

# DEFUND

# THE POLICE *STL*

An illustrated guide to re-envisioning public safety.



**What it means.** Defunding the police is the process of reallocating funds and responsibilities from police departments to community-based systems of safety, prevention, and de-escalation. “Defund the police” is synonymous with various “divest and invest” campaigns.

### Why it is necessary.

**Police are a tool of social control.** Modern-day policing originated from slave patrols, colonial police forces, and efforts to quash labor movements. Police are, and always have been, used to protect private property and powerful interests over people.

**Bloated police budgets divert funds from investments that actually make us safe.** Police budgets are generally the largest line item in city budgets. As a result, insufficient funding is devoted to affordable housing, public education, medical and mental health care, and violence prevention programs—investments that actually promote public health and safety!

**If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.** All social problems are not police problems! An entity trained and authorized to use force should NOT be the primary approach to addressing mental health crises, homelessness, drug use, and other social challenges.

**Reform is not enough!** For decades, cities have attempted to reform police through increased accountability, diversity, and training. Because they did not question the role of the police, these reforms simply expanded police power, instead of stemming police abuse.

### Some fast facts.

- Most police officers only make one felony arrest per year; the majority of their time is spent addressing noncriminal issues.
- St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department kills more people per capita than any other police department in the country.
- St. Louis' proposed 2021 budget allocates \$137,586,585 from the general fund to the police. It dedicates \$0 to homelessness. If budgets are moral documents, what are our priorities?
- Despite intense media scrutiny and federal investigation of policing in St. Louis County prompted by the Ferguson Uprising in 2014, the 2020 St. Louis County Police Department budget is 45% higher than at the time of Michael Brown's killing.



# REINVEST IN COMMUNITIES

**What we need.** Instead of doubling down and throwing hundreds of millions of dollars at the failed arrest and incarcerate model of policing each year, we need to rethink the role of police and invest in programs and policies that address the root causes of harm.

**Here are four immediate steps to defund the police and re-envision public safety:**

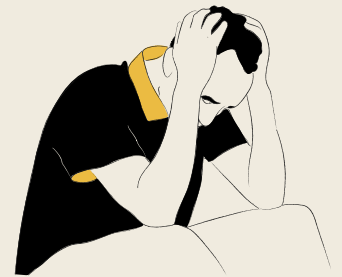
## (1) Remove police from:



Accident response and traffic enforcement



Domestic and intimate partner violence response



Mental health crises



Homeless outreach



Drug use and overdose response



Schools

## (2) Redirect funds to alternatives outside of police departments.



Traffic accident investigators, unarmed traffic monitors



Trained domestic violence counselors, de-escalators, and crisis intervention teams



Mental health professionals and peer support



Outreach workers, housing providers



Substance use counselors, street nurses, injection sites, peer recovery outreach



Peer "walking counselors"

## (3) Reduce police department size and scope.

- Terminate specific units or patrols that enforce **"quality of life" offenses**, target **protesters**, or are tasked with **surveilling communities**.
- Enact **budget and hiring freezes**. End **surveillance**. Reject **privatization**.

- **Disarm, decommission, and dismiss** officers who harm community members.
- End the **militarization** of police, as well as external funding streams like **civil asset forfeiture** and corporate **subsidies**.

## (4) Respond to community harm with community-based resources.

- **Community harm** is real and at crisis levels in far too many communities. We must respond urgently and with resources to save lives and address root causes.

- Prevent and respond to gun violence with community **violence interrupters** like **Cure Violence** and **Sankofa Unity Center**.

- Address the conditions of crime by investing in **affordable housing, education, medical and mental health care, public spaces, and violence prevention programs**.

This guide is a joint project of four Black-led racial justice organizations that are committed to re-envisioning public safety in St. Louis.



**ARCHCITY**  
DEFENDERS



**FORWARD  
THROUGH  
FERGUSON**

**#defundthepoliceSTL**

# POLICING IS NOT THE ANSWER!

We can invest in another future.

