Dismantling the Minneapolis Police Department and creating a new transformative model for safety

What is the problem with Minneapolis Police Department?

Minneapolis has already implemented a number of reforms of its police department including: a number of different civilian review authorities, body cameras, mediation by the Department of Justice, and reform-minded police chiefs from Black and Native communities. None of those has adequately improved the health and wellbeing of Minneapolis residents. The impacts have especially been felt by Black, Native, immigrant, queer, trans, poor, and disabled communities.

City Council members have joined Black Visions, Reclaim the Block, and others to undertake a community-driven process to dismantle MPD.

A change this big will take time. This plan will be transitional, not overnight. But if we want to build a safer city, now is the time to start.

How is Minneapolis already responding community needs without using the Police?

Within Minneapolis, we already have city programs that address violence, harm, and conflict, including the Group Violence Intervention program (housed in the Office of Violence Prevention) which uses public health approaches to address gun violence. In the first two years of the GVI program, the program worked with 150 people at risk of being involved in gun violence - only 7 of whom were rearrested on a gun charge in that time.

There are several Minneapolis-based organizations, such as Southside Harm Reduction, MAD DADS, and the Sexual Violence Center that are already doing community-based safety and harm reduction work. Some of them currently cooperate with police in various ways and for various reasons, and we are confident they will continue to lead in community in ways that provide more comprehensive safety without policing.

If these programs were sufficiently resourced they could support the needs of Minneapolis community members, avoid the violence of policing, and increase safety overall. For more local examples of alternatives, please check out the MPD150 website: mpd150.com/report/alternatives

Mutual aid in Minneapolis has taken off in unprecedented ways in recent weeks, in the midst of the pandemic, uprisings across the city, and violence from police and white supremacists. Here are some of the ways our communities are taking care of each other - some of which can continue in sustainable ways into the future, if they’re well-resourced:

• Nearly 200 displaced and unsheltered people in south Minneapolis have opened a sanctuary in a south Minneapolis hotel in the memory of former shelter worker George Floyd.

• Community members on the Northside have been patrolling neighborhoods to protect Black-owned businesses. Similarly, AIM Patrol has been keeping Little Earth and other
South Minneapolis residents safe, and Latinx business owners on Lake Street have been protecting their storefronts.

- Southside Community Fire & Defense Response Crews have responded to fires when the fire department wasn’t responding to 911 calls.
- Food and supply pantries at nearly every community organization, house of worship, and school across the city.

Are there existing, successful programs that might help us imagine what Minneapolis can look like without a Police Department?

Many cities have already created programs to support emergency needs, mental health crisis, interpersonal violence, domestic and intimate partner violence, and even gun violence. These programs are have demonstrated track records, and have not increased the level of violence. While no single program will be able to be inserted into Minneapolis without adapting it to meet local needs, the following examples may have pieces or practices that could be useful to think about adapting for the Minneapolis context.

**CAHOOTS** (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) provides mobile crisis intervention 24/7 in the Eugene-Springfield, OR, Metro area. CAHOOTS is dispatched through the Eugene police-fire-ambulance communications center, and within the Springfield urban growth boundary, dispatched through the Springfield non-emergency number. Each team consists of a medic (either a nurse or an EMT) & a crisis worker (who has at least several years experience in the mental health field). CAHOOTS provides immediate stabilization in case of urgent medical need or psychological crisis, assessment, information, referral, advocacy & (in some cases) transportation to the next step in treatment.

**Common Justice** is a New York City-based organization that develops and advances solutions to violence that uses restorative justice principles to respond to serious harms and violence, including murder, assault, and robbery. Based on the survivor’s consent and request, Common Justice works with survivors of harm to provide services and seek repair and healing based on their needs. They then work with those who have done harm to engage in violence intervention, accountability, and healing processes. Through restorative justice circles, Common Justice also helps circle participants reach agreements about what the responsible party(ies) can do to make things as right as possible. *Common Justice has found that 90% of the survivors offered the program choose to participate within the program, as opposed to using the court and legal system.*

**API Chaya’s** Community Solutions is a Seattle-based program that exists to increase the capacity of community members to respond to gender-based violence and human trafficking harm in ways that center the healing and dignity of all those involved, including those who have caused harm. They build power by educating and mobilizing South Asian, Asian, Pacific Islander, and all immigrant communities to end exploitation, creating a world where all people can heal and thrive.