

**OFFICE OF MAYOR MELVIN CARTER  
CITY OF SAINT PAUL**



**COMMUNITY-FIRST PUBLIC SAFETY  
2020 BUDGET PROPOSAL SUPPLEMENT**

**ADDRESS TO THE SAINT PAUL CITY COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2019

*REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY*

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Council President Brendmoen, members of the Saint Paul City Council, thank you for the opportunity to join you today for this critical conversation about public safety in our city.

I would like to start by offering a moment of silent reflection for each of the individuals who've lost their lives to violence, not only in 2019, but anytime in our city's history; to their families and loved ones, and to our entire community who has mourned our losses far too many times.

Our meeting today culminates a year long, citywide conversation about public safety in Saint Paul. Through our Imagine Our City events last winter, we declared public safety as our first and highest ambition for our city, upon which all other dreams must be built.

And through our Budget Engagement events this summer, we declared our recognition that safety requires security, by demanding increased investments in affordable housing and mental health as our top two funding priorities.

I'm looking forward to sharing with you what we've heard through our public safety engagement events over the last two weeks. To tell the truth though, what we've heard is anything but surprising, because it's much of the exact same things so many of our residents and community partners have said for decades:

- We need a fundamentally new approach. Even with a strong police department that leads locally and nationally on so many fronts, we cannot expect our officers alone to solve all of our problems.
- It starts in the home and with the parents- we have to do a better job raising and investing in our youth to grow to be hopeful, productive members of our community.
- Gun violence is a public health crisis.

We have heard these assertions shouted out, cried out, Tweeted out, and written out over and over again - not just this year, but as far back as most of us can remember.

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The clearest message I've heard over the past few months is that it's time to finally listen to those community voices, invest in community capacity, and change our actions and investments based on these understandings:

- Our lamentation that even our incredible police officers cannot solve all of our problems alone should lead us to identify innovative new investments to compliment their work.
- Our understanding that all of this starts in the home and at very young ages should lead us to invest in the mental, physical, and emotional security of our children and families.
- And our recognition of gun violence as a public health crisis should lead us to intentionally expand our traditional public safety toolkit to include public health tools.

Finally, let our angst, our anger, our frustration and sadness about the series of tragedies we've endured over the past few months be the force that drives us to accept nothing less than new, innovative and evidence-based approaches to interrupt and end the cycles of violence that have played out in our community for too many years.

That is the bright red line I directed my cabinet and policy team to draw in formulating this package.

To be clear, this proposal skips certain investments that may feel like the right thing to do, and funds only those for which we can identify credible, independently validated empirical evidence to justify as a means to improve public safety outcomes in our city.

The most surprising of these findings was with regard to acoustic gunfire detection technology. Despite our police department declaring that they were not interested in securing such a system for Saint Paul just two years ago, I became interested in pursuing the possibility last year, and asked Chief Axtell for a fresh assessment.

That possibility became even more real over the past few weeks, as Governor Tim Walz and State Public Safety Commissioner John Harrington reached out to help, and discussions began about the possibility of a state grant to help us launch such a system here in Saint Paul.

After a five-month process to review and discuss the body of independent evaluation available on the effectiveness of acoustic detection systems, including research articles published by Time Magazine, Forbes Magazine, the Brookings Institute and even the International Association of Police Chiefs, Chief Axtell notified me last week of his intent to request state resources for expedited DNA testing capacity instead.

To offer a glimpse of those research findings, one such study comes from Police Chief Magazine, the monthly publication of the International Association of Police Chiefs, which concludes that *"...it is difficult to see how agencies benefit from expensive technology that increases financial strain on departments with its only discernible impact being fewer founded crime incidents."*



In similar fashion, while we have had significant conversation over the past few months about whether an increase of 4 officers or 9 is right for Saint Paul, I cannot pretend that a difference of 5 police officers can fundamentally transform public safety outcomes in a city of over 300,000 people.

Further, an opinion article published today suggests that Saint Paul should add 115 officers to meet the national average of 2.4 per 1,000 residents. However, because our rates of violent crime are already consistently lower than national averages for comparable cities, the only answer is for Saint Paul to lead national trends; chasing after averages would move us in the wrong direction.

We all know we need a new approach from the policies, practices and investments that got us to where we are today. And yet, I'll be first to acknowledge the possibility that these decisions - and the break they represent from traditional public safety strategies - may prove politically unpopular.

But we cannot chart a new path for Saint Paul by prioritizing investments that feel right from City Hall or even those that raise perceptions of safety for those of us least likely to be impacted by violence - over investments that are proven to actually make our most vulnerable children and families more secure in our homes and neighborhoods.

Madam Council President, I'm happy to pause here for any questions or concerns you may have about the methodology I've laid out so far, otherwise I can proceed into the details of our proposal.

As I've mentioned, our budget proposal is presented in three, high-level categories:

- Improving community connectivity & supports;
- Designing public spaces for safety; and
- Enhancing the capacity of public safety systems.

Unsurprisingly, these categories track closely the three research-based core principles of our Community First Public Safety Framework:

- Residents who are physically, emotionally, and financially secure, and who are connected to community supports, are less likely to become either an offender or victim of crime.
- Public spaces that are well-designed, well-maintained, and well-lit proactively improve quality of life, and limit opportunity for crime; and
- People who trust law enforcement systems and personnel will treat them fairly are more likely to obey the law, call 911 in an emergency, and provide critical information to aid an investigation.



As a high-level overview, this proposal:

- Invests \$1.5 million in proven, data-driven and evidence-based approaches from around the country and world, with a proposed 1% additional increase to the city's property tax levy.
- Leverages public, private and philanthropic investments to maximize public resources.
- Engages 9 different city departments in a comprehensive public safety strategy;
- Reflects community-driven priorities from over 1,000 Saint Paul residents who've participated in Mayor's Office community engagement events in 2019; and
- Invests directly in community-based resources & capacity to address localized challenges.

The first research-based core principle of our Community First Framework is that residents who are physically, emotionally, and financially secure, and who are connected to community supports, are less likely to become either an offender or victim of crime.

Earlier this fall, our City Attorney's Office launched a pilot of the ETHOS Program, which uses a restorative justice model to provide a community-based, victim-centered alternative to traditional prosecution in addressing crime; and joined with the Saint Paul and Ramsey County Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, as well as local criminal justice and community partners to form the Domestic Violence Firearm Enforcement Taskforce, working together to improve enforcement of Minnesota's 2014 Domestic Firearm Act which requires those who have been convicted of domestic violence to surrender their firearms to an authorized third party.

We have worked over the past year to build our community mental health co-responders model, employing trusted members within our communities to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competency of services delivered to residents experiencing mental health trauma or crisis. And we have contracted with our Community Ambassadors to effectively engage youth around our community and inside our Saint Paul Public Libraries.

In the 2020 budget I presented in August, I have proposed funding a full time social worker to provide services in and through our public libraries. This investment allows an experienced case manager to continue providing screening, counseling, and case management at the Rice Street, Sun Ray, Rondo and Arlington Hills Library branches, while adding capacity across all libraries by helping staff to create trauma-sensitive environments, support resilient staff, and provide needed social navigation services in our libraries. This critical work has been sustained with grant funding from the Saint Paul Foundation over the past two years, and it must continue.



I have also proposed an innovative pilot partnership called Familiar Faces, teaming up with Ramsey County, Region's Hospital, and the East Metro Mental Health Roundtable, and our public safety departments to identify and proactively serve the small group of individuals who our officers and medics see and treat over and over again throughout the course of the year.

Through Familiar Faces, we will team up to proactively offer transitional housing beds, case managers and peer specialists to help participants access basic needs and benefits, make appointments with service providers, and develop a housing and treatment plan tailored to each participant's circumstances.

One incredibly promising development in violence prevention is the realization of violence as a public health crisis. Founded by Dr. Gary Slutkin, former head of the World Health Organization's Intervention Development Unit, an organization called Cure Violence leading the way to operationalize this recognition across the country.

Cure Violence is guided by clear understandings that violence is a health issue, that individuals and communities can change for the better, that community partners and strategic partnerships are keys to success, and that rigorous, scientific, professional ways of working are essential for effectiveness.

To reduce violence using disease control and behavior change methods, Cure Violence was launched in Chicago's West Garfield Park neighborhood, and was quick to produce results, reducing shootings by 67% in its first year, according to an independent, third party evaluation. Cure Violence has since proven replicable, having expanded to over 50 cities since their initial launch.

Research shows that funding caring, committed community members and organizations to engage and intervene with our youth and in our neighborhoods is one of the most effective ways to reduce and prevent violent crime. Because this work is so critical, it forms the centerpiece of my proposal.

A full two thirds of the \$1.5 million in public safety investments I am proposing today is to make our city safer by employing local community members and organizations to build and leverage actionable, trusted relationships with youth and adults in our neighborhoods.

These investments include:

- Launching the Healing Streets Project, our local take on the proven national Cure Violence model I mentioned earlier;
- Expanding our Community Ambassadors Program, which has reduced youth arrests in targeted areas by 37%, into our North End, Midway, East Side and Frogtown neighborhoods;
- Investing in youth jobs, specifically targeting justice involved youth, through the city's Right Track Program; and
- Ensuring that our free afterschool rec check programs in our recreation centers remain free and accessible to every child in Saint Paul.



In the category of investing in people, I am additionally proposing to add capacity to our Community Justice Unit in the City Attorney's Office, to build and staff our growing portfolio of diversionary and restorative justice work, and a pilot called Returning Home Saint Paul, that provides mitigation funds as an incentive for landlords to rent to individuals who have a history of incarceration. This work is both supported by research, which shows that returning residents who are stably housed are 40% less likely to reoffend, and by over a year of community engagement that a team of city employees has conducted over the past year, in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies.

The second core principle of our Community First Framework is that public spaces that are well-designed, well-maintained, and well-lit proactively improve quality of life, and limit opportunity for crime. Commercial Vitality Zones and Cultural Destination Areas are two critical tools built by this council to invest in the physical and aesthetic quality of our most challenged neighborhoods, and I'm excited to share with you one more.

As you know, we have worked to redesign our city's CIB process to provide opportunity for greater investment in capital investment ideas generated by community members. 2020 will be our first year implementing that plan, with a million dollars we've already set aside for this purpose.

Because our public safety concerns are so urgent and pressing, I have asked our CIB committee to build a public process centered around the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, or CPTED, to guide those investments. This coming January, our CIB committee will issue its call for ideas, inviting community members from every corner of our city to bring forward ideas about relatively small investments in the physical realm - from upgrading street lights to trimming trees for visibility - that can make a big difference to make or neighborhoods safer.

Finally, traffic safety statistics provided by our Public Works Department show that a pedestrian is hit by a car in Saint Paul once every 2.5 days, and a bicyclist once every 5 days. Because safety is clearly no one-dimensional concept, I am proposing a one-time investment in our Public Works Department to boost pedestrian safety by advancing our city's Complete Streets Plan.

I want to be clear that one of the things we have heard is a desire for an even more active police presence, particularly in our most challenged neighborhoods. This goal, too, can be achieved through a portfolio of strategies.

One of my first acts as mayor was to authorize a well-deserved pay increase for our Saint Paul Officers, and Chief Axtell has confirmed that once we hire to the authorized sworn strength in my 2020 budget proposal, we will employ more police officers than any other time in city history. The combination of these investments result in the police department comprising a full 41% of the new cash investments in my original 2020 budget proposal. But we need more than just numbers. Our officers deserve to be well compensated, and they deserve 21st century tools to help them do their jobs well.



To that end, Chief Axtell is working to expand our use of our Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) in partnership with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Saint Paul Field Division. Specifically, the grant provides funding for a crime analyst, a National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) technician, a CGIC prosecutor, and training.

I want to thank Governor Tim Walz, who has been an incredible partner and called right away to determine how the state can be a partner in helping end the cycles we've endured. As I mentioned earlier, Chief Axtell has decided to request grant funding from the state to enhance and expedite our DNA Testing capabilities, so we can more quickly pursue actionable investigative leads.

And we are exploring a partnership with a Saint Paul-based company who has created Tip411, an interactive online tool that allows residents to share critical information with our police officers completely anonymously.

As we invest in our officers, and provide them with 21st century tools to do their job well, we have also identified a set of strategic deployment efforts to maximize the front-line impact our officers can make in Saint Paul neighborhoods.

First, in response to our robust discussions over the past few months about the shortcomings of our current staffing model, we have begun working together to evolve our staffing model to produce greater year-round consistency in sworn strength and reduce reliance on expensive overtime. We implemented a similar change in fire department staffing earlier this year.

Secondly, a recent news story reported that 45% of our Saint Paul officers work front-line patrol duties, as compared to 68% of Minneapolis officers. While many non-patrol duties add critical value to our core public safety mission, SPPD leadership is working to ensure our resources are concentrated as much as possible on our front lines. Chief Axtell's decision this spring to eliminate Saint Paul's Mounted and Motors Units returned 12 officers to front line patrol duties. That's an important start, and we are identifying opportunities to keep that thoughtful work moving forward, by identifying other functions within the department that could be performed by civilian personnel or other city departments.

For example, 5 officers and one sergeant currently work in our Closed Circuit TV Unit to monitor cameras and handle collateral and related duties, including maintaining back end/ administrative controls for tech platforms and creating digital data disks for data requests. I have asked Police Department and Office of Technology & Communications leadership to together determine if some portion of this work can be more efficiently performed by OTC.

Thirdly, we must continue to leverage technology to maximize our effectiveness. We've gone from under 200 reports per month on our online reporting system to around 400. Chief Axtell reports that one officer equates to approximately 200 calls per month, so this capacity buys back the functional equivalent of 2 full-time officers each month. Utilization of this service continues to grow as more people learn about it; reaching our department's goal of 1,000 calls per month will buy back another 3 full time officers.



And finally, according to Police Department data, Priority 4 and Priority 5 calls for service represented 60% of the calls for police service that our department fielded in 2017.

As a reminder, Priority 4 calls include:

- Offense reports where no suspect is present and no personal threat exists.
- Assist citizen in non emergency matter
- Shoplifters being held by store security personnel
- Drunks, emotionally disturbed persons, disorderly persons, not threatening physical harm

Priority 5 calls include:

- Miscellaneous requests for service
- Barking dogs
- Loud parties
- Loud radios; and
- Parking complaints.

This chart which shows average officer time on scene by priority. As you can see, our officers regularly spend significantly more time on scene for our lower priority calls - like barking dogs and loud radios - than they do on our higher priority calls. As you know, Priority 1 is exclusively reserved for incidents in which an officer is down and/or needs critical assistance.

While definitively answering why that is will require additional analysis, it is anecdotally believed that this may be due to officers spending significant additional time serving residents and businesses as ad hoc social workers, housing counselors, etc. Again, because these lower priority calls comprise 60% of our police department's calls for service, this time comes at a great expense, in terms of those same officers' readiness to respond to our most acute emergencies.

Our investments in affordable and supportive housing efforts like Familiar Faces, our Mental Health co-responders, Community Ambassadors, Healing Streets and online/telephone reporting are all designed to offer alternative resources that allow officers to connect individuals in crisis with community supports, and clear lower priority calls more quickly.





These efforts too will help free up significant officer time; reducing average time on scene for Priority 4 and Priority 5 calls to match current average time on scene for Priority 3 calls for service would buy back the equivalent of another 2.9 officers.

Council President Brendmoen, Council Members,

None of the proposals presented above, taken alone, presents a panacea for our city, and we know that interrupting a cycle we've been stuck in for generations will require both investment and time.

Most likely, we won't get everything right our first time around. If we're honest with ourselves, we'll learn from our experiences in real time and refine our efforts as we go.

I teach my children that you cannot fail at a task until you stop trying, and I can assure you that the City of Saint Paul will never rest in our drive to produce a safer, more promising city for our children and families.

Thank you.