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Minneapolis City Council Members make commitment to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department, look towards a police-free future

Minneapolis, MN - On Sunday afternoon, nine Minneapolis City Council Members committed to start the process of ending the Minneapolis Police Department and building a new, transformative model of safety in Minneapolis.

The historic announcement came at a community meeting held by Black Visions and Reclaim the Block, two grassroots organizations that have been calling on City Council to divest from MPD since 2018. The announcement is a major victory for both organizations, who have received global attention and support since the murder of George Floyd and the social uprising that has followed.

“It shouldn’t have taken so much death to get us here,” said Kandace Montgomery, Director of Black Visions, “George Floyd should not have been murdered for so many people to wake up. It shouldn’t have taken young Black folks risking their lives in these streets, over and over. I want to honor all of the organizers and communities who - for generations - have dreamed and worked to make this day happen.”

Nine Council Members were present at the event at Powderhorn Park in South Minneapolis, which was attended by hundreds of Minneapolis residents. All of the Council Members in attendance—CMs Bender, Ellison, Cunningham, Cano, Jenkins, Johnson, Fletcher, Gordon and Schroeder—committed publicly to the following:

1. Decades of police reform efforts have proved that the Minneapolis Police Department cannot be reformed and will never be accountable for its actions.

2. We are here today to begin the process of ending the Minneapolis Police Department and creating a new transformative model for cultivating safety in our city.

3. We recognize that we don’t have all the answers about what a police-free future looks like, but our community does. We’re committing to engaging with every willing community member in the City of Minneapolis over the next year to identify what safety looks like for everyone.

4. We’ll be taking intermediate steps towards ending the MPD through the budget process and other policy and budget decisions over the coming weeks and months.

With these commitments, Minneapolis makes history by beginning a community-driven process to dismantle its police department. Although the community gathering was not a formal council meeting, nine members makes a veto-proof majority for future policymaking. Leaders from Black Visions and Reclaim the Block emphasized the significance of the Council Members’ commitments:
“Minneapolis, we are here to make history,” said Miski Noor of Black Visions. “We are here to rebuild our city on a different foundation - a foundation of real safety, protection for Black people, for Native people, for immigrants, for queer and trans people, for poor people, for disabled people.”

Council Members and organizers also recognized the substantial work ahead for Minneapolis to create a model of safety that is life-affirming for all community members. Speakers acknowledged that the process ahead would not be free from uncertainty or discomfort, but that the result would be a strengthened, safer community.

“Safety is being able to decide who supports you,” said Arianna Nason, of MPD150. “We’re not abolishing help. We’re abolishing police. That’s very different...We have to do the work to imagine something different and to listen to what people in different neighborhoods and communities want.”

Community members discussed their questions and hopes after listening to speakers and Council Members. Scaling up existing forms of community care through city investment, speakers reminded attendees, will be a focus over the coming months and years.

“We have no paradigm for policing that is not rooted in white supremacy,” CM Phillipe Cunningham said, speaking about a public health approach to violence prevention. “We have a paradigm for safety that is rooted in community and justice. We have seen it the last two weeks. The reality is that people have been doing this work for decades and not being paid. We have poured that money into the police department and where has it gotten us?”

After Sunday’s meeting, City Council is expected to begin creating a transition plan away from MPD that will engage Minneapolis residents as well as organizers and experts in the community and nationwide.

Sunday’s announcement comes after two years of organizing by Black Visions and Reclaim the Block to push Minneapolis to divest from MPD and invest in community resources. The beginning of a process to dismantle MPD and shift to community led safety is the result of years of organizing by grassroots organizations like Reclaim the Block, Black Visions and MPD150. This work is also built alongside the ongoing presence and legacy of American Indian Movement (AIM) Patrol, members of which were present at today’s event.

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