? (Implicitly, in cases where DPD disagrees?)
 - iv. What is the process for changing any of the above?
- II. What is the current demographic composition of DPD?
 - a. Is there a disparity between the demographics of DPD and Denver at large?
 - i. At a precinct level, is there a disparity between demographics of officers and community? (Does the police force reflect the community it serves?)
- III. What are the current hiring standards and minimum qualifications for new DPD officers?

- a. How can these be changed to combat implicit bias (racism, sexism) and improve equity/representation?
- b. Are there hiring targets?
- c. Review POST certifications
- IV. What is the current DPD disciplinary/termination process?
 - a. How can the discipline matrix be improved?
 - b. What is the role/ability of the police union in advancing or stalling these procedures?
 - i. Is this level of influence appropriately scaled?
- V. What does mental health support within DPD currently look like?
 - a. What is missing?
 - b. How can MH resources be improved and expanded?

Alternatives to Emergency Response through Community Based Models

Focus: The subgroup on Alternatives to Emergency Response through Community Based Models will focus on (but is not limited to) topics including response teams, crime prevention, innovative public safety interventions, and alternative approaches to community violence.

- I. In what situations would people be better served by an alternative, non-police response to Denver 911 emergency calls?
 - i. What are the most common call dispositions/resolutions for different types of Denver 911 emergency calls?
 - 1. Which of these are most disproportionate to the initial offense?
 - b. What programs/practices currently exist to provide an alternative to police, both nationally and in Denver? [STAR, HOT, co-responders]
 - i. Where are these programs (STAR, HOT, co-responders) housed and how is their funding determined?
 - 1. How can they be effectively expanded geographically and temporally?
 - ii. How can we support the STAR pilot program?
 - 1. What does the program need to maintain its current level of service?
 - 2. What would it cost to expand the program (both geographically and temporally)?
 - 3. Feasibility of adding specialized teams for different calls?
 - 4. Can we expand the range of STAR-eligible calls?
 - iii. Can we apply the STAR model to other types of crises?
- II. In what other situations would reducing or eliminating unnecessary contact with police create safer, more salutary call resolutions and long-term solutions?
 - a. When and how often do police self-initiate contact (e.g., while on patrol, traffic stops)?

- i. What are the most common outcomes of self-initiated dispatches for incidents involving the unhoused (e.g., trespassing, nuisance)?
 1. How much are these costing the city?
 2. How can these populations be better served by an alternative response?
- ii. What are the most common outcomes of self-initiated dispatches for incidents involving traffic stops?
 1. Can such citations be automated to increase safety for officers and civilians?

Community Healing

Focus: The subgroup on Community Healing will focus on (but is not limited to) topics including healing those most impacted by police, restorative/transformative justice for those who have experienced systematic harm, and the roles of police in our community.

- I. What does ensuring systematic access to safety, harm reduction, and healing look like?
 - a. How can we create/implement new systems that ensure access to safety, harm reduction, and healing?
 - i. What structural, cultural, and individual changes are needed to make this possible?
- II. How can we heal in a way that makes it impossible for more harm to happen?
 - a. What is the source/nature of this harm/trauma?
 - i. What in the current Department of Safety is causing harm?
 - ii. What in the current Department of Safety is working to promote healing?
 - b. How is “safety” defined? [What does safety look like/defined for people who have been harmed?]
 - c. How can we build trust between community and police?
 - i. Can LEO be trained to effectively defuse/deescalate?
 1. If so, how do we distinguish those who have completed training?
 - ii. How can we encourage/enforce accountability and taking responsibility/relating to harm that has already happened?
 - d. What are existing examples of practices that center healing?
 - i. Are there options less intense than restorative justice?
 - ii. What exists specifically to address trauma caused by law enforcement?
 - e. What settings are most appropriate for healing events?
 - i. Can (should?) police officers take part in healing?

Alternative Approaches to Public Health (Mental Health, Housing, and Substance Use)

Focus: The subgroup on Alternative Approaches to Public Health (Mental Health, Housing, and Substance Use) will focus on (but is not limited to) topics including appropriate housing options, alternatives for mental health crises, substance abuse treatment and prevention, and harm reduction.

- I. Are police and the criminal legal system the best response to public health issues like mental health crises, homelessness, and substance abuse?
 - a. How did deinstitutionalization lead to the criminalization of poverty (homelessness), mental illness, and substance abuse?
 - b. What are the impacts of misdemeanor arrests related to mental health crises, homelessness, and substance abuse?
 - i. Who is disproportionately affected by these?
 1. How do we minimize these negative impacts for marginalized and vulnerable populations?
 - ii. What is the cost of criminalizing homelessness compared to providing housing?
- II. How do we stop the “revolving door” of contact with the criminal legal system for issues related to mental health crises, homelessness, and substance abuse?
 - a. What are the existing alternatives to arrest in Denver?
 - i. Specialized services?
 1. Culturally specific (congruent/attuned)?
 - a. Availability of bilingual care?
 2. Trauma informed care?
 3. Wraparound services?
 - ii. How can these be improved and expanded?
 - b. Proactive or “upstream” evidence-based approaches?
 - c. How do we address reactive policing?
 - i. What are the implications of routine stops?

Funding and Community Reinvestment

Focus: The subgroup on Funding and Community Reinvestment will focus on (but is not limited to) topics including community reinvestment models, funding sources and allocation, a budget for safety, and policing budgets.

- I. What does public safety look like?
 - a. Identify areas where city spend (and policy) is causing harm.
 - i. Identify areas in which city is overspending on punitive activities.
 - b. Determine how much this harm is costing financially and otherwise.
 - c. Determine where city needs to invest/spend for healing and safety.

- II. What is the best way to invest city revenues into the people who live here, in such a way that creates equity among all Denver residents, rather than in to the DPD budget?
 - a. What are the current funding priorities in the city budget?
 - b. How can we meet the needs of the community?
 - i. Which communities are most negatively impacted and overpoliced?
 - 1. What do people in these communities want to see? What are their priorities?
 - ii. What kinds of programs/initiatives are NOT eligible for funding from the Caring for Denver Foundation?
 - iii. What response-oriented programs/initiatives are promising but underfunded?
 - iv. What community programs are currently successful?
 - 1. Is it possible to expand them?
 - a. What will it take to support and expand these programs?
 - v. Are there preventative investments we can make?
 - c. Can we identify areas for divestiture (i.e., where can the budget be cut)?
 - i. Within these areas, what specific line items may be vulnerable?
 - ii. How can we use the budget/policy to hold police accountable?
 - 1. What is police indemnification costing Denver taxpayers?
- III. What are the main obstacles to successfully divesting to reinvest?
 - a. How do we sell this to Denver city officials (e.g., mayor, city council) and the community?
 - i. What is the cost- benefit analysis of moving that money into the community?

Judicial System Transformations

Focus: The subgroup on Judicial System Transformations will focus on (but is not limited to) topics including reforming Pre-Trial processes, alternatives to monetary bond, alternatives to incarceration, decarceration models, and restorative/transformational justice for criminal offenses.

- I. How can we reduce police contact and justice system involvement?
 - a. What are the policy and statutory areas in which police intervention can be avoided altogether?
 - b. When police intervention cannot be avoided, what can be replaced with a public health-oriented response?
 - i. [Nuisance offenses, misdemeanors, warrants, failure-to-appear charges]
- II. How can we re-allocate resources within the court system to align with less punitive, more restorative goals?
 - a. [Diversion, deferred prosecution, probation waivers, drug courts, offense-specific evaluations, victim advocacy]
 - b. How can we best support existing examples of these initiatives?
 - c. Who are the key court actors behind/driving/involved with these initiatives?

- i. What additional resources do they need to succeed?
 - 1. How can we provide or improve access to these resources?

3. Report: Findings from the Task Force Questionnaire

Overview

This report presents the findings of the *Task Force Questionnaire (TFQ) to Reimagine Policing in Denver*, a survey implemented on behalf of the community-led task force to reimagine policing and public safety in the city of Denver. The goal of the *TFQ* survey was to identify community concerns and priorities to aid in refining the task force agenda. Overall, respondents identified systemic racial discrimination, the criminalization and overpolicing of other marginalized groups (e.g., homeless, mentally ill), police use of force, and increased militarization as the most critical issues in the current Denver policing model. Respondent suggestions for improving the public safety model included: responding to homelessness, mental health crises, and addiction with specialized services rather than police; prioritizing collaboration with the community; demilitarizing and restricting firearms to smaller, specialized police response teams rather than general issue; and improving police training, particularly in de-escalation and non-violent strategies. Data in this report were collected from a total of 334 community members between June 30, 2020 and July 31, 2020.

The Survey

The *TFQ* is an exploratory survey containing several open-ended questions that allow community members to express a wide range of opinions on current practices, ideas for the future, and suggestions for collaborative organizations. The full survey is reproduced on page 14. This report summarizes the responses to the following two items:

1. List current policing practices that are problematic to you
2. What should Denver’s public safety model look like?

Responses were screened for duplicates, analyzed for recurrent themes, and then coded using appropriate keywords. Responses ranged in length from a single word to nearly 500, with most responses containing more than one answer to each question. Responses were not “double counted” if they repeated the same keyword or if they contained more than one keyword for any given category. Keywords were searched inclusively using the grammatical root (e.g., “militar” for military, militarized, militarization) and alternate forms (e.g., gun, firearm) when applicable. Groups of keywords were as comprehensive as possible, but the use of open-ended questions prevented a more rigorous analytic approach and it is likely that some responses went uncounted in each category. Consequently, the figures below are both approximate and almost certainly underestimated.

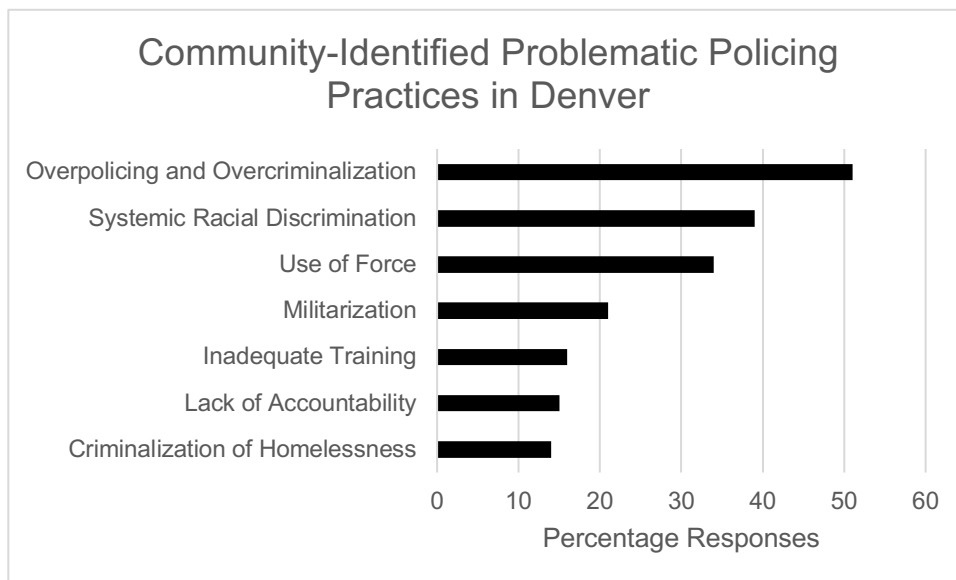
The estimates on the following pages are accompanied by particularly illustrative respondent quotes; these are italicized but are otherwise reproduced verbatim. Many responses were

emotionally charged and some of these, though passionate and strongly suggestive of intent, defied accurate coding categorization without unaccountably imputing motivation. These responses are not included in the counts below and are instead presented as part of a longer list of impact quotes at the end of this report.

Problematic Policing Practices

Respondents identified a wide range of concerns with Denver’s current policing model. The chart below presents the most commonly identified issues. The top category is deliberately broad to include the 51% of responses identifying some form of **overpolicing** and/or **overcriminalization** of marginalized or vulnerable groups.

“Disproportionate policing of black and brown people of color. Disproportionate time spent by police on less serious, misdemeanor crimes.”



Approximately 39% of responses identified **systemic racial discrimination**, or the institutionalized processes that effectively criminalize specific demographic groups, as a critical problem in Denver. These responses were classified by references to at least one of the following: African American, Black, brown, color/people of color, race/racial/racism/racist, POC, BIPOC.

“I do not know the terms but violence against people of color needs to stop.”

“I have African-American friends who have been pulled over for being Black. This seems to be a huge problem.”

“Stopping young Black men for “suspicious” behavior is problematic”

“Racial profiling--I would have been Elijah McClain and i would be dead if my skin were black. We need to understand racial bias and get training, etc.”

Approximately 34% of respondents cited **police use of force** as a pressing concern, particularly in the context of peaceful protests (12%). Responses in this category include references to police brutality and escalation of nonviolent situations.

“Too many guns! Too much violence. They prepare for violent interactions and that’s what they’re trained to do and what they give us. Racial profiling must stop.”

“Racial profiling and excessive force on certain detainees is the biggest problem”

“Dial back application of force by a thousand. If police are so afraid so often that they have to shoot this much, they aren’t good candidates. No bad eggs. Police are not executioners—even guilty people should not be murdered.”

“Do not infringe on rights to public protest. Stop using tear gas and pepper spray on protesters.”

The increasing **militarization** of law enforcement - including the use of militarized weaponry - was another concern for 21% of respondents.

“I am uncomfortable with the military gear (armored trucks, SWAT gear, etc.) that was deployed during June demonstrations. Doesn't this encourage military-style responses to situations in which perhaps other responses would be better?”

“The militarization is abhorrent. The prevailing attitude in training and otherwise that the police force is at war with citizens”.

“I personally have not had issues with my local police. That said, I don’t want to see police in riot gear at peaceful marches or protest. I don’t want to see military grade equipment at peaceful marches and protest.”

“Police should not be outfitted like soldiers—they are civilians too.”

Approximately 16% reported concerns related to **inadequate police training**, particularly with regard to de-escalation (10%) and racial bias (5%).

“They should have years of training like in Norway, not a mere 1000 hours— that’s 6 months at 40 hours a week. During training, eliminate the abusive, alienating practice of convincing cops everyone is against them and protecting each other is more important than community well being.”

“Denver police should be required to go through racial bias training in addition to building skills in problem-solving, conflict mediation, and de-escalation tactics.”

“I don’t have a problem with the police, I have a problem with administration and the lack of support and training they give their officers.”

Approximately 15% of responses identified issues of **accountability, immunity or transparency** in law enforcement.

“Insufficient culture of fellow officer accountability for legal and ethical behavior.”

“Denver police are lacking accountability and transparency. To build trust, there must be consequences and the public must have information. Accountability systems should be directed by the communities that police departments are supposed to protect and serve.”

“Police should be held accountable by outside agencies, police should not police themselves. Police should not be punished or “outed” for whistle blowing on fellow problematic officers. Police should act on genuine threats to the community, not arbitrary application of outdated laws or assumptions of guilt.”

Respondents also reported concerns regarding the **criminalization of homelessness** (14%) and **addiction** (5%).

“Over policing and under serving our homeless population.”

“violent sweeping of the homeless camps (where else are they supposed to go?)”

“Why are the police not working hand and hand with the homeless. They should be talking to them everyday in a constructive manner!”

“Police outfitted with guns, etc responding to mental health, addiction and homelessness crises.”

Respondents repeatedly cited the growing burden on police to take on additional roles (e.g., social worker, mediation) in their activities. An exact count of these respondents was precluded by the sheer variety in language and phrasing around this particular issue. However, at least 24% of respondents believe that police involvement is inappropriate for wellness checks or crises involving mental health, homelessness, or substance abuse.

“Stop asking police to be health care, mental health, family counselors, etc. they aren’t trained for it and it shows.”

“Police Officers are asked to do too much and wear too many hats. They cannot be adequately trained in 100 different areas.”

“Use of police where social workers and trained counselors would be of better use.”

Approximately 5% of respondents reported **no issues** with the current policing model.

“None! They are doing a fine job when allowed to enforce the law.”

“What Should Denver’s Public Safety Model Look Like?”

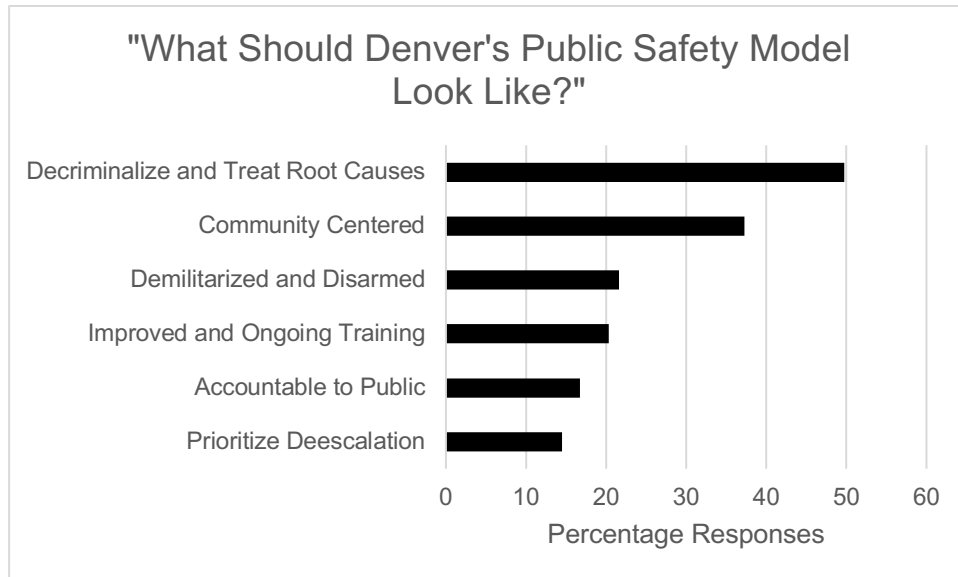
Many responses to this question were conceptual:

“Actual public safety”

“Empathy over brutality”

The more concrete suggestions organized into overlapping themes, presented in the chart below, that are succinctly summarized by this response:

“Smaller police force with fewer weapons and more training on racial bias and de-escalation. Specialized groups that respond to mental health crises, overdoses and homeless issues.”



Almost half of responses (49.7%) described a public safety model that **minimizes unnecessary police involvement and escalation for cases involving homelessness, mental health crises, addiction, and similar nonviolent disruptions**. Instead, respondents appear to support a model that treats the root causes of crime and other social ills through enhanced community resources, preventative programs, and specialized first responders.

“Smaller police force with fewer weapons and more training on racial bias and de-escalation. Specialized groups that respond to mental health crises, overdoses and homeless issues.”

“Address the root cause of crimes at a community level. Invest in community programs and services that respond to crises other than the police (mental health care professionals, nurses, family counselors, child advocates, drug rehab professionals, etc. invest in economic development, education, and health care in desperate communities.”

“A system that creates advocates for our "problematic" citizens. Better mental health services and drug rehab that is free to help people. A real way to help our displaced and homeless citizens.”

The need for specialized response reached consensus among even those respondents who passionately defended the current policing model in the previous question (“driving all the good cops out of state”).

“Take the social work out of policing and let them do their jobs.”

“Have the police handle serious crimes and support the deployment of mental health workers and other community resources for many less-serious crimes.”

Approximately 40% of responses referenced the need for **community involvement** and collaboration in any public safety model.

“Community officer social workers to handle most calls without weapons and aggression. Other community minded liaisons to take down info and make reposts of non-violent crimes to work through the system toward an actual end of betterment of individuals and community.”

“Community based, nonviolent approaches founded in de-escalation, mutual aid, and providing resources”

“Communities should be policed by people who live in the community.”

Approximately 21% of responses advocated for a **disarmed, demilitarized** police force.

“A paradigm shift must occur where police no longer engage in a “ us vs them ” scenario. Warriors need not apply. Only Protectors needed.”

“We should look into truly non-lethal means of protection for our police force, and the use of lethal force should only be available when ultimately determined necessary.”

“Traffic enforcement should not be conducted by armed officers.”

Approximately 20% of responses supported **increased and ongoing training**, particularly in **de-escalation strategies** (15%).

“Safety on a level of equality which involves a huge amount of training and self reflection. Officers need to have an adequate education and money should be spend for ongoing training and supervision and not for weapons!”

“The police should be the last resort and be experts on de-escalation.”

“Training will be an important and required function for all police members. New hires will be thoroughly vetted, tested on conscious and unconscious biases and other measures and will be retested and trained on these throughout their careers.”

Approximately 17% supported a police force with improved **accountability** and **transparency**.

“Elected citizen oversight committee with power to remove police officers from active duty as well as assign special prosecutors in cases needing additional oversight.”

“There should be data tracking for police activities and interactions with the public which is open and available to all. The process to remove officers that do not meet these high standards will be reasonable and timely, so that the public is assured of the force's accountability.”

“Limit the power of police unions that protect the blue wall, no matter the indiscretion or how egregious the act”

“full transparency about police actions that is easily accessible to the community (shootings, detainments, arrests, stops, searches, everything they do on the job)... make sure cops who have unjustly harmed community members are immediately investigated, charged, fired, and cannot reapply at other police departments, and ensure police unions do not have the power to cover up crimes committed by fellow officers or hold more power than community members.”

Impact Quotes from July 2020 TFQ

The following quotes are reproduced verbatim from responses to the *TFQ*. Quotation marks have been added to distinguish responses, but no other formatting changes have been made.

Problematic Policing Practices

“Their fear kills us”

“Everything”

“I think we’re at a point where we need to reevaluate everything.”

“Every practice that involves the Police interacting with the public except in the case of a mass shooter.”

“Systemic racial profiling, targeting people of color, violence against protestors, militarized police force, feeling that they are not accountable for their actions”

“No accountability, minimal oversight. The ever-present systemic racism. Militarization.”

“Undue focus on BIPOC people and the poor outcomes from those encounters. Police harassment and bullying. Militarization (equipment, recruitment, training and response). Using police for mental health crisis response. High rate of police who are themselves in crisis (high rates of divorce, substance abuse and suicide) trying to respond to crises among the citizenry. Training for self-protection rather than public safety (eg. shooting center mass). Everybody carrying guns, clubs and handcuffs as their primary tools. Police unions and qualified immunity. Training for teamwork over public protection. Lying and fabricating evidence to cover mistakes. Officers in the schools, particularly with guns.”

Systemic racial discrimination (any POC) (39%)

“I do not know the terms but violence against people of color needs to stop.”

“systemic racism (under the proper definition of the racism existing in policies, not necessarily within the officers), excessive force and escalation esp with regard to racism, all officers carrying firearms, officers responding to calls where no policing is necessary, such as homeless situations that are not violent or involve illegal drugs, etc.”

“overpolicing Black and Brown neighborhoods and people”

“Disproportionate policing of black and brown people of color. Disproportionate time spent by police on less serious, misdemeanor crimes.”

“I have African-American friends who have been pulled over for being Black. This seems to be a huge problem.”

“Stopping young Black men for "suspicious" behavior is problematic”

“Racial profiling--I would have been Elijah McClain and i would be dead if my skin were black. We need to understand racial bias and get training, etc.”

Criminalization of homelessness (14%)

“Harassing homeless citizens and stealing their property. Seeing this happen in the middle of winter is even more insidious.”

“Over policing and under serving our homeless population.”

“violent sweeping of the homeless camps (where else are they supposed to go?)”

“Why are the police not working hand and hand with the homeless. They should be talking to them everyday in a constructive manner!”

Criminalization of addiction (5%)

“Police outfitted with guns, etc responding to mental health, addiction and homelessness crises.”

“Racial biases, excessive force, excessive response to protests, and criminalization of homelessness, addiction and mental illness.”

Inappropriate use of force/brutality (34%)

“Too many guns! Too much violence. They prepare for violent interactions and that’s what they’re trained to do and what they give us. Racial profiling must stop.”

“Racial profiling and excessive force on certain detainees is the biggest problem”

“Dial back application of force by a thousand. If police are so afraid so often that they have to shoot this much, they aren’t good candidates. No bad eggs. Police are not executioners—even guilty people should not be murdered.”

At peaceful protests (12%)

“Disproportionately targeting BIPOC. Aggressive responses to things that don’t require aggressive behavior, i.e. tear gassing and shooting rubber bullets at peaceful protestors.”

“That police show up with riot gear to peaceful protests, and have used force after being called names, like insecure high school bullies with power.”

“Every single thing about protest enforcement. They have too much gear, they use it too enthusiastically, they show up in numbers much too large and escalate tension on purpose, they intentionally escalate by lining up in random places knowing protestors will confront them, they have no restraint when deploying chemical weapons, they are eager to pose with and swing batons. Nothing about protest enforcement is even remotely acceptable.”

“Do not infringe on rights to public protest. Stop using tear gas and pepper spray on protestors.”

Increased militarization and use of militarized weaponry (21%)

“Training practices that reinforce violent behavior, and the ideology of police as an insurgent army. Using any terms such as “war on drugs” or “war on terror” or any such neo-con vocabulary is inherently problematic.”

“Police should not be outfitted like soldiers—they are civilians too.”

“I am uncomfortable with the military gear (armored trucks, SWAT gear, etc.) that was deployed during June demonstrations. Doesn't this encourage military-style responses to situations in which perhaps other responses would be better?”

“The militarization is abhorrent. The prevailing attitude in training and otherwise that the police force is at war with citizens.”

“I personally have not had issues with my local police. That said, I don't want to see police in riot gear at peaceful marches or protest. I don't want to see military grade equipment at peaceful marches and protest.”

Inadequate training (any) (16%) - including racial bias (5%)

“They should have years of training like in Norway, not a mere 1000 hours—that's 6 months at 40 hours a week. During training, eliminate the abusive, alienating practice of convincing cops everyone is against them and protecting each other is more important than community well being.”

“Denver police should be required to go through racial bias training in addition to building skills in problem-solving, conflict mediation, and de-escalation tactics.”

“I don't have a problem with the police, I have a problem with administration and the lack of support and training they give their officers.”

“police training is way too short (should be a two-year program with A LOT of implicit bias, history of race in America, and empathy training)”

“street officers lacking training in domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking; lack of training around strangulation in gender violence”

De-escalation (10%)

“Lack of training (especially rigorous training around de-escalation and seeing people as non-threatening)”

“lack of training to de-escalate social problems”

“lack of adequate and relevant training; training to use a lethal weapon against people but not to first de-escalate”

Accountability and transparency (15%)

“The violence and aggression with little to no accountability. The entitled attitude of some to do whatever they want because they have a gun and a badge.”

“Insufficient culture of fellow officer accountability for legal and ethical behavior.”

“No repercussions for public acts of harassment towards BIPOC in our communities”

“Denver police are lacking accountability and transparency. To build trust, there must be consequences and the public must have information. Accountability systems should be directed by the communities that police departments are supposed to protect and serve.”

“Police should be held accountable by outside agencies, police should not police themselves. Police should not be punished or “outed” for whistle blowing on fellow problematic officers. Police should act on genuine threats to the community, not arbitrary application of outdated laws or assumptions of guilt.”

Too Many Roles

“Stop asking police to be health care, mental health, family counselors, etc. they aren’t trained for it and it shows.”

“Police Officers are asked to do too much and wear too many hats. They cannot be adequately trained in 100 different areas.”

“The fact that the police are expected to solve every problem in society”

“Police militarization. Expecting armed officers to solve problems that they are not tooled for or prepared to handle. Lack of accountability.”

“Use of police where social workers and trained counselors would be of better use.”

“Lack of training, police are given too broad a list of responsibilities and expectations, views of police as “authority/“militant” rather than “public servant/helpers,” focus on drug crimes.”

“Police responding to mental health/drug issues are not adequately trained nor have the support/equipment to do so. This situations often result in poor outcomes.”

What should the public safety model look like?

“Actual public safety”

“Smart and communicative”

“Empathy over brutality”

“It should be fair, honest, and accountable to us the people that they serve.”

“Smaller police force with fewer weapons and more training on racial bias and de-escalation. Specialized groups that respond to mental health crises, overdoses and homeless issues.”

“Community Resources specific to communities “

“Have the police handle serious crimes and support the deployment of mental health workers and other community resources for many less-serious crimes.”

“Better coordination among police, mental health professionals, drug addiction counselors, and social services to provide the appropriate response to various situations such as dealing with mentally ill people.”

“A system that creates advocates for our "problematic" citizens. Better mental health services and drug rehab that is free to help people. A real way to help our displaced and homeless citizens. EDUCATION!! A SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE.”

“Address the root cause of crimes at a community level. Invest in community programs and services that respond to crises other than the police (mental health care professionals, nurses, family counselors, child advocates, drug rehab professionals, etc. invest in economic development, education, and health care in desperate communities.”

“Mental health supports and assistance for the homeless should not be done by police. Traffic enforcement should not be conducted by armed officers. Community involvement is key and poor and minority neighborhoods should be treated with the same respect and cooperation that white neighborhoods are.”

“Community based, nonviolent approaches founded in de-escalation, mutual aid, and providing resources”

“Community effort, not just one entity. The police should be the last resort and be experts on de-escalation.”

“Safety on a level of equality which involves a huge amount of training and self reflection. Officers need to have an adequate education and money should be spend for ongoing training and supervision and not for weapons!”

“Elected citizen oversight committee with power to remove police officers from active duty as well as assign special prosecutors in cases needing additional oversight.”

“Communities should be policed by people who live in the community. If you are not a Denver resident, you should not be a Denver cop. Also racial demographics should match those or the county. Currently the police force is too white to adequately police the diverse community of Denver.”

“Community officer social workers to handle most calls without weapons and aggression. Other community minded liaisons to take down info and make reposts of non-violent crimes to work through the system toward an actual end of betterment of individuals and community.”

“Police should be used to help the public in a more narrow and clearly defined way to reduce crime and increase the safety of the entire public. Other community programs and groups should take care of non-threatening/violent issues concerning mental illness, illegal drug and alcohol abuse, some domestic disturbance and public disturbances so that the police force can focus more specifically on dangerous crime. The police culture will need a complete overhaul to one that the public can support and see as a valuable part of the community, not a threat. We should look into truly non-lethal means of protection for our police force, and the use of lethal force should only be available when ultimately determined necessary. There should be data tracking for police activities and interactions with the public which is open and available to all. The process to remove officers that do not meet these high standards will be reasonable and timely, so that the public is assured of the force's accountability. Training will be an important and required function for all police members. New hires will be thoroughly vetted, tested on conscious and unconscious biases and other measures and will be retested and trained on these throughout their careers.”

“full transparency about police actions that is easily accessible to the community (shootings, detentions, arrests, stops, searches, everything they do on the job), much more involvement of various social workers and other groups who are highly trained in de-escalation tactics, demilitarization (police can no longer have full riot gear, use of lethal weapons should be kept to an absolute minimum), ensure that police no longer have immunity, make it easy for families who have been wronged by police to seek justice (through payment, access to legal and supportive resources), make sure cops who have unjustly harmed community members are immediately investigated, charged, fired, and cannot reapply at other police departments, and ensure police unions do not have the power to cover up crimes committed by fellow officers or hold more power than community members.”

“Limit the tasks that police are asked to perform. Engage specialists in mental health, homelessness, and addiction when the situation does not create risk of harm to anyone. Send them on a 911 call before you send the police who use violence as a default response.

Respected, well known members of the community must be able to compel accountability and transparency with clearly defined power and authority through oversight boards. Rather than recommendations to be considered, the board must have a vote that can determine the outcome or direction of a case.

A paradigm shift must occur where police no longer engage in a “ us vs them” scenario. Warriors need not apply. Only Protectors needed.

Police have been told that their primary responsibility is to return to home safely. Their primary responsibility is to protect the public. With the return home safely mantra, police are told better to be tried by 12 rather than carried by 6. In effect, better to shoot first and leave the outcome to a jury. Philosophy of policing must be examined and challenged.

Limit the power of police unions that protect the blue wall, no matter the indiscretion or how egregious the act”

Task Force Questionnaire to Reimagine Policing in Denver

There is an effort to develop a community-led task force to reimagine policing and public safety in Denver. The goal at this time is to obtain input from the YOU, our community, about the work and composition of the task force. Please complete the questions below to share your ideas, your recommendations for who should be on the task force, your interest in joining this effort, and any other suggestions.

Thank you for your participation in this critical mission to transform Public Safety in Denver.

1. What is your email address*
2. List current policing practices that are problematic to you.
3. What should Denver’s public safety model look like?
4. What ideas or suggestions would you like the task force to consider?
5. What organizations or entities do you believe should have representation on the task force?
6. Are you interested in working with the community to reimagine policing in Denver?
7. What is your name*
8. What is your phone number*
9. Anything else you would like to add?

Tonight's hosts: The Denver Citizen's Oversight Board, the Greater Metro Denver Ministerial Alliance, the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, and the Conflict Center, THANK YOU for joining the conversation and for sharing your thoughts. Let's do this!

**Responses were redacted prior to analysis*

Appendix

Letter from Denver City Council to Department of Public Safety



City and County of Denver
CITY COUNCIL

Dear Executive Director Murphy Robinson, Chief Pazen, and Mayor Hancock,

Thank you to the Executive Director and the Chief for attending Council’s Safety Committee on June 10. It was the beginning of Council’s dialogue with the agencies and administration about recent events and about what is needed going forward to advance a more equitable approach to public safety for the City of Denver.

We write to communicate our support for a community-led path to the stakeholder conversations necessary to reexamine and re-center public safety. The City can and should resource, engage with, listen to, and support a community conversation about the future of safety and policing. But we think it is critical that the community have the opportunity to shape that conversation, from the make-up of the body, to the best host for the staff and infrastructure to support it, to the agenda items to be discussed. A non-city convener will be best suited to ensure community confidence that the full range of ideas the community may wish to offer will have a seat at the table and be considered, albeit with the full involvement of the Department of Safety and its agencies, including Police and Sheriff.

For this reason, the undersigned Councilmembers seek to support, and serve as partners to, a community-led Task Force. Several councilmembers have already been in dialogue with leaders of color who have been on the front lines of police accountability, use of force and alternative models of safety who are coming together to self-convene a first community meeting on June 30. These same organizations and leaders are prepared to self-convene a Task Force following this community meeting. These partners include those who lead the Citizen Oversight Board, served on the Use of Force Committee from 2017-present, were involved in advising on the STAR program, and others. These partners are also open to including new/missing voices, such as youth, education representatives or others. These leaders have also expressed a willingness to be a conduit for broader community input and comment beyond the organizational representatives who will formally serve on any body.

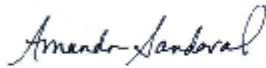
We write to ask for your support for a community-led approach by providing the convening entity with financial support for research, staffing and logistics to ensure the success of the discussion. The COB is prepared to serve as the anchor to host these staff and resources, but the co-conveners will need to evaluate all options. We also ask that you respond to requests for information, presentations, and sharing of data when requested, and engage in dialogue, attending and hearing the recommendations of the Task Force in good faith throughout its entire process.

As we’ve engaged in dialogue with the administration about Denver Council’s powers in recent months, representatives of the administration have made clear that lack of council power to initiate funding bills in the current moment is not a bar to us partnering to ensure that critical efforts receive the resources they need. So in that spirit of collaboration, we ask you to work with Council and leaders of the community effort to identify funding from within the Department of Safety to advance this necessary work, providing a community-

Letter from Council to Administration Pg. 2/2

led Task Force with the staffing and support to ensure it is inclusive, meaningful and produces tangible outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration,



Councilwoman Amanda Sandoval, District 1



Councilwoman Candi CdeBaca, District 9



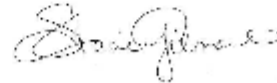
Councilman Kevin Flynn, District 2



Councilman Chris Hinds, District 10



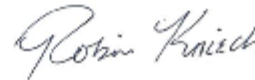
Councilwoman Jamie Torres, District 3



Councilwoman Stacie Gilmore, District 11



Councilwoman Kendra Black, District 4



Councilwoman Robin Kniech, At-Large



Councilwoman Amanda Sawyer, District 5



Councilman Paul Kashmann, District 6



Council President Jolon Clark, District 7

Project Timeline

Phases to Progress

Phase I – 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 II – 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 III – 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 IV – 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 V – 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 agencies 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 VI – 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.

Community Organizations Invitation Letter



Greater Metro Denver Ministerial Alliance

Contact: Dr. Robert Davis (318) 792-6954 cell robert@swg-unboxed.org

Dear Community Partner,

The Task Force To Reimagine Policing and Public Safety in Denver would like to invite you to serve as a member of the Task Force. Your organization was recommended by multiple community members during our community town hall meetings and through the online questionnaire. We are asking you to send a representative to the Task Force meetings so your voice and perspective can be heard.

Our goal with this 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.

While other cities across the nation are engaging in similar work, what makes this initiative unique is that it is completely community led. This initiative is a collaboration between Greater Metro Denver Ministerial Alliance, Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, The Conflict Center, Center for Trauma and Resiliency, Together Colorado, and Project VOYCE. We are also inviting many other community organizations to be a part of this historical endeavor.

The Task Force will convene the week of August 31st. Please reply with the name of the individual that will represent your organization by Friday, August 21, 2020.

If you have any additional questions please contact me at 318-792-6954. Thank you for your service to our community.

Dr. Robert Davis
Project Coordinator

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The Greater Metro Denver Ministerial Alliance (GMDMA) is a 79-year-old African American Civil/Human Rights Clergy organization committed to the fight for community and social justice.

List of Participating Organizations and Institutions

Participating Community Organizations

- ACLU Colorado
- Afro Liberation Front
- American Friends Service Committee
- Atlantis Community Inc.
- Center for Trauma Resilience
- CO Youth Congress
- Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
- Colorado Freedom Fund
- Colorado Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC)
- Colorado Latino Forum
- Colorado Public Health Association
- Democratic Socialist of America
- Denver Alliance for Street Health Response (DASHR)
- Denver Creative Industries Alliance
- Denver Homeless Out Loud
- Denver Indian Center
- Denver Justice Project
- Denver Street Partnership
- Four Winds
- Greater Metro Denver Ministerial Alliance
- Harm Reduction Action Center
- Heart and Hand Center
- Interfaith Alliance of Colorado
- JEWISHcolorado
- Mental Health Center of Denver
- NAACP
- Padres y Jovenes Unidos
- Police Union
- Presbyterian St. Luke’s Medical Center
- Project VOYCE
- Reclaiming the Block
- Rose Aodom Center
- Showing Up for Racial Justice
- Spirit of the Sun
- The Center on Colfax
- The Conflict Center
- Urban Peak
- Young Aspiring Americans for Social and Political Activism (YAASPA)

Participating Government Agencies

- Denver City Council
- District Attorney
- Municipal Public Defender
- Office of Independent Monitor
- Office of the Colorado State Public Defender
- Department of Public Health & Environment
- Denver Police Department*
- Denver Sheriff Department*
- Department of Safety*

Collaborating Partners

- Vera Institute of Justice
- Center for Policing Equity
- Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition
- Fraternal Order of Police
- Dignity and Power Now
- Justice LA

*Withdrew from Task Force on January 13, 2021

Questions for Director Robinson

December 3, 2020

1. What is the purpose of the Public Safety Transformation and Policy Director's office?
 - a. Who serves in this office? How was this office formed? Who was involved in the creation process?
 - b. What do you envision to be the relationship between this office and this Task Force?
2. The Police Union contract only requires mandatory subjects to be discussed such as pay raises and benefits. Permissive subjects, such as accountability, can only be discussed if the union agrees to it. Currently all of the board representatives are white men, and attempts to diversify have been a failure. Is it time for the police union to also reform and how should they do that?
3. What is your vision and/or commitment to reimagining safety for Denver.
 - a. Do you believe it's a few tweaks or reforms, a transformative overhaul, or something in between?
4. There have been killings by law enforcement officers that the community has not felt were justified even though they were cleared of wrongdoing. What do you intend to do to promote community healing even though these killings continue? What are the stats for officer involved shootings including a breakdown of demographics?
5. What is the status of STAR and its relationship to the Dept. of Safety?
6. How much does it cost the city/taxpayers to conduct a sweep of our unhoused neighbors? What is the City's plan to stop criminalizing homeless people?
7. What has been the effect of the new police accountability law and how will you fully implement it?
8. What do you believe is the role of the courts in transforming/reimagining public safety?
9. What kind of changes have been made in the jail in response to COVID-19? Once a vaccine is available will it be offered to inmates as well as staff?
10. What do you believe is the role of restorative justice in these reform efforts?
11. What are the average yearly number of separations from DPD and DSD?
 - a. How many annual internal audits are performed, both unqualified and qualified?
 - b. Does your department conduct employee surveys for DPD & DSD?
 - c. What are the average satisfaction ratings?
 - d. Are there any areas of concern from these surveys?
 - e. How is your office addressing these areas of concerns?

- f. What do you believe to be the greatest area of concern and/or opportunity for improvement? What is your office doing to implement these improvements?
- 12. Has your office or DPS discussed the potential to bring forth a bill that would fund emergency alternatives?
 - a. What would that look like if they did?
 - b. What type of community support would be needed for this to become a ballot initiative?
 - c. What type of opposition do they anticipate a measure like this would face?
- 13. During the first night of protest in Denver I observed DPD's actions as highly militarized. Why did DPD take such a strong militarized approach? What are your plans to ensure those types of tactics are not used in the future?
- 14. What is the mayor's initiative on diversity, inclusion, equity and race and who is involved in that?

Questions for City Council

December 17, 2020

1. (These first questions are directed to members of the Safety, Housing, Education, & Homelessness Committee) What changes would you like to see to policing and public safety in Denver? What do you see as the biggest obstacle to those changes?

Possible follow-up: Has the city considered incentivizing fewer arrests? Meaning rewarding officers for using other means to address the crime, or the mental health issues. Is there precedent for that from other cities?

2. (These next set of questions are directed to the Finance & Governance Committee) There are some questions in the community about the police pay raise. Why was the Mayor and the City Council unable to come to an agreement over a counteroffer during arbitration?
 - a. *[Davis follow-up question (paraphrased): The police union always seems to get its way, especially regarding budget and pay raises after a year of serious missteps. Why is the union so overpowered?]*
 - b. Many on this Task Force believe the most recent police union negotiations were contrary to fiscal responsibility, the expressed desire of the community, and unfair to all other public employees. What legislative changes would you support to make the police negotiation process transparent like many other public employee unions?
3. (The following questions are for a few of our councilmembers who represent communities with higher BIPOC populations) What have your constituents voiced regarding policing in their community? What solutions have you heard from your constituents that you believe this TF should consider?
4. (We would like to address these next set of questions to our At-large Council Members) The homeless sweeps have escalated with as many as 3 per week, which is contrary to CDC guidelines during a pandemic.
 - a. Do you support the sweeps (“clean-up”)?
 - b. Do you support Safe Outdoor Spaces aka sanctioned campsites in your district?

5. (We are going to open this next question to 2–3 councilmembers on the Safety, Housing, Education, & Homelessness Committee) Two weeks ago Director Robinson expressed confusion as to why this Task Force is spending so much of our time on homelessness issues (“Why are we pivoting to homelessness?”). At the time, we were discussing how the unhoused are subjected to regular sweeps (or “clean-ups”), which are carried out by Denver Police Department officers. Given that the DPD is housed within Director Robinson’s department, his response led us to wonder why the police are still in charge of these “clean-ups.” Besides the police, are there any other Denver organizations that have the capacity to engage our unhoused citizens, treat them with dignity, and connect them with alternative housing and other necessary services? Has the city ever discussed moving it into a community-based agency's hands before?

6. City Council recently approved a \$16 million contract that bundled body cameras with tasers. Soon after, the OIM released a report detailing systemic failures by DPD during the George Floyd protests, including finding that most officers did not use their body cameras, even while using their weapons and munitions.
 - a. Councilmember(s) _____ what legislative action are you willing to take to address DPD’s failures that endangered the public?
 - b. Councilmember(s) _____ what ordinances can we pass that ensures DPD is transparent with the public and the public is informed about new surveillance technology being used, and new weapons or military style weapons and equipment that has been acquired by DPD?
 - c. Councilmember(s) _____ some on this TF were very concerned when we learned that OIM does not have unfettered access to evidence, but has to rely on DPD providing it for them. What changes can be made to the OIM ordinance to guarantee greater access to documents by that office?

Task Force Statement On Trauma in Community Conversations

December 17, 2020

One of the goals of this Task Force is to create a safe place for community to come together and create a model for public safety that empowers community and promotes well-being. We also want to ensure that our work is restorative, healing, and trauma eliminating, not trauma producing.

This is important to understand in our conversations with city officials, especially police and public safety officials. First there is a significant power differential between police and public safety officials on this Task Force and community members. Community members do not have a well-organized union backing them as they attempt to create solutions. Community does not have a large, weaponized paramilitary force backing them. Police, District Attorney, Public Safety, and in many ways City Council have approximately 1,500 armed officers ready to assist and support them.

Furthermore there are people on this Task Force who have experienced police brutality, harassment, and injury. Like anyone who has experienced abuse, it is very difficult to enter these types of spaces with your victimizer or even those who resemble them. Listening to law enforcement say things like, “if you only knew how difficult our jobs are, you’d understand how these types of misconducts can happen from time to time” is like listening to a school superintendent say, “if you only knew how difficult it is being a teacher, you’d understand how abuse happens from time to time.”

In other words, individuals who have been traumatized by police are especially vulnerable to institutional re-victimization, such as when city officials dismiss or downplay the severity of those experiences. This happened to community members when I served on the Use of Force Advisory Committee, and several people reported it happened when Director Robinson presented to this Task Force two weeks ago. I asked some individuals to share their thoughts and here are a few examples that they shared with me:

- Robinson’s responses were often glib and dismissive; when asked how his department planned to promote community healing when officers kill unarmed civilians, Robinson spoke instead of how policing is the most difficult job in the world. He described waking up each morning with dread, wondering whether it would be necessary to use force that day, because “shooting someone messes up a police officer’s life forever.” He did acknowledge that the murder of George Floyd has highlighted the lack of trust between Denver citizens and law enforcement and that community healing will be “an entire program” within his department.

- Robinson also frequently laughed while responding, though it is unclear why the topic of police killing unarmed civilians - deaths he described as “unfortunate” – elicited such a response.
- Robinson was evasive and dismissive in response to concerns that the Denver police sweeps of homeless encampments are both inhumane and ineffective, particularly when housing is not among the list of services offered in the course of these sweeps. Robinson asked “Why are we pivoting to homelessness?,” effectively derailing the discussion until task force members explained to the Executive Director of the Department of Public Safety that homelessness is fundamentally an issue of public safety and thus relevant to the work of the Task Force.
- Near the end of the session, Robinson said he would be joining us more often. This felt more like a threat than a gesture of good faith.
- Finally, after 90 minutes of saying he heard us, Robinson said he believed that the Task Force would benefit from hearing from more police officers. As many of the Task Force participants have been directly victimized by police officers, this suggestion was tone-deaf and inappropriate.

As Project Coordinator, neither the facilitation team, nor I will allow members of this body to be traumatized or re-victimized at these meetings. I am asking that everyone associated with law enforcement, and city officials, please be mindful of your positions, and the impact your comments may have on people. Take into consideration that we approach this work from varying perspectives. Be even more conscientious that there are those in this room who have been abused by the very system you represent.

One of the reasons we live stream these meetings is because we want to show Denver, and all of America what it looks like when all of community comes together to create solutions to the centuries old problems we have faced with policing and public safety. We will show that these conversations can be conducted in a way that is thoughtful, respectful, and promotes healing. After all, we are the Denver Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety.