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Reclaim the Block presents vision for a safer Minneapolis, urges City Council to address root causes of violence instead of adding 14 cops

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Minneapolis, MN— At the first city council hearing on Mayor Jacob Frey's proposed Minneapolis 2020 budget, the council heard about 3 hours of public testimony, including about 30 residents urging the city to invest in community-based solutions to the city's public safety issues. Community members from across the city laid out their vision for a thriving Minneapolis, including funding violence prevention, youth homelessness services, worker protections, solutions to the opioid crisis, mental health response and transgender equity work. They urged the city to fund these programs instead of adding 14 new police officers.

"We're not here because we're in denial about the real problems in our city - we're here because we know how serious those problems are," said Yolanda Hare, who works with Black Visions Collective and lives in the Ventura Village neighborhood. "We see the gun violence, the domestic violence, the racism, the addictions and overdoses, the lack of affordable housing. 50 years of trying to solve these problems with more and more police has not solved them, it's just landed more Black and brown people behind bars. We want to partner with the city council to create different kinds of solutions."

Community members reminded council members of their leadership in the 2019 budget cycle, when Council Members Fletcher and Cunningham authored, and the council passed, an amendment to re-allocate \$1.1 million away from new MPD hires and toward an array of community-driven public safety programs, including the creation of the Office of Violence Prevention.

Residents also contrasted Mayor Frey's expressed commitment to community safety and affordable housing with his comparatively small proposed budgets for programs and offices including Stable Homes Stable Schools and the Office of Violence Prevention. Mayor Frey's 2020 budget allocation of \$193.4 dollars for the Minneapolis Police Department, including an increase of \$2.1 million for 14 new police officers, is more than the budgets proposed for affordable housing, health, violence prevention, civil rights, and renter protections combined.

Many neighbors testified about impacts of the opioid crisis in their communities. "The opioid crisis is hitting our communities hard. It's hit me hard," said Jae Hyun Shim of the East Phillips neighborhood, who testified that naloxone saved their life two years ago. "We need to invest in solutions to the opioid crisis at the scale of the crisis itself. Fund the recommendations of the Mayor's Opioid Task Force and the critical work of grassroots harm reduction groups. This is one of the fastest ways to reduce overdoses and the 911 calls that come with them."

Several testifiers noted that while Mayor Frey received positive national attention for objecting to President Trump's campaign rally in Minneapolis, the same rally featured a strong presence and support from leadership and members of Minneapolis Police.

Reclaim the Block's demands have been endorsed by Black Visions Collective (BLVC), Center for Prophetic Imagination, Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL), Council on American Islamic Relations MN (CAIR-MN), Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia, Jewish Community Action (JCA), the Kaleo Center for Faith and Justice, the Minneapolis Catholic Worker, Showing Up for Racial Justice-Twin Cities (SURJ TC), and Take Action MN.

Today's hearing was the first opportunity for public input on the city budget. The next public hearing will take place on December 4th at 6pm. The budget adoption hearing is on December 11th at 6pm.

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