A moral document?
Expanding conversations about public safety budgets in Minnesota in the wake of George Floyd's murder

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ABSTRACT

Minneapolis, Minnesota, became the epicenter of mass protests for racial justice in 2020 following the police killing of George Floyd on May 25. In the months since, local activists and elected officials have advanced ambitious visions for how the city can reimagine its systems of public safety.

This thesis builds on these perspectives by looking at public safety budgets, specifically, across the state of Minnesota. I make a case for expanding and refining current conversations about public safety budgets in several ways. First, I see existing conversations in Minnesota – centered around reimagining police budgets in major cities like Minneapolis and Saint Paul – as insufficiently narrow. I contend that police departments belong to a broader system of public safety services whose role in society needs to be re-examined, including sheriffs, highway patrols, and correctional agencies. Given that the harms associated with existing systems of public safety, including police killings, serious crime, and incarceration are present statewide – as are residents of color, who are most likely to suffer harms from these systems – I argue that conversations to reimagine public safety must also take place in communities across the state (Section I). Second, I explore the availability of existing public safety resources across the state, identifying what can be considered the upper limit of public safety reinvestment for communities in a first-of-its-kind analysis (Section II). Third, I find that current conversations around public safety budgets are complicated by the different visions, tactics, and roles that community leaders take on, and suggest that conversations around public safety budgets need to be responsive to this variation (Section III). I conclude by identifying questions that can guide further conversations about public safety budgets, examining relevant efforts to reimagine public safety systems in Austin, Los Angeles County, and Oregon, and outlining actions that Minnesotans can take to initiate conversations in their community (Section IV).

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Artwork at the George Floyd Memorial on 38th Ave and Chicago in Minneapolis. Photo taken by author.

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Introduction

"The importance of social movements is that they force people to more deeply engage with an issue than they otherwise would."
– Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University[1]

"Things aren't getting worse, they're being uncovered."
– Adrian Maree Brown, Author[2]

"Daddy changed the world."
– Gianna Floyd

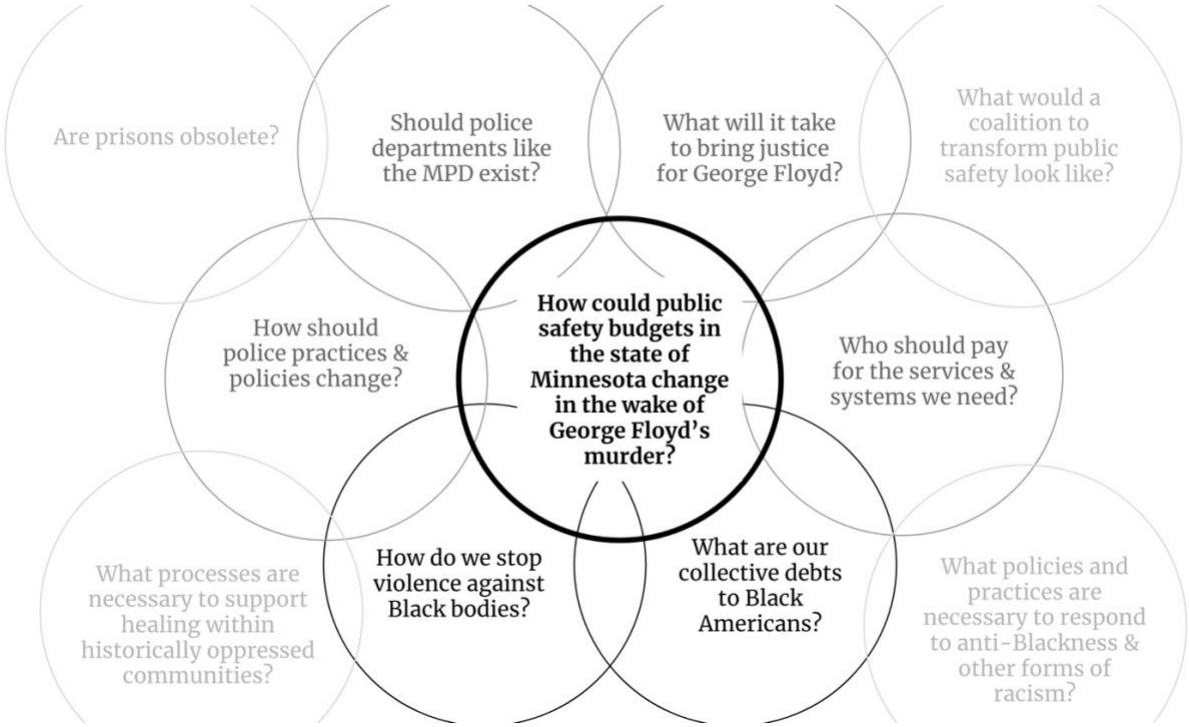
The killing of George Floyd, a Black man, at the hands of an officer of the Minneapolis Police Department on May 25, 2020 is a defining moment of injustice in a year defined by them. News and footage of the killing reached people across the world within hours. People outraged and angry about Floyd's death, and the fissures it revealed in our society, soon began gathering in Minneapolis and other cities, despite the threat of COVID-19 transmission. The following weeks of protests – nearly all of which were peaceful – quickly became the largest mass protests in U.S. history.

Within hours of Floyd's death, different threads of long-running conversations surfaced for many, like me, who hadn't been paying close enough attention, offering potential explanations of what caused this tragedy and what could be done to ensure that it never happened again. The moment of alignment in a society riven with social, economic, political, geographic, and cultural divides around condemning a horrific act quickly gave way to urgent questions about what we collectively might do in response.

State and local politicians asked what it would take to bring about justice and shift the culture of the police department. Academics asked how such a tragedy could happen in Minnesota. Racial justice groups called for immediate reforms to stop police violence against Black and brown bodies. National commentators called us to take seriously our collective debts to Black Americans. Longtime activists in Minneapolis asked whether the Minneapolis Department should even exist.

Amidst a mosaic of profound and interrelated questions that Floyd's death brought renewed attention to, this research focuses on one: how could public safety budgets in the state of Minnesota change in the wake of George Floyd's murder?

[1] Taylor, "We Should Still Defund the Police," *The New Yorker*
[2] brown, adrienne maree. "Living through the Unveiling," February 3, 2017. http://adriennemareebrown.net/2017/02/03/living-through-the-unveiling/.



Some of the many questions that were elevated in the wake of George Floyd's death

In this thesis, I make a case for expanding and refining current conversations about public safety budgets in several ways. First, I see existing conversations in Minnesota – centered around reimagining police budgets in major cities like Minneapolis and Saint Paul – as insufficiently narrow. I contend that police departments belong to a broader system of public safety services whose role in society needs to be re-examined, including sheriffs, highway patrols, and correctional agencies. Given that the harms associated with existing systems of public safety, including police killings, serious crime, and incarceration are present statewide – as are residents of color, who are most likely to suffer harms from these systems – I argue that conversations to reimagine public safety must also take place in communities across the state (Section I). Second, I explore the availability of existing public safety resources across the state, identifying what can be considered the upper limit of public safety reinvestment for communities in a first-of-its-kind analysis (Section II). Third, I find that current conversations around public safety budgets are complicated by the different visions, tactics, and roles that community leaders take on, and suggest that conversations around public safety budgets need to be responsive to this variation (Section III). I conclude by identifying questions that can guide further conversations about public safety budgets, examining relevant efforts to reimagine public safety systems in Austin, Los Angeles County, and Oregon, and outlining actions that Minnesotans can take to initiate conversations in their community (Section IV).

George Floyd's life, and death, has already changed the world. Floyd's impact on us endures as we collectively explore, debate, and act upon the many questions in front of us in the months and years ahead.

Personal motivation & positionality

"I can interact with white people because I understand that it is not the individual but rather the system of white supremacy that continues to hold us back. The thing is, however, that the systems are created, perpetuated, and sustained by individuals. And there are people who benefit from this centuries-long upside-down reality that renders Black folks victims of the continual plundering perpetrated by this system. And only people can work to overcome these inequities in our society."
– Minneapolis City Council Member Andrea Jenkins[3]

"White people should recognize that it's their responsibility to stand on the front lines of justice, and that there's a long history of white people doing just that."
– Civil rights activist Angela Davis[4]

"A column must produce heat – or light. Either stoke an emotion in your reader's heart that prompts them to feel or act differently about an issue, or illuminate an issue in a way that will inspire them to look at it anew. The ideal column does both."
– New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman[5]

Unlike many of the people I spoke with over the course of this research, I don't come to issues of public safety with much personal experience interacting with law enforcement or our broader systems of public safety. I'm a white man who grew up in a middle-class household in a majority-white neighborhood in the city of Saint Paul, Minnesota. I inhabited – and continue to inhabit – a uniquely privileged, insulated place in society, having never been the target of a police officer's suspicion and lacking friends or family members who are closely connected to existing policing, corrections, or judicial systems through their careers or their personal lives. Growing up, I largely internalized the conventional wisdom of my social circles that police and corrections officers, and the systems they belonged to, served a relatively benign and essential civic function. Police and corrections officers were comparable to other pillars of professionalized, contemporary society such as doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, bus drivers, pilots, and government officials. It wasn't until later that I was exposed to perspectives that contextualized the United States' unprecedented levels of criminalization and incarceration in recent decades, including Michelle Alexander, Angela Davis, Van Jones, Ava DuVernay, and Mariame Kaba. For these reasons and others, I feel underqualified to speak of the harms caused by our current system of public safety. Throughout this project, I've struggled with how I might contribute to ongoing public discussions; how to explore and articulate my own perspective in a way that acknowledges my own ignorance, spurs action, and values the perspectives of those who, through personal lived experience or more extensive analysis, see our social systems more clearly. One thing I've learned while a graduate student at MIT is that tensions like these can't be easily resolved, nor should they be, but serve as catalysts for ongoing learning and improvement.

I do come to questions of public safety, however, with a strong ethical framing towards racial justice and equity, as well as professional experience researching socioeconomic dynamics in

[3] Shin, *A Good Time For The Truth: Race in Minnesota*.
[4] Speaking at a virtual event at MIT in October 2020
[5] Friedman, *Thank You For Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Surviving in the Age of Accelerations*

cities and regions, public budgets, federalism, and community development strategies at the Brookings Institution. I came to graduate school to deepen my understanding of how public and civic actors in cities can advance strategies to support racial and socioeconomic equity; in 2020, these interests converged and crystalized in the wake of tragedy in my home state of Minnesota, which energized contemporary social movements for racial justice.

In the quote above, Andrea Jenkins, the first Black transgender woman to serve on the Minneapolis City Council, beautifully captures the necessity of grappling with social challenges like racism on both a structural and individual level. The two cannot be easily separated, as individual actions ultimately create the systems that produce our deeply unequal status quo. As someone who benefits greatly from these systems, I feel a responsibility to work to overcome their inequalities and support their transformation. Angela Davis, at virtual lecture given at MIT in October 2020, reminds us that white people who seek to support justice are in good company.

Thomas Friedman, the well-known New York Times columnist, may seem to be a strange perspective to pair with the ideas expressed by Jenkins and Davis. Yet his articulation of the concepts of "light" and "heat" relate to my goals and audiences for this project. It is my hope that this project sheds light, in particular, on how Minnesotans think about investing public safety budgets across the state by providing data, concepts, questions, examples, and recommendations that can guide future action. My hope is that focusing on establishing a shared understanding and drawing connections is an especially worthwhile contribution given the abundance of "heat" generated by our political, politicized moment.

Broadly speaking, I am convinced by the arguments that political, social, and economic systems in the United States have produced deep-rooted inequities that fall along racialized lines. It's clear that the promise of the American Dream is not equally available to all residents. And I believe that our systems of public safety today – from militarized and discriminatory policing practices, to the reliance on prisons and jails to control vulnerable members of society, to our collective instinct to prioritize punishment above rehabilitation – are crucial drivers of this inequality. I believe that we must make transformative changes to public safety, creating systems that actually keep us all safe, which I believe can only happen through the work of collective movements. Whether transformation occurs under the banner of "defund the police" or another organizing message seems less relevant to me than the process and outcome of the transformation itself. I see public investment as one essential part of existing systems; it is my hope that this research contributes to the re-imagining of how these investments can be deployed to build a society that is safer, fairer, and more just than the one we live in today.

Section I

Calls to rethink public safety extend beyond police departments

In Minnesota, policing remains at the center of conversations around public safety budgets

Why public safety budgets should be re-evaluated statewide

There are limits to seeking change through reimagined public safety budgets

Calls to rethink public safety extend beyond police departments

> "Abolition is about presence, not absence. It's about building life-affirming institutions."
>
> - *Prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore*[6]

For decades, activists in the United States have called for a reimagining of our systems of public safety, including through the divestment of funds from harmful institutions and reinvestment into alternatives. Many of these calls have emerged in the wake of police brutality, but extend beyond policing to include prisons and the systems that support them.

Policing has long been at odds with marginalized communities in the United States. Ricardo Levins Morales, a prominent activist in Minneapolis, explained to me that left-leaning social movements in the United States have always had antagonistic relationships with law enforcement.[7] This can be seen as an almost inevitable tension: left-leaning social movements seek to upend entrenched power structures, while police generally serve to protect them. Throughout U.S. history, in the telling of abolitionist organizations like the Minneapolis-based MPD150, police forces have captured fugitive slaves, broken union strikes, enforced xenophobic and other hostile laws, racially profiled Black and brown people, acted violently to suppress protesters and political dissidents, criminalized homelessness, poverty, and mental illness, and protected the property and livelihoods of the wealthy and powerful.[8] Tracing back to these very real traumas, many left-leaning activists, including several whose perspectives are explored in greater detail later in this research, evince a profound distrust in existing policing institutions.

Activist intellectuals Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and Rose Braz helped clarify generations of distrust into a clear demand: the abolition of prisons and interrelated systems of public safety. In 1997, the three founded the organization Critical Resistance, which set out to abolish what they called the "prison industrial complex." Critical Resistance offers a holistic analysis of the prison industrial complex, which it defines as "the system of surveillance, policing, and imprisonment that government, industry and their interests use as solutions to economic, social, and political problems." Davis' 2003 book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* and Gilmore's 2007 book *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* explored the harms that prisons – and the systems that send Americans to them, like policing – inflict on Black, brown, and other marginalized communities. In the quote above, Gilmore describes abolition as an effort not just to tear down existing systems, but to replace them with "life-affirming institutions;" to organize society in ways that get people the resources they need to thrive.

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[6] MPD150. "What Are We Talking about When We Talk about 'a Police-Free Future?,'" June 10, 2020. http://www.mpd150.com/what-are-we-talking-about-when-we-talk-about-a-police-free-future/.

[7] Conversation with the author, October 2020

[8] MPD150. "Enough Is Enough: A 150-Year History of the Minneapolis Police Department." Accessed October 14, 2020. https://www.mpd150.com/report.

Subsequent analyses, from Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, to Ava DuVernay's movie *13th*, documented the ways that incarceration has been used as a mechanism to punish and control Black people and other people of color throughout American history. Alexander, a self-described prison abolitionist, and DuVernay offer further evidence of the harms that existing public safety systems inflict on millions of Americans, especially Black and brown ones.

The rise of Black Lives Matter and other contemporary movements to advance racial justice marks another turning point in contemporary understandings of public safety systems. Widespread protests following the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in 2014 brought newfound attention to the costs of American policing. The movement also elevated ideas of defunding and reinvestment on issues of public safety. In 2016, the Movement for Black Lives, an umbrella group that coordinates Black Lives Matter-affiliated organizations across the country, published its first policy platform, which centered around six demands. One of these demands, "Invest-Divest," requested "a reallocation of funds at the federal, state and local level from policing and incarceration to long-term safety strategies such as education, local restorative justice services, and employment programs." This demand was one of the most controversial aspects of the platform. In publishing it, the Movement for Black Lives helped popularize demands not just for policing reform, but also reinvestment of public funds into alternative approaches for providing public safety.[9]

Studies of police budgets, specifically, have grown since 2017. One landmark report, produced by the Center for Popular Democracy, studied the budgets of a dozen major cities and counties and found that all spent between 20% and 45% of their general funds on police services. The book *The End of Policing*, written by academic Alex Vitale, provides a thorough and frequently-cited exploration of why alternative forms of public safety are necessary. Vitale documents the many ways that police are asked to solve problems that they are ill-equipped to solve, including mental health, drug addiction, sex work, and homelessness, and respond in harmful ways.

Due to growing awareness of the social and financial costs of existing systems of public safety, city and state leaders have experimented with strategies to redirect public resources to community-driven strategies for public safety. A 2018 report by the Urban Institute describes some recent efforts. Notable policy experiments include the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, a partnership between the U.S. Department of Justice, 36 state governments, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and other organizations to limit costs within the criminal justice system and channel savings towards proven public safety strategies, including community services. Between 2012 and 2017, states collectively invested $557 million in non-prison public safety strategies through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, including $156 million in community-based treatment and services.[10] In San Jose, California, an initiative called Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together

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[9] Akbar, Amna A. "How Defund and Disband Became the Demands." *The New York Review of Books* (blog), June 15, 2020. https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/06/15/how-defund-and-disband-became-the-demands/.

[10] Notably, as states had broad leeway to determine how to direct Justice Reinvestment savings, not all reinvestments supported alternative models for public safety. Approximately 30% of reinvested funds ($154 million) have gone towards parole officers and other forms of community supervision, 13% have gone towards in-

(BEST) provides financial support and coordination for non-profit organizations that provide care to young people at risk of gang involvement. BEST is led by the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force and receives approximately $2.2 million annually from the city's general fund. And in Washington, DC, reforms to reduce young peoples' exposure to the juvenile justice system produced savings that went towards a mentorship program that matches young people with adults who shared similar backgrounds to provide support and coaching. These initiatives reflect a common interest in seeking creative ways to limit investment in traditional forms of public safety and explore new approaches.

For decades, advocates and scholars across the country have argued convincingly that we must reimagine our public safety systems, systems which extend far beyond policing. In this light, the police killings of Black Americans like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castile, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and countless others should not be seen solely through the prism of structurally racist police departments. Instead, these tragedies are the most visible reflections of a broader system of public safety that inflicts undue harm upon millions of Americans.

prison programming, 7% to local corrections agencies and 3% to police. See Welsh-Loveman and Harvell, "Justice Reinvestment Initiative Data Snapshot," *Urban Institute*.

The names of Black and brown Americans killed in confrontations with the police are painted on the street at the George Floyd Memorial in Minneapolis. Photo taken by author.

In Minnesota, policing remains at the center of conversations around public safety budgets

Conversations on reinvesting public safety budgets in Minnesota, meanwhile, center on policing.

Officer-involved killings of Black and brown people in Minnesota over the years have prompted mass protests and inspired sustained organizing. One longstanding anti-police brutality organization in Minneapolis, Communities United Against Police Brutality, was created in the aftermath of the shooting death of Charles "Abuka" Sanders by Minneapolis police in 2000. Another, Twin Cities Coalition for Justice 4 Jamar, formed following the killing of Jamar Clark by Minneapolis police officers in 2015. The killing of Philando Castile in a suburb just north of St. Paul in 2016 sparked renewed anger, grief, and widespread protests as well.

It's in the context of these tragedies that the three organizations currently at the forefront of the movement to shift funds from police in Minnesota – MPD150, Reclaim the Block, and Black Visions Collective – were formed. Ricardo Levins Morales, a founding member of MPD150, explained that the organization took shape as an explicit effort to change public narratives around policing. After noticing that the Minneapolis Police Department's 150-year anniversary was coming up, Morales and others set out to document what they saw as the untold history of the department. Morales told me: "part of our agenda was to shift the conversation so that when police atrocities occur, people aren't reaching for those same tired and useless reforms that they've been demanding for a hundred years that get implemented, eroded, and abandoned."[11] MPD150's flagship report, *Enough is Enough: a 150-year performance review of the Minneapolis Police Department* was released in 2017 and circulated among Minneapolis' activist community. MPD150 set clear boundaries around their work – they would focus on research and narrative, not policy – which created space for organizations like Reclaim the Block and Black Visions Collective to step in to lobby public officials and organize direct actions.

In 2018, Reclaim the Block approached the Minneapolis City Council and requested a 5% budget cut, approximately $9 million, to the city's police department and a redirection of those funds to what they called "community-driven public safety programs." The Council, led by Council Members Phillippe Cunningham and Steve Fletcher, ultimately approved a cut of $1.1 million to the police department's planned budget, which went towards the creation of a new Office of Violence Prevention and initiatives to reduce youth and domestic violence. In our interview, Council Member Cano described that event as the first such request connecting police budgets with social services.[12] In the meantime, the city implemented changes to its police department in line with reforms recommended by the Obama Administration's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

[11] Conversation with the author, October 2020
[12] Conversation with the author, October 2020

Accordingly, the City of Minneapolis was a testing ground for new philosophies of public safety well before 2020. As CM Cano observed: "Minneapolis isn't new to redirecting funds from MPD to other things, and Minneapolis isn't new to reform."[13]

Advocates in the city of Saint Paul, too, began pushing for a redirection of city resources from police to care-based services as early as 2018. After the St. Paul Police chief expressed his interest in adding 50 new officers to the department, 31 community groups in the city signed a letter asking St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter to oppose new funding for police and calling on the city to "build safety through investments in youth and communities." In December 2019, Mayor Carter and the Saint Paul City Council voted to allocate $1.5 million to community-based anti-violence programs while resisting calls to add new officers.

These actions set the stage for far more profound changes in 2020. In June, weeks after George Floyd's death, a veto-proof majority of the Minneapolis City Council announced their intention to disband the Minneapolis Police Department and create "a new, transformative model for cultivating safety." Though efforts to realize this vision have been stymied in the months since for a number of intersecting reasons,[14] the Council's message in June set the city into uncharted waters. As of this writing, the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul have each adopted 2021 budgets that cut millions from police departments and, despite severe fiscal constraints brought about by COVID-19, allocated new funds for alternative strategies.

It's hard not to think that what we've witnessed to date is just the beginning of a much longer conversation. Transformational change, if it does occur, can take decades. And most immediately, the city councils and mayors of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and other municipalities in the state face an election year in 2021. Given the events of 2020, it's clear what issue will animate these elections. As Council Member Steve Fletcher described to me: "[2021] is going to be a year-long conversation about public safety. That is literally the only thing anybody's going to be focused on."[15] Yet at the moment, leading advocates for reinvestment in the state tend to equate public safety with policing.

[13] Conversation with the author, October 2020

[14] A non-comprehensive list: it soon became clear that Council Members held starkly different understandings of what it meant to "dismantle" the MPD; the ongoing crises brought about by COVID-19 drew attention and capacity away; the Minneapolis Charter Commission blocked proposed amendments that would enable the city to divest from policing from appearing on city voters' 2020 ballots; a surge in violence in the city shifted Council Members' priorities; and Republican officials and operatives politicized scenes of violence that accompanied the summer's mass protests and weaponized terms like "defund the police", which constrained potential debate.

[15] Conversation with the author, October 2020

Why public safety budgets should be re-evaluated statewide

"We need a statewide conversation and not a Twin Cities conversation [on policing] because the police kill more people in Greater Minnesota than they do in the Twin Cities. This is not just a Black people's problem. It is a policing problem."

- *Justin Terrell, Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Center*

In studying public safety budgets across the state of Minnesota, I am making a deliberate choice to broaden the geographic and thematic scope of many conversations that followed George Floyd's murder. For understandable reasons, these conversations did, and still do, focus on policing in the city of Minneapolis. Yet I believe that a broader lens is necessary.

Problems of policing extend far beyond the city of Minneapolis and its twin city of Saint Paul. Nearly 70% of police-involved deaths since 2001 have occurred outside of the Twin Cities, according to a recent study by the Star Tribune, Minnesota's paper of record. And cities are not the only governments that fund police services: county sheriff's patrols carry out policing responsibilities as well, as do state governments (through state highway patrols, specialized policing units, and more), school districts (through school resource officers and security guards), transit agencies, and other local governments. County sheriffs play a particularly important role in local policing, as they serve as the primary public safety officers in hundreds of small cities and towns across Minnesota that do not have municipal police forces, as will be explored later, and for residents living in unincorporated parts of the state. Accordingly, studying county sheriff's budgets is an especially important complement to city police budgets.

The conversation is bigger than police, too. As Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore remind us, policing is just one part of a broader "prison industrial complex" that denies opportunities to people caught up in its many systems. Police function as conduits to criminal records, prison time, crippling fines, government surveillance, and severely diminished life prospects. We are living in a time of mass incarceration, as authors like Michelle Alexander describe, which catalyzes and compounds deep inequities in our society.

These systems produce tremendous human costs in Minnesota. Roughly 10,000 Minnesotans are currently imprisoned in state prisons and another 6,000 are in county correctional facilities, according to the non-profit research and advocacy organization The Sentencing Project. More than 100,000 are on probation or parole. Nearly 65,000 Minnesotans – one in every 63 residents – have felony convictions and are barred from voting. Every one of these individuals face barriers to living stable, independent, and happy lives as a result of their exposure to incarceration. As Minnesota Governor Tim Walz observed recently, "Incarceration is a failure of the system. When we get to that point, we have failed at every step along the way and most of the outcomes after incarceration do not end well." Affirming Governor Walz' point, 85 percent of incarcerated Minnesotans are

diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder, and 26 percent return to prison within three years of their release. These are not signs of a system of public safety that keeps all residents safe.

These costs are not confined to residents in the central counties of Hennepin and Ramsey, or even the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area; they are truly statewide. Rates of serious crime are lower in Greater Minnesota than the Twin Cities metro area on average, but counties in Greater Minnesota including Beltrami, St. Louis, Stearns, Mille Lacs, and Blue Earth have crime rates that are on par with rates in Hennepin and Ramsey counties. More than three in five inmates in state facilities committed crimes (and likely lived) outside of Hennepin and Ramsey counties. Half of Minnesotans on probation and parole live outside of the Twin Cities metro area.

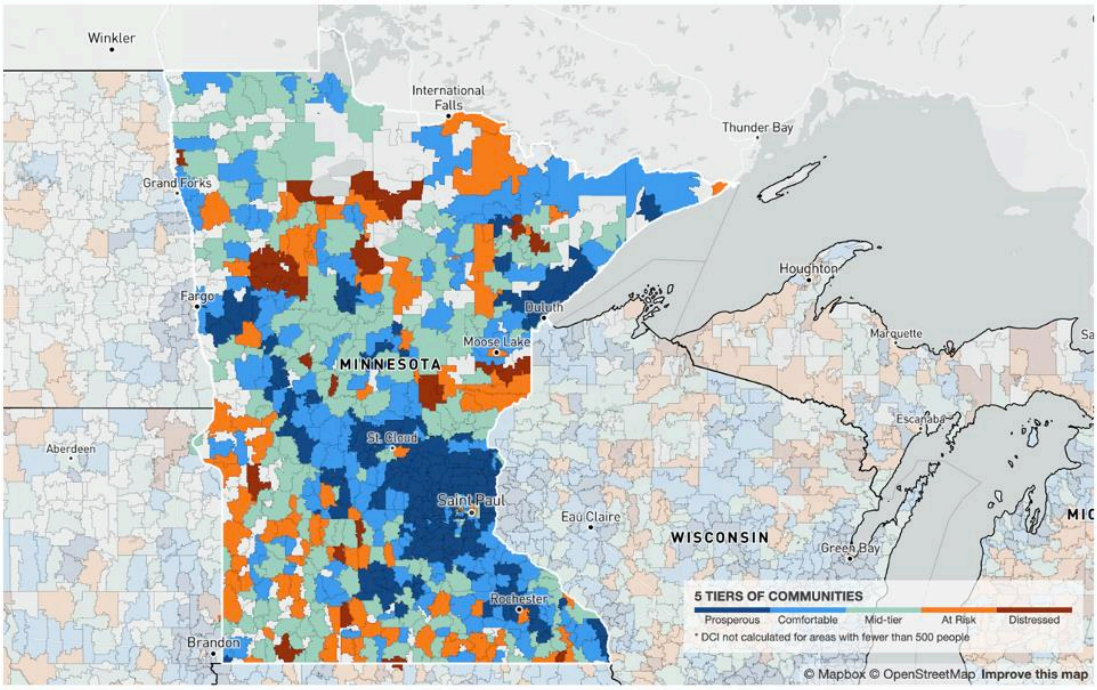
Advocates for reimagining public safety budgets in Minneapolis make the case that most criminal behavior is a downstream effect of unmet community needs.[16] This logic applies statewide. On many health measures, including frequency of poor mental health days, excessive drinking, and rates of premature death, counties in Greater Minnesota fare worse than Hennepin, Ramsey, and other counties in the Twin Cities metro area.

On measures of socioeconomic distress, too, many communities in Greater Minnesota are on par with neighborhoods in Minneapolis and St. Paul. One assessment of socioeconomic need comes from the "Distressed Communities Index," produced by the Economic Innovation Group (EIG), a nonpartisan think tank. The index combines seven indicators, including the share of residents without a high school diploma, the share of adults who aren't working, and the housing vacancy rate by ZIP code, classifying communities into one of five tiers, from "prosperous" to "distressed." The statewide map, shown below, reveals that many of the most distressed communities are in Northern and Southwestern Minnesota (shown in red and orange). The Twin Cities metropolitan area, centered around Saint Paul and Minneapolis, is a sea of deep blue, reflecting the region's prosperity.

[16] See, among other resources: "Enough Is Enough: A 150-Year History of the Minneapolis Police Department," *MPD150*

Many communities in Greater Minnesota are distressed, while the Twin Cities metro area is more prosperous

Rankings based on levels of income, poverty, education, housing vacancy, & employment by ZIP code



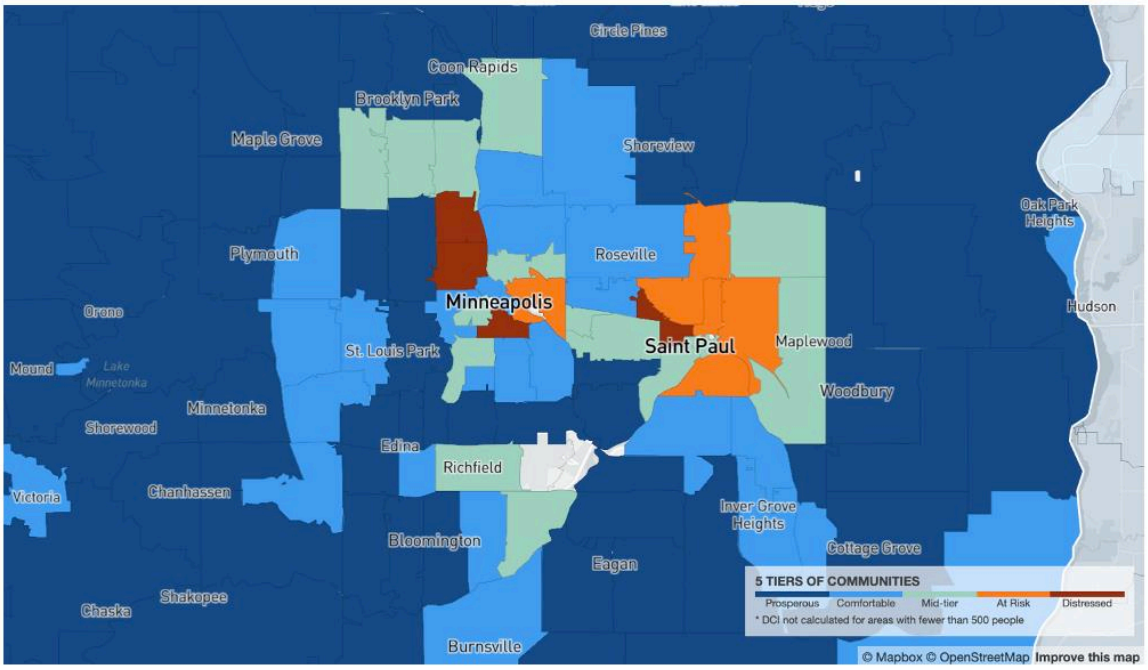
Source: Economic Innovation Group's "Distressed Communities Index," 2020 (based on 2018 5-year ACS)

The Twin Cities metro area's overall prosperity, however, belies extreme distress in specific communities in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. As can be seen in the map below, distressed communities include the North Side of Minneapolis (in dark red), the heart of the city's Black community, and the Phillips neighborhood, not far from where George Floyd was killed; as well as Frogtown, Dayton's Bluff, and other neighborhoods in St. Paul that are home to many of the city's Hmong, Black, and immigrant communities. Other neighborhoods in the two cities, as well as many inner-ring suburban communities, are classified "mid-tier" (light green), on par with many communities across Greater Minnesota. In these ways, the economic distress that serves as root causes for unsafe communities in Minneapolis and Saint Paul exists in other parts of Minnesota too.[17]

[17] Observations about the necessity of statewide conversations about public safety in no way negate the conversations underway in Minnesota's largest cities about public safety budgets. Indeed, given the massive scale of public safety investment, the long history of harms inflicted by existing systems, and the acute social and economic challenges in these communities, it's intuitive that conversations about public safety budgets began in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. In many ways, organizers and policymakers in Minneapolis and Saint Paul are breaking new ground, exploring possibilities that residents and officials in other places across the state have yet to consider.

Some neighborhoods in Minneapolis and St. Paul are severely distressed

Rankings based on levels of income, poverty, education, housing vacancy, & employment by ZIP code



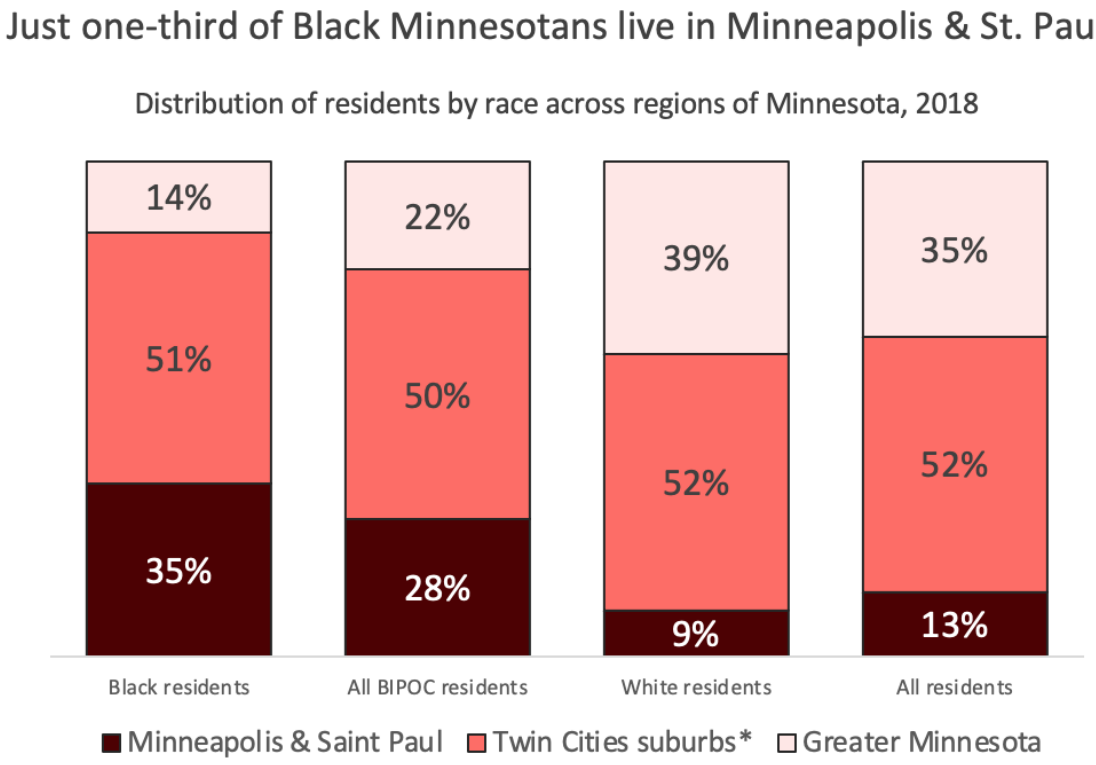
Source: Economic Innovation Group's "Distressed Communities Index," 2020 (based on 2018 5-year ACS)

It's not reasonable to expect public safety budgets by themselves to solve each of the social challenges described above. Yet public safety departments are tasked with responding to them. The presence of police killings, serious crime, incarceration, poor health outcomes, and socioeconomic distress across the state pose sizable risks to the safety of communities. Residents across the state should ask whether their community's public safety investments are responding to these risks, or if their budgets can be reoriented in ways that better meet community needs.

There is one other reason why conversations about public safety budgets deserve to be held across the state: the people most likely to be harmed by existing systems do not reside only in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Scholars like Angela Davis, Michelle Alexander, and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor have argued convincingly that existing systems of public safety carry ingrained racial biases, producing systemic harms for communities of color in particular.[18] In Minnesota, Native American residents are 12 times more likely to be imprisoned than white Minnesotans; Black Minnesotans are 11 times more likely; and Hispanic residents are 4 times more likely. Given these disparities, it's worth noting that people of color comprise a sizable, and growing, share of Minnesotans who live outside of Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

[18] See: Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*; Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*; and Taylor, "We Should Still Defund the Police"

In fact, just 35 percent of the state's Black residents live in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, according to data from the 2018 American Community Survey. A majority – 51 percent – of Black Minnesotans live outside of the Twin Cities themselves but within the 14-county Twin Cities metro area, while the remaining 14 percent live in Greater Minnesota, as can be seen in the graph below. More than one in five Minnesotans of color live in Greater Minnesota. This includes 56 percent of all Native Americans in the state, 38% of Mexican-Americans, and 20 percent of Somali-Americans. Efforts to reimagine public safety systems hold racial justice as a core motivation; such efforts will be insufficient if they only reach a subset of the jurisdictions in which people of color live in the state.



Note: Twin Cities suburbs includes all residents outside of Minneapolis and Saint Paul in the census-defined 14-county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan statistical area. This is a larger geography than the 7-county metro area definition used by the Metropolitan Council and elsewhere in this report.

Source: Author's calculations using data from the 2018 1-year ACS

A statewide analysis is also necessary because cities, counties, and the state government all play significant roles in funding the services that advocates see as addressing root causes of crime. [19] The provision of health care, education, housing, access to jobs, open space, and other public goods and services are a shared responsibility across many levels of government. Counties, for instance, make far greater investments in public health and human services than most cities do. It's for this

[19] See, among other resources: "Enough Is Enough: A 150-Year History of the Minneapolis Police Department," *MPD150*

reason that the Minneapolis City Council Members I interviewed spoke of their interest in collaborating with county officials to pilot mental health, emergency response, and other supportive programs. Council Member Steve Fletcher told me, for instance, that "there's a model of mental health teams that could be direct responders to 911 calls… we're hoping [Hennepin] County wants to own that because they have mental health response capacity already. We're trying not to reinvent the wheel."[20] Just as city, county, and other governments share traditional public safety responsibilities, they share responsibilities for potential alternatives. Accordingly, understanding patterns of investment across cities, counties, and other governments matters when determining how public safety budgets can shift.

[20] Interview with author, October 2020. See appendix for an edited transcript of the conversation.

There are limits to seeking change through reimagined public safety budgets

"You need to be careful when you go after budgets, because what you don't want to do is strip away the policies that have the ability to influence the practice."

- *Justin Terrell, Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Center*

It's worth noting that studying public safety through budgets is a complex and fraught process. Public budgets are difficult to parse, given jurisdictions' differing fiscal years, administrative structures, responsibilities, definitions of 'public safety,' and reliance on funds from other levels of government. It is challenging to compare budgets between jurisdictions, between levels of government, and over time, especially for people like myself who lack a formal training in public finance.

Studying budgets also results in a relatively blunt analysis. Seeking to translate research on budgets into action can lead to unintended consequences, as Minnesota Justice Research Center's Justin Terrell affirms in the quote above. Budgets don't reveal a city's public safety outcomes, and can't offer much clarity on how money is spent within police departments. With police departments investing in everything from recruiting racially diverse cadet classes and de-escalation training to purchasing military-grade weapons, and with correctional agencies investing in more mental health counselors alongside new prisons, each dollar going towards public safety doesn't have an equally harmful or beneficial impact. Applying public pressure to cut police or funding may well result in cuts to seemingly beneficial programs. In our interview, Minneapolis Council Member Alondra Cano expressed this exact concern, telling me: "[the Minneapolis Police Department is] diversifying [its] workforce like crazy. Unfortunately, those are the people that we're going to lose when we continue to defund the department, because they don't have seniority and as much union protection as employees who have been there longer."[21] Shifting resources towards alternative strategies for public safety may directly counteract hard-won reforms to the ways departments currently operate.

Redirecting budgets is also an indirect way, at best, of bringing about other necessary changes to existing public safety policies, practices, and cultures. Exploring questions of police funding, CityLab's Brentin Mock asks: "would a defunded police department, with fewer officers and resources, be less racist? Or would police act even *more* obnoxiously, and oppressively, with less mechanisms for accountability in place?" Clearly, shifting funds is just one potential tool among many to achieve public safety systems that truly keep us all safe.

[21] Conversation with author, October 2020.

Section II

Defining public safety budgets in Minnesota

Every level of government in Minnesota invests in public safety

Larger cities, and smaller counties, spend the most per resident on public safety in Minnesota

Most public safety budgets in Minnesota are increasing over time

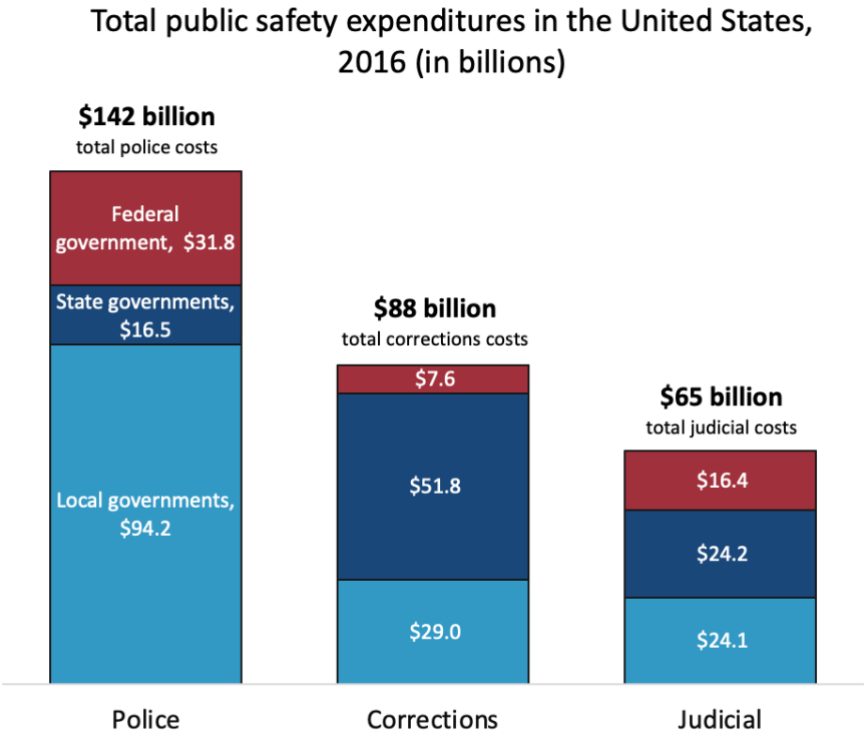
Defining public safety budgets in Minnesota

"Don't tell me what you value.
Show me your budget and I will tell you what you value."

- Joe Biden[22]

One essential building block for conversations about reimagining public safety budgets is an understanding of how public safety systems are funded, and who funds them. This knowledge can guide public attention towards the governments and officials most responsible for defining them. It enables practical conversations about what resources are currently being deployed towards public safety, and what initiatives might conceivably be funded by redirecting them.

Governments at all levels fund systems of public safety. One of the most comprehensive estimates of public safety budgets in the United States comes from the U.S. Department of Justice, which identifies three broad categories that encompass public safety: police, corrections, and "judicial and legal," which includes prosecution, courts, and public defense expenditures. The chart below offers a detailed breakdown of these costs by level of government.

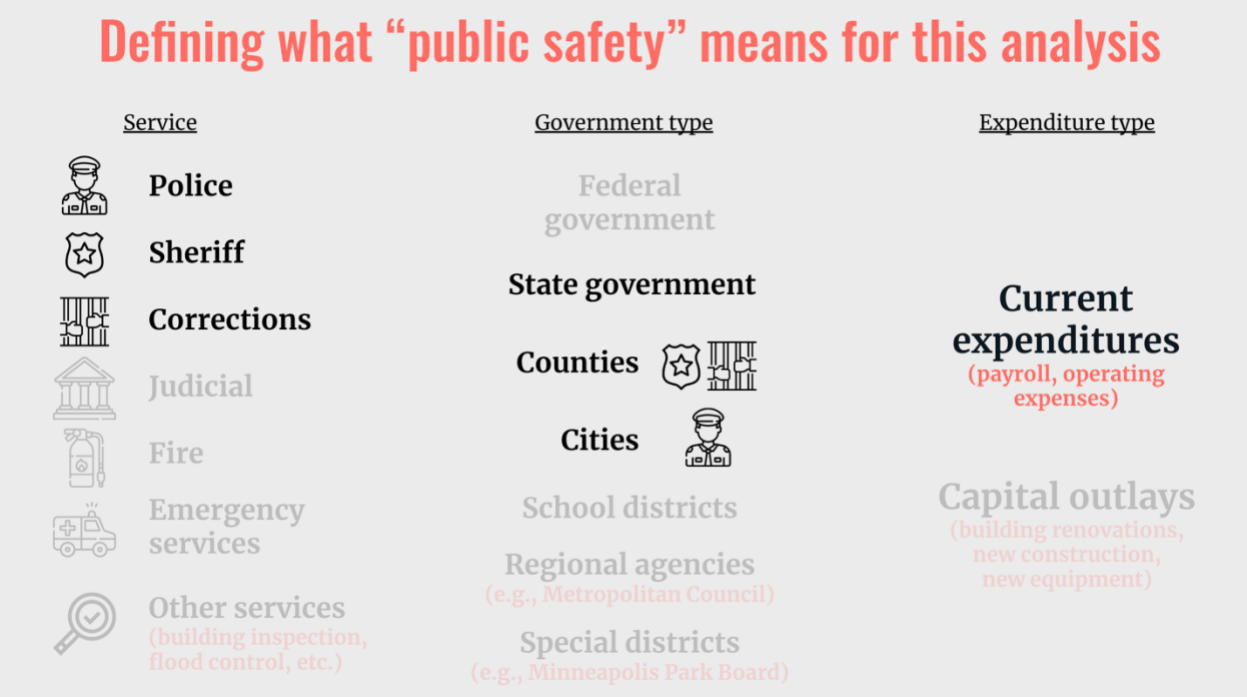


Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics at the U.S. Department of Justice, 2019

[22] Biden, Joe. "Biden's Remarks on McCain's Policies." *The New York Times*, September 15, 2008, sec. U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/15/us/politics/15text-biden.html.

According to the DOJ, governments across all levels in the United States spent $142 billion on police, $88 billion on corrections, and $65 billion on judicial costs in 2016, the latest available data. Each level of government shoulders different responsibilities. Local governments (a category that includes cities and counties) account for more than two-thirds of total police spending, and one-third of corrections spending. State governments account for 58% of corrections spending, but just 11% of police spending. The federal government, meanwhile, accounts for more than 20% of total police spending, nearly 25% of total judicial spending, and just 8% of corrections spending.

The remainder of this analysis examines a subset of public safety budgets in the state of Minnesota. In selecting my scope, I sought to strike a balance between the broad definition of public safety offered by the Department of Justice and narrower definitions that equate public safety with municipal police budgets (or just the Minneapolis police budget). The following graphic visualizes how I define "public safety" in this analysis.



Though local governments often include fire services, emergency services, building inspection, and more within the budget category of "public safety," I focus on police, sheriffs, and corrections, the services that have generated sustained criticism over decades, and inflict some of the most tangible harms on residents. I focus on public safety budgets at the state, county, and city level in Minnesota, as these governments invest the most in public safety within the state. [23] And I focus on current expenditures: officer salaries, regular training, and other ongoing expenses, which comprise the vast majority of police and corrections spending. In doing so, I leave out capital outlays, which are subject to greater year-to-year variation, are often funded through mechanisms outside of regular city budget processes, and are accordingly less easily directed (and re-directed) by local officials.

[23] This analysis leaves out federal direct spending, but not federal funds that are channeled through states, counties, and cities, and are therefore included in those jurisdictions' expenditures.

Every level of government in Minnesota invests in public safety

The state government, county governments, and city governments in Minnesota each invest over one billion dollars annually in public safety services.

The state government's public safety budget

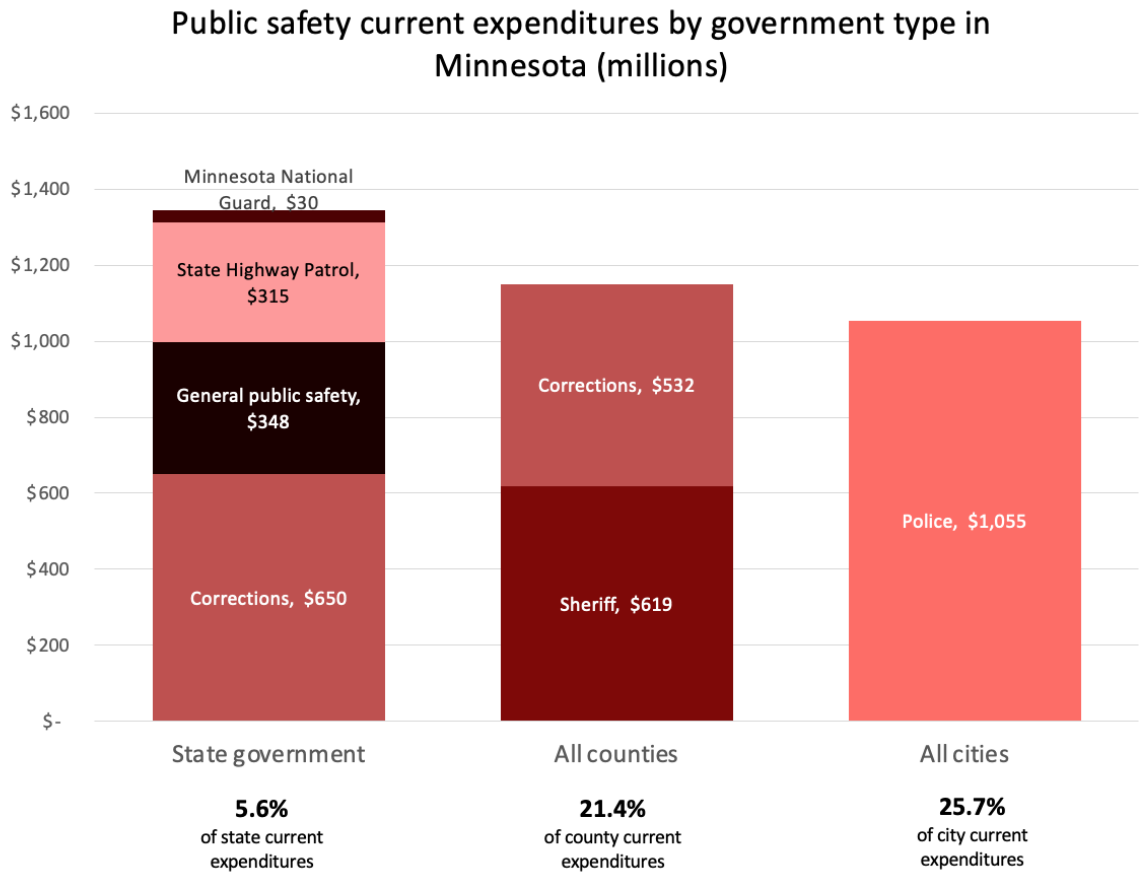
The state of Minnesota's expenditures on policing and corrections services are predominantly concentrated into two of the state's 11 "bill areas" of spending: "Public Safety & Corrections," which includes crime prevention services, correctional institutions, and state courts; and "Transportation," which includes the State Highway Patrol.

Corrections is largest component of the state government's public safety budget: in FY2020, the state spent an estimated $650 million on its prison system.[24] The state spent approximately $348 million on a range of public safety services, including homeland security, alcohol and gambling enforcement, and emergency communications.[25] It spent $315 million on the State Highway Patrol. The Minnesota National Guard, though primarily funded by the federal government, received approximately $30 million – 5.3% of its total budget – from the state government that year.

Collectively, these expenditures constitute just 5.6% of the state's approximately $24.2 billion current expenditures budget in FY2020. Funding public safety is thus a relatively small aspect of the state government's responsibilities. Yet because of the size of the state's budget, the state remains the largest single funder of policing and corrections spending in Minnesota. The $1.3 billion it spends annually far exceeds public safety expenditures by the cities of Minneapolis (approximately $176 million in 2018), Saint Paul ($107 million), and Rochester ($27 million), and the counties of Hennepin ($231 million in 2018) and Ramsey ($122 million). See the first column of the graphic below for a breakdown of major state public safety expenditures.

[24] The State of Minnesota adopts a biennial budget, or one that runs for the length of two calendar years. For comparative purposes, the figures I use are estimated annual spending, which were calculated by dividing state expenditures by two. Fiscal years for the state of Minnesota run from July 1 to June 30, so FY2020 corresponds to spending estimates between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

[25] "Public safety" at the state level also includes the State Fire Marshal and Minnesota Firefighters Training, categories of spending that I exclude from city and county figures but was unable to at the state level. Accordingly, state expenditures somewhat overestimate police-related expenditures.



Note: These estimates use the most recent confirmed data: state government estimates are from 2019, while county & city estimates are from 2018
Sources: "Current Estimates of State Budget," Minnesota Management and Budget; "2018 Minnesota County Finances Report" and "2018 Minnesota City Finances Report", Minnesota State Auditor

County governments' public safety budgets

County governments play a particularly important role in funding public safety expenditures.

Their sheriff's offices have similar law enforcement powers as municipal police departments. Sheriff's offices also operate county jails, enforce evictions, and provide security for county courts. Minnesota's 87 counties spent a total of $619 million on sheriff expenditures in 2018, which comprised 13.1% of total current expenditures.[26]

Unlike cities, county governments also manage correctional facilities, probation offices, and help centers for returning citizens. [27] Counties spent $532 million on corrections in 2018, comprising 11% of current expenditures.

[26] The best available data for county expenditures comes from the Minnesota State Auditor, which collects and publishes financial audit information on an annual basis. As this data is verified based on audit records, there is a lag in its availability – the latest available data is from 2018.

[27] Some cities do operate jails and holding cells. These costs are included in their police expenditures, as their police departments typically operate them.

Collectively, counties in Minnesota spent nearly $1.2 billion on public safety current expenditures in 2018 – on par with what the state government spends – comprising 21.4% of counties' current expenditure budgets.[28] County spending on public safety vary greatly by county, as will be explored in a later section.

City governments' public safety budgets

Cities hold different public safety responsibilities than counties or states – while they don't maintain correctional facilities or courts,[29] many maintain large, independent municipal police forces, and as a result spend larger shares of their budgets on policing.

In 2018, Minnesota's 823 cities collectively spent $1.06 billion on police current expenditures, which amounts to 24.9% of cities' total current expenditures. Spending on public safety varied widely by city, as will be explored in a later section.

Other public safety expenditures in Minnesota

While the state, county, and city governments constitute the largest funders of policing services, many other public institutions and private organizations pay for police, either through independent police forces and security details or through contracts with local police departments and off-duty officers.

In the days after George Floyd's death, a number of these institutions and organizations in Minneapolis ended or significantly limited existing contracts with the MPD, including the University of Minnesota, the Minneapolis Public School System, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and a number of local concert venues, museums, and businesses.

Another way to understand public and private investment in public safety services in Minnesota is through employment levels among occupations most closely connected to public safety functions. The following estimates from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development reflect the total number of public and private-sector jobs in major public safety-related occupations in the state, their comparison to national employment levels, and the degree to which these jobs are concentrated in the 7-county Twin Cities region.

[28] Current expenditures comprise about three-quarters of total county expenditures, and capital outlays are the largest remaining expense. Counties spent another $28 million on capital outlays for sheriffs departments and $55 million for corrections. See the Appendix for a comparison of public safety-related capital outlays between the state government, counties, and cities in Minnesota.

[29] City police departments also maintain holding facilities or jails, whose costs are included in police budgets. These are distinct from correctional facilities (prisons), which generally hold people for longer periods of time.

Fewer people hold public safety jobs in Minnesota compared with national averages

Public safety employment in Minnesota across major occupations, 2020

Occupation	Employment	Per 1,000 workers in MN	Percent above/below national employment levels	Over/underrepresentation in the 7-county Twin Cities region
Security Guards	10,890	3.8	-51%	24%
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	9,820	3.4	-25%	-12%
Correctional Officers and Jailers	4,860	1.7	-41%	-42%
First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives	1,510	0.5	-37%	-14%
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	1,390	0.5	-33%	10%
First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	450	0.2	-51%	-36%

Source: "Occupational Employment Statistics," Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Several takeaways emerge from this data. First, the single most common public safety job in Minnesota is security guard. The nearly 11,000 security guards employed in Minnesota surpass the total number of frontline state, county, and municipal police and sheriff's patrol officers. Put another way, nearly 4 in every 1,000 workers in Minnesota are security guards. These occupational categories include workers in both public and private sectors; assuming that a large fraction of security guards are employed by non-governmental organizations, this suggests a significant role for the private sector in funding services that maintain order across the state.

The second takeaway from the table above is that there are roughly twice as many police and sheriff's patrol officers (9,820 officers) as correctional officers (4,860 officers) in Minnesota. Policing remains the largest source of employment in the public safety sector, despite the dramatic increase in the state's incarceration rate over the past four decades. Approximately 4.4 of every 1,000 workers in Minnesota work in policing occupations, and another 2 workers per 1,000 work in corrections.

A third takeaway is that Minnesota's rates of employment across all public safety occupations fall significantly below national averages. The state has 51% fewer security guards, 25% fewer police and sheriff's patrol officers, and 41% fewer correctional officers per capita than the nation as a whole. This is consistent with other findings that, compared to other states, Minnesota has lower rates of incarceration and investment in criminal justice systems. But perhaps the United States, which has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world, isn't the right yardstick. According to one study by the Prison Policy Institute, Minnesota's incarceration rate is higher than all but eight countries in the world – and exceeds the rates of countries like Brazil, Turkey, and Iran. Lower rates of public safety employment in Minnesota compared to other states doesn't mean that the state wouldn't still do well to further reduce its investments in policing and corrections.

The final takeaway from this data is that following a national trend, employment in public safety occupations is disproportionately concentrated outside of the 7-county Twin Cities region, with the exception of security guards and criminal investigators. Put simply, Greater Minnesota's economy relies more heavily on public safety jobs than the Twin Cities region's economy does.

Larger cities, and smaller counties, spend the most per resident on public safety in Minnesota

"If you grew up in a well-off, predominantly white suburb, how often did you interact with cops? Communities with lots of good jobs, strong schools, economies, and social safety nets are already, in some ways, living in a world without police."

– Minneapolis-based police abolitionist organization MPD150[30]

"We often talk about black and brown communities… as having no resources, and being starved… In fact, there is an incredible amount of investment going into black and brown communities. But it's going into criminalizing them."

- Jennifer Epps-Addison, co-executive director of the Center for Popular Democracy[31]

Spending totals don't reveal where public safety dollars are spent. As the observation from MPD150 above suggests, some communities invest far greater amounts in public safety than others. Understanding how public safety budgets vary across cities and counties in Minnesota lends insight into which jurisdictions invest most heavily in traditional systems of public safety. Doing so also establishes an approximate ceiling for the amount of available resources a community might deploy towards alternative strategies for public safety.

To differentiate spending patterns across urban, suburban, and rural geographies, I categorize cities and counties in Minnesota into one of three regions. "Core county" jurisdictions include cities that are located within Hennepin and Ramsey counties, including Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The "core counties" include many of the most densely populated, urbanized places in the state. Cities that are located within the remaining five counties of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, as defined by the Metropolitan Council, the regional planning agency, are considered to be part of the "Twin Cities suburbs." The cities and counties outside of the Twin Cities metro area, meanwhile, are categorized as "Greater Minnesota."

[30] MPD150, *Enough is Enough: a 150-year performance review of the Minneapolis Police Department*
[31] Mock, Brentin. "What Happens If Cities Stop Spending On Police?" Bloomberg.Com, July 14, 2017. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-14/what-it-really-means-to-divest-from-policing.

Distribution of public safety spending across Minnesota's cities

Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the two largest cities in Minnesota, also have the state's largest municipal police departments. In 2018, Minneapolis spent close to $177 million on policing, while Saint Paul spent $107 million. Other well-funded police departments include cities in Greater Minnesota, such as Rochester, Duluth, and Saint Cloud, and large suburban cities within the Twin Cities metro area, including Bloomington and Brooklyn Park. The following table displays the ten cities with the largest police budgets in the state.

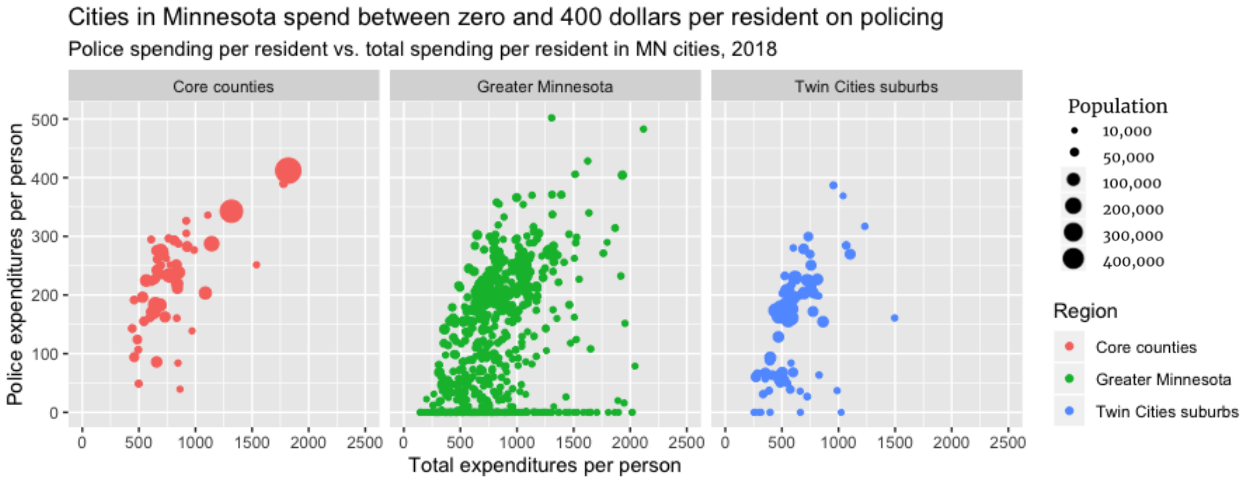
Minneapolis and Saint Paul have the largest police departments in Minnesota

The 10 largest police departments in Minnesota (2018 current expenditures)

Rank	City	Region	Population	Police Expenditures	Total Expenditures	Percent of city budget spent on police	Police expenditures per resident
1	Minneapolis	Core counties	428,483	$ 176,506,000	$ 779,818,704	23%	$ 412
2	Saint Paul	Core counties	313,010	$ 107,284,872	$ 412,371,437	26%	$ 343
3	Rochester	Greater Minnesota	117,444	$ 27,448,744	$ 124,771,008	22%	$ 234
4	Bloomington	Core counties	89,654	$ 25,766,677	$ 102,460,002	25%	$ 287
5	Duluth	Greater Minnesota	87,213	$ 23,804,581	$ 112,685,623	21%	$ 273
6	Brooklyn Park	Core counties	81,679	$ 22,393,731	$ 56,593,873	40%	$ 274
7	Saint Cloud	Greater Minnesota	68,202	$ 17,661,597	$ 56,817,552	31%	$ 259
8	Eden Prairie	Core counties	63,456	$ 14,822,370	$ 48,562,705	31%	$ 234
9	Plymouth	Core counties	78,351	$ 14,390,378	$ 50,709,135	28%	$ 184
10	Burnsville	Twin Cities suburbs	62,657	$ 14,373,574	$ 38,551,491	37%	$ 229

Source: Minnesota State Auditor, 2018 City Finances Report

Minneapolis and Saint Paul also spend more dollars per resident on public safety than most cities across the state. Minneapolis spends more than $400 per resident on policing; Saint Paul spends $343 per resident. These are among the highest public safety expenditures per resident of any city in Minnesota. [32] The scatterplot below reveals the extent of public safety expenditures per resident in cities across the state, separating cities by region for readability.



[32] "Cities" is defined broadly here as any incorporated place, ranging in population from Minneapolis' 428,000 to Bary's 13 residents.

This scatterplot reveals several relevant insights about the nature of public safety spending across Minnesota's cities. With a few exceptions, no city in Minnesota invests more than about $400 per resident in public safety, and many spend far less. Public safety expenditures are a sizable budget category for most cities, nearly always surpassing city expenditures on parks, economic development, and housing, for instance.[33] Still, these expenditures suggest that public safety budgets alone likely couldn't support major social policies like universal jobs programs, tuition-free college, or basic incomes for residents.

Several hundred small cities, nearly all of which are located in Greater Minnesota, don't spend any funds on public safety.[34] These are jurisdictions that do not maintain active municipal police forces, and rely on county sheriffs for their public safety needs. Meanwhile, other small cities in Greater Minnesota spend hundreds of dollars per resident on public safety.[35]

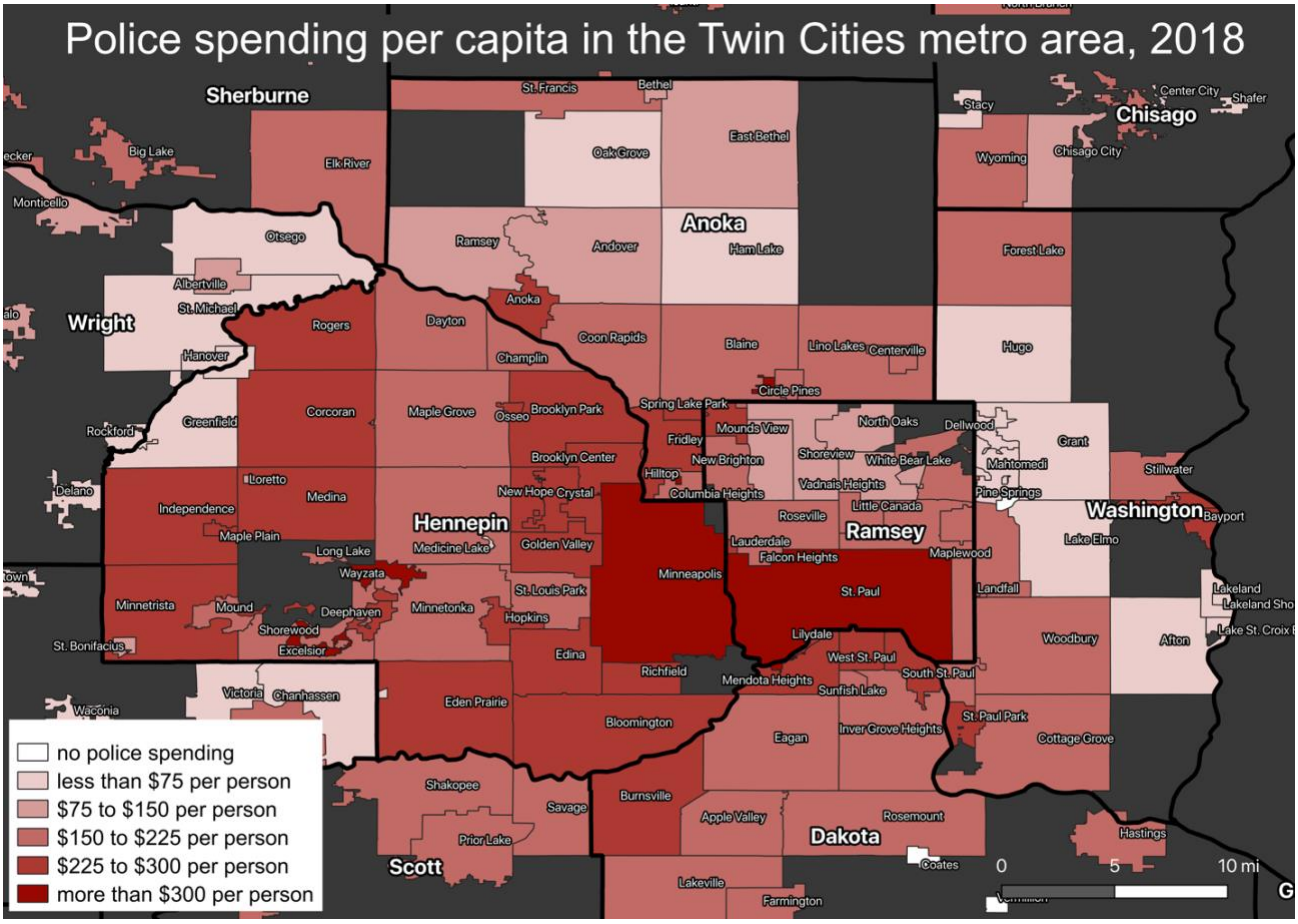
Lastly, most cities, including nearly all in the core counties and Twin Cities suburbs, have limited resources, spending less than $1,000 per resident on all city services. Put another way, the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul have far more public resources per capita at their disposal to invest in services than most other jurisdictions in Minnesota.

Differences in public safety spending across the Twin Cities metro area can be seen in the following map. Many jurisdictions in the Minneapolis suburbs spent between $225 and $300 per resident on public safety, and most of the remaining inner-ring suburbs spent at least $150 per resident on policing. The suburbs located farther from the core cities, meanwhile spent even less – jurisdictions like Ham Lake, Hugo, and Grant spent less than $75 per resident on policing: less than one-fifth of what Minneapolis residents pay.

[33] Author's calculations using data from the 2018 City Finances Report.

[34] The jurisdictions that didn't report police expenditures in 2018 had extremely small populations: just four had populations greater than 1,000 residents, and none had populations above 5,000.

[35] High public safety expenditures in Greater Minnesota are often driven by extremely small populations; some jurisdictions that maintain police departments are home to just a few thousand residents, which leads to high ratios of public safety spending per resident. Why some rural jurisdictions maintain police forces while others rely on county sheriffs is an intriguing question that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this research.



This initial review of how public safety budgets vary across Minnesota's cities could serve as an entry point for further inquiry into the factors that drive public safety spending. My analysis suggests that smaller cities actually spend larger shares of their budgets on public safety than larger cities; that cities with more Black residents are slightly more likely to have larger public safety budgets; that cities with very low public safety budgets tend to have very high shares of white residents; and that wealthier cities spend approximately the same per resident on public safety as less-wealthy cities. Additional maps and charts exploring these questions can be seen in the appendix.

For the purposes of this research, however, the data above offers a few lessons that can inform conversations about public safety budgets. Larger cities tend to spend not just larger aggregate amounts on public safety, but also larger amounts per resident. Accordingly, these cities are worthy testing grounds for conversations about how to invest in better systems of public safety. And many other cities – those that maintain municipal police departments, at least – spend several hundreds of dollars per resident on these services, suggesting that resources are available across the state for rethinking approaches to public safety.

Distribution of public safety spending across Minnesota's counties

Spending on public safety varies widely across Minnesota's 87 counties. Hennepin County, the most populous in the state, runs the largest sheriff and corrections departments. With an annual budget of approximately $108 million, the Hennepin County sheriff's office is more than double Ramsey County's sheriff's office, the second-largest in the state at around $53 million. The $123 million Hennepin County spent on corrections in 2018 is also nearly twice Ramsey County's $69 million corrections budget, and close to five times the size of the next largest corrections agencies. This is largely a function of Hennepin County's much larger population; unsurprisingly, the state's other large counties tend to have the largest public safety expenditures across the state. The following table displays the ten counties with the largest public safety budgets in Minnesota.

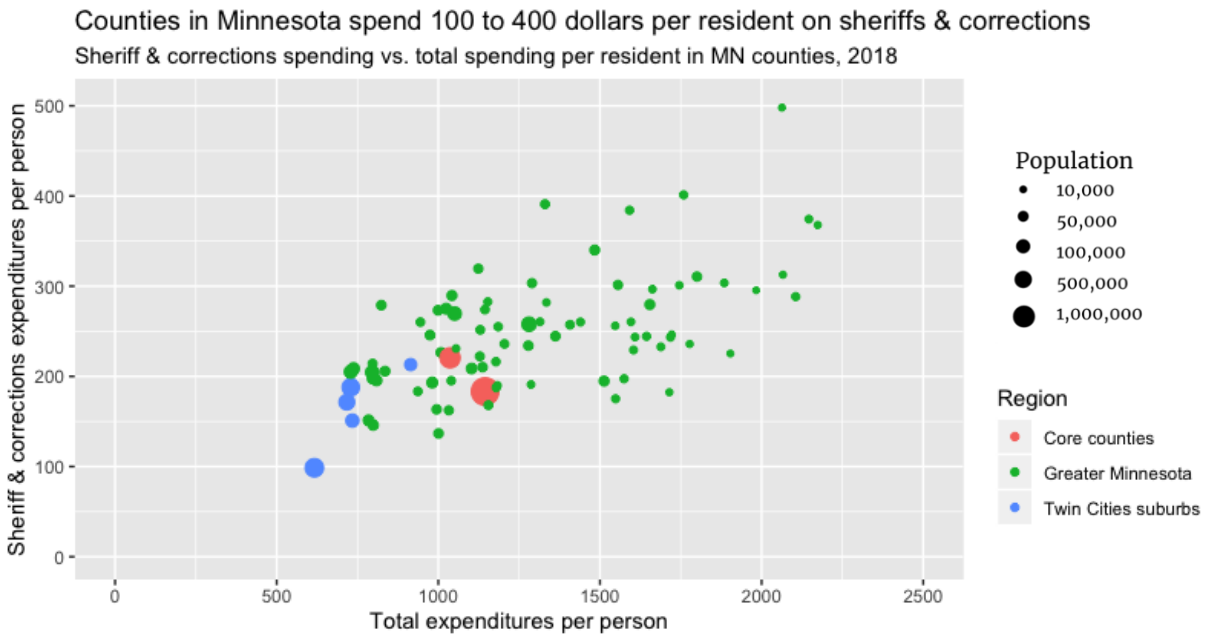
Hennepin County has the largest sheriff and corrections departments in Minnesota

The 10 largest sheriff and corrections departments in Minnesota (2018 current expenditures)

Rank	County	Population	Sheriff Current Expenditures	Corrections Current Expenditures	Combined sheriff & corrections expenditures	Total Current Expenditures	Percent of budget spent on sheriffs	Percent of budget spent on corrections	Percent of budget on combined sheriff & corrections expenditures	Sheriff expenditures per resident	Corrections expenditures per resident	Combined expenditures per resident
1	Hennepin	1,261,104	$ 108,156,123	$ 122,872,302	$ 231,028,425	$ 1,443,521,392	7%	9%	16%	$ 86	$ 97	$ 183
2	Ramsey	552,232	$ 52,652,299	$ 69,147,884	$ 121,800,183	$ 572,331,547	9%	12%	21%	$ 95	$ 125	$ 221
3	Anoka	357,851	$ 42,898,236	$ 24,338,508	$ 67,236,744	$ 260,931,659	16%	9%	26%	$ 120	$ 68	$ 188
4	Saint Louis	200,261	$ 23,803,708	$ 27,828,050	$ 51,631,758	$ 256,461,154	9%	11%	20%	$ 119	$ 139	$ 258
5	Washington	261,512	$ 33,857,858	$ 10,973,307	$ 44,831,165	$ 187,488,153	18%	6%	24%	$ 129	$ 42	$ 171
6	Olmsted	157,446	$ 15,074,200	$ 27,380,731	$ 42,454,931	$ 165,377,514	9%	17%	26%	$ 96	$ 174	$ 270
7	Dakota	428,558	$ 22,174,116	$ 20,104,203	$ 42,278,319	$ 264,209,589	8%	8%	16%	$ 52	$ 47	$ 99
8	Stearns	159,258	$ 12,583,627	$ 19,990,428	$ 32,574,055	$ 126,718,638	10%	16%	26%	$ 79	$ 126	$ 205
9	Wright	136,510	$ 21,081,551	$ 6,903,469	$ 27,985,020	$ 99,511,036	21%	7%	28%	$ 154	$ 51	$ 205
10	Carver	105,970	$ 20,626,236	$ 1,951,819	$ 22,578,055	$ 96,902,973	21%	2%	23%	$ 195	$ 18	$ 213

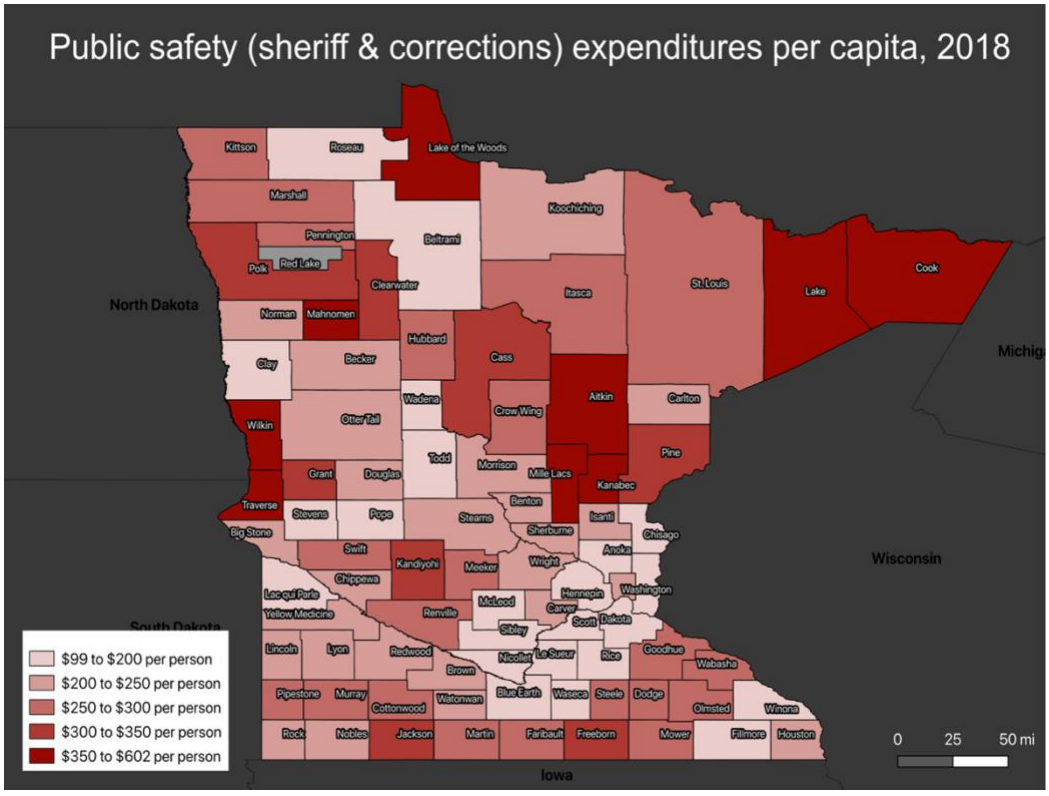
Source: Minnesota State Auditor, 2018 County Finances Report

However, Hennepin County and other urban counties spend less per resident on public safety than counties in Greater Minnesota. Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, and others in the Twin Cities metro area spend roughly $200 per resident on combined sheriff and corrections expenditures. Meanwhile, more than three-quarters of counties in Greater Minnesota spend more than $200 per resident on public safety expenditures. In contrast to cities, in which the larger cities tend to have the largest budgets per resident, counties in Greater Minnesota tend to have larger overall budgets than more urban counties, too. These patterns can be seen in the scatterplot below, which plots combined county spending on sheriffs and corrections against total county spending per resident.



Coinciding with patterns of employment in public safety occupations, which were much more prevalent in Greater Minnesota, counties outside of the Twin Cities appear to be significantly more invested in public safety systems than cities within the metropolitan area.

The following map reveals how counties in Greater Minnesota tend to spend more dollars per resident on sheriff and corrections services than more urban counties.



Hennepin, Anoka, and Washington counties all spend less than $200 per person on sheriff and corrections services. Meanwhile, Cook and Lake Counties in the far northeast corner of the state spend more than $350 per county residents on public safety. Combined public safety expenditures by counties thus match, and in many cases exceed, public safety expenditures in cities. County investments in public safety systems also surpass their investments in other community needs, including health services. My analysis reveals that every county in Minnesota spends more dollars on public safety than on public health.[36]

More thorough analysis to understand the factors that contribute to higher sheriff and corrections budgets in Greater Minnesota is warranted. It's likely that sheriff budgets are higher in Greater Minnesota in part because sheriffs take on a greater share of local policing responsibilities in that part of the state. As seen above, hundreds of smaller cities and towns do not invest directly in municipal police forces, and rely on county sheriffs. And sheriffs also undertake public safety responsibilities for the roughly 950,000 Minnesotans – 17% of the state's population – who do not live in incorporated areas, nearly all of whom live in Greater Minnesota.[37] Corrections spending, meanwhile, is likely higher in more rural parts of the state due in part to long-established patterns of locating prisons in low-density areas as an economic development strategy.

For the purposes of sparking conversations about public safety budgets, however, several key facts emerge from this review of county expenditures. The most populous counties – including Hennepin, Ramsey, and Anoka – spend the greatest amounts on sheriffs and corrections. Accordingly, these counties have the greatest potential to reimagine public safety for the largest number of Minnesotans, and are worthy focal points for local organizers seeking to rethink public safety budgets. Yet residents in the less populous counties of Greater Minnesota may also want to question whether their existing investments in public safety systems are serving them well, as their counties are investing the greatest amounts per resident in these services.

[36] See appendix for a map that compares county investments in public safety and public health

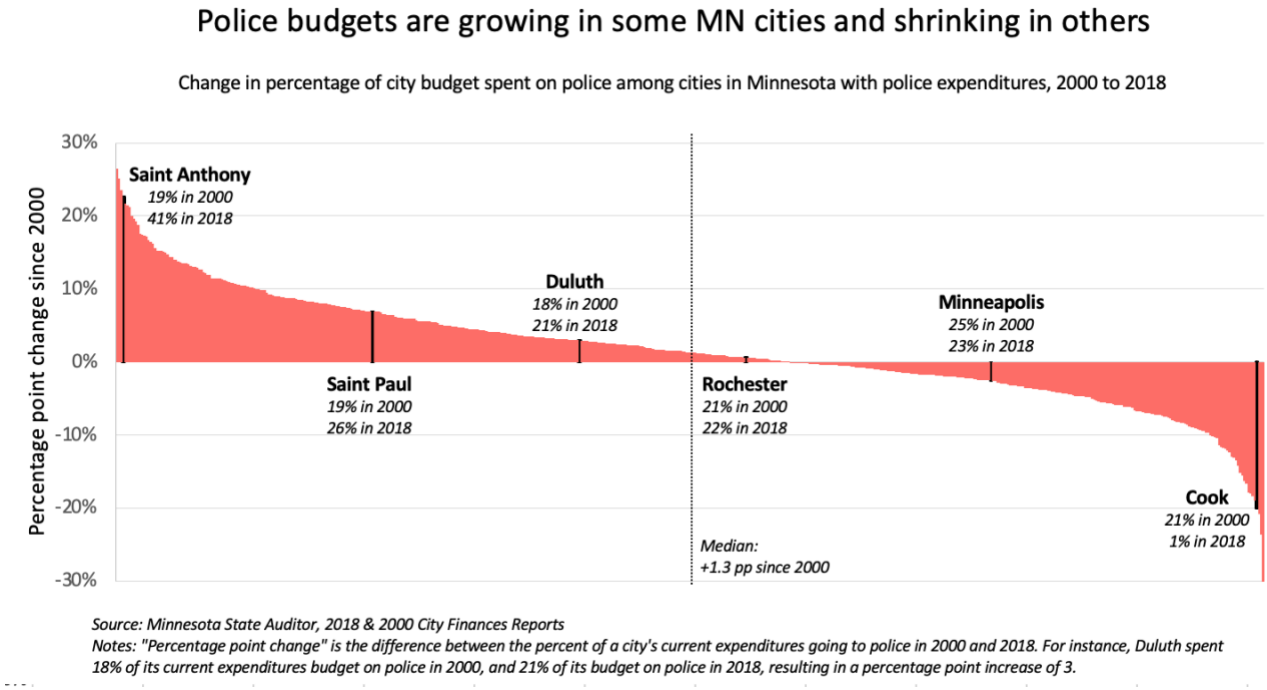
[37] Author's calculations based on population data from the Minnesota State Auditor's 2018 City Finances Report

Most public safety budgets in Minnesota are increasing over time

"At the city level it's very unusual to see public safety budgets cut over time, because the need becomes greater and every time you double down on reforms, you end up transferring more and more of your budget into the hands of the police department."
– Minnesota State Representative Aisha Gomez[38]

Another crucial component of conversations to reimagine public safety budgets is an understanding of how budgets have changed over time. Advocates for reimagining public safety budgets often note that these budgets tend to expand, leaving fewer resources for other public services. As Representative Gomez expresses in the quote above, new policing reforms and technologies, from de-escalation and unconscious bias trainings to ShotSpotter and body cameras, require new financial investments. Advocates make the case, persuasively, that police are typically seen as essential, while after-school programs, community recreation centers, and summer jobs for young people are not, resulting in cuts to the latter before the former when budgets shrink.

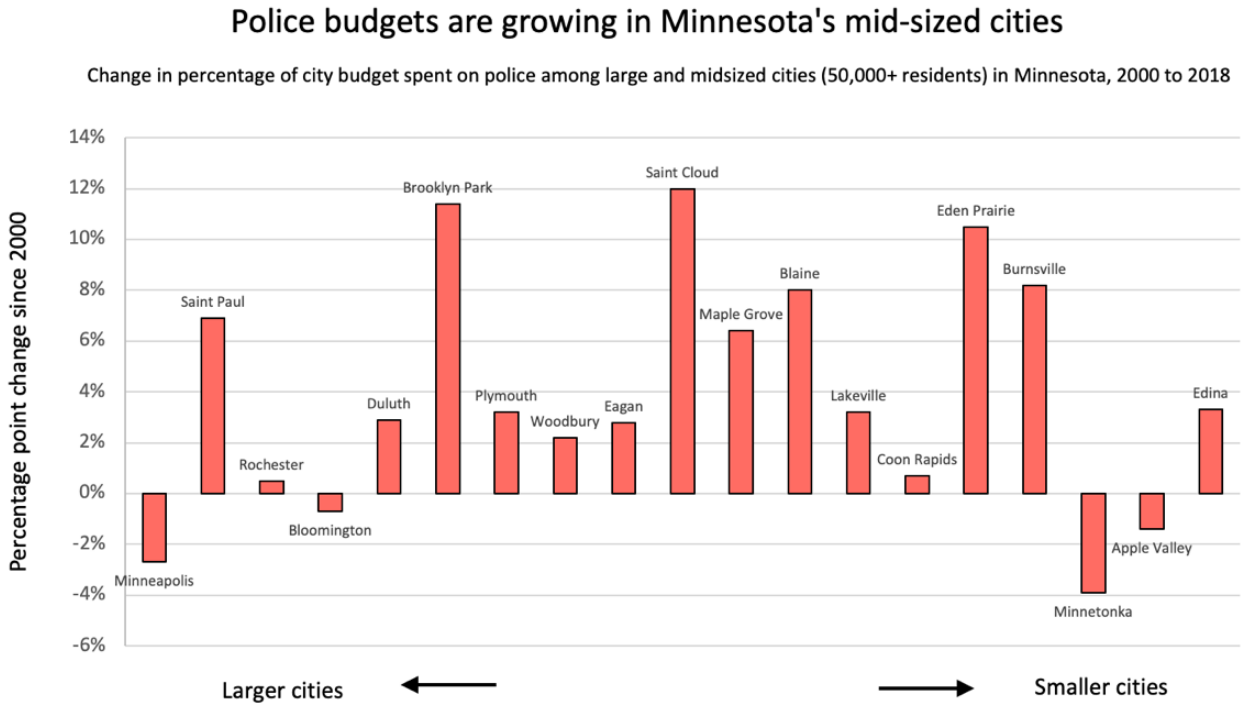
Of the 544 cities in Minnesota that reported public safety expenditures in both 2000 and 2018, 59 percent (319 cities) spent a larger share of their budget on public safety in 2018 than in 2000. The remaining cities reduced public safety expenditures as a percentage of their budget. The typical city's public safety budget increased by 1.3 percentage points since 2000, as can be seen in the following chart.



[38] Conversation with author, December 2020

This data suggests that cities in Minnesota have a range of different police budget trajectories. Some cities have seen a significant increase in spending: Saint Anthony, a suburb of 9,000 residents just west of Minneapolis, saw its spending on police dramatically increase in recent decades, going from 19% of expenditures to over 40%. Saint Paul, the second-largest city in the state, saw its police budget rise from 19% in 2000 to 26% in 2018. Other cities, like Duluth and Rochester, spent roughly equal shares of their budgets on police in 2000 and 2018. Minneapolis' police budget actually shrank as a percentage of the city's budget, from 25% of current expenditures to 23%. And the cities like Cook, population 547, essentially zeroed out its spending on police between 2000 and 2018. Cook's spending on police dropped to nearly zero in 2009, in the nadir of the Great Recession – it seems likely that the city eliminated its police department during that time of fiscal crisis and opted to rely on Saint Louis County's sheriff for its public safety needs.

Clearly, the city of Cook and the city of Minneapolis have vastly different needs and capacities, limiting the usefulness of their comparison. Among the 19 cities in Minnesota with populations above 50,000, all but four have increased public safety spending over the past two decades.



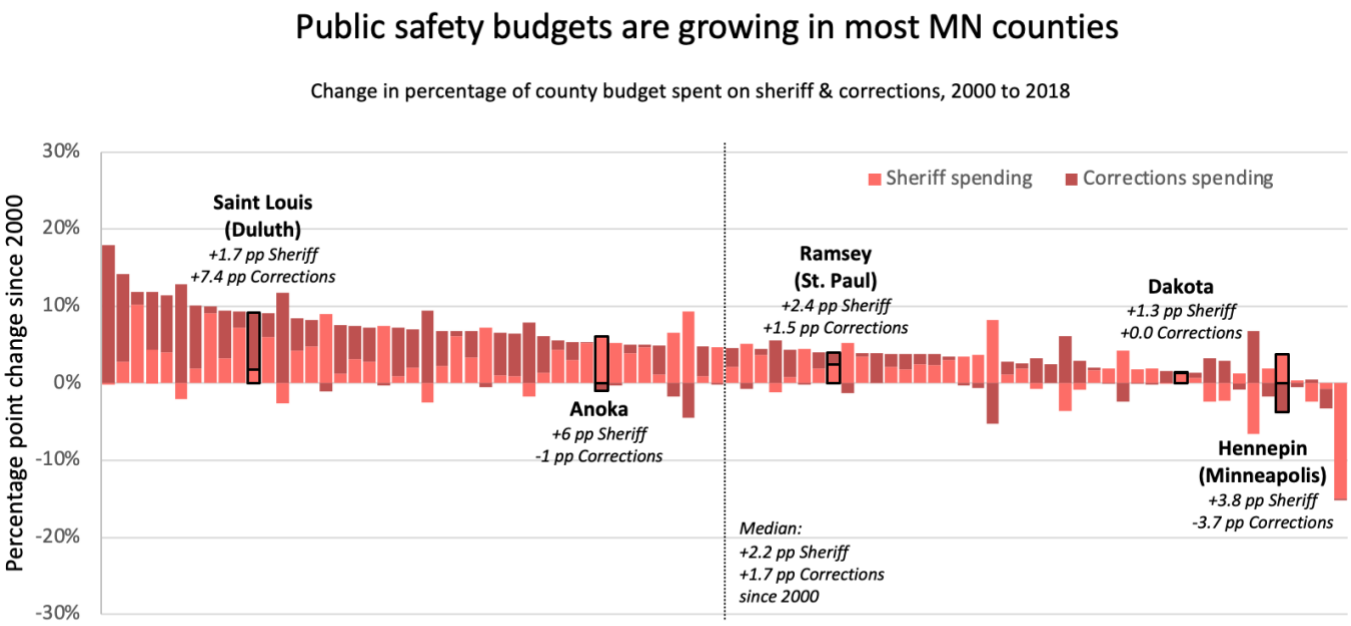
Source: Minnesota State Auditor, 2018 & 2000 City Finances Reports
Notes: "Percentage point change" is the difference between the percent of a city's current expenditures going to police in 2000 and 2018. For instance, St. Cloud spent 19% of its current expenditures budget on police in 2000, and 31% of its budget on police in 2018, resulting in a percentage point increase of 12.

Public safety budgets appear to be rising particularly quickly in mid-sized cities within or adjacent to the Twin Cities metro area. The suburban jurisdiction of Brooklyn Park, for instance,

saw public safety spending increase from 28 percent of its budget in 2000 to 40 percent in 2018. Eden Prairie's public safety spending increased from 20 percent to 31 percent. Others, including Saint Cloud, Maple Grove, Blaine, Burnsville also spend significantly larger percentages of their budget in 2018 than in 2000.

Taken collectively, this data paints a more nuanced story than one of perpetually increasing police budgets. Police budgets are increasing among more than half of cities in Minnesota; remaining stable in approximately one-quarter; and decreasing by sizable amounts for the remainder. Advocates who seek to slow the growth of public safety budgets across the state shouldn't look only to big cities like Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Public attention might be best focused on the rapidly growing, mid-sized suburban jurisdictions that appear to be in the midst of significantly expanding public safety services.

I find that nearly all counties spent higher shares of their budgets on sheriffs and corrections in 2018 than they did in 2000. The typical county spent 8.8 percent of its current expenditures budget on sheriffs in 2000, which increased to nearly 11 percent in 2018; corrections increased from 4.5 percent of the typical county's budget in 2000 to 7.7 percent in 2018. The chart below visualizes county spending on sheriffs and corrections over time.



Source: Minnesota State Auditor, 2018 & 2000 County Finances Reports

Notes: "Percentage point change" is the difference between the percent of a county's current expenditures going to sheriffs/corrections in 2000 and 2018. For instance, the sheriff's office comprised 10% of Anoka County's current expenditures budget in 2000 and 16% in 2018, resulting in a percentage point increase of 6; and corrections comprised 10% of the county's budget in 2000 and 9% in 2018, resulting in a percentage point decrease of 1.

71 of 87 counties spent a higher share of their current expenditures budget on sheriff's services in 2018 than they did in 2000, and 62 counties spent a larger share on corrections during that timeframe. Notably, the counties with the fastest rates of public safety spending growth tended to be less populous ones in Greater Minnesota. The largest counties in the state – including

Ramsey, Hennepin, Dakota, and Washington – saw relatively smaller increases. Hennepin County, where Minneapolis is located, saw its share of the budget going towards the county sheriff double, going from 3.7 percent to 7.5 percent, and its spending on corrections decline from 12 percent to 8.5 percent.

Counties appear to be investing more in sheriff and corrections services than they once did. While this data doesn't reveal why budgets have grown, or how agencies are spending new resources, the expansion of systems that inflict such evident harms on residents does not seem to be an entirely positive outcome.

Budgets are political documents as well as moral ones – the product of intense negotiations among competing interests, responsive to present-day crises, and continually renewed and updated. To gain insight into how conversations about public safety budgets might be carried out, I chose to explore the perspectives of people in the midst of Minnesota's most contentious budget discussions, which centered around policing in Minneapolis.

Section III

Four questions that differentiate perspectives on public safety

Advancing conversations on public safety budgets in Minnesota requires reconciling different roles and visions

Four questions differentiate local perspectives on public safety

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

- *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author*[39]

Based on the interviews I conducted with individuals at the center of current conversations around public safety budgets in Minnesota, I found that conversations are complicated by the different roles that individuals take on and the different visions and tactics they hold on to. While some aspects of current discussions seem profoundly irreconcilable – for instance, it's unlikely that the police abolitionist organization Reclaim the Block and the Police Officers Federation of Minneapolis will ever agree on the role of the Minneapolis Police Department in promoting public safety – other aspects of current discussions seem complementary, even if they are not always treated as such. In this section, I identify four questions that I believe differentiate perspectives on public safety, which can inform ongoing conversations.

Between October and December 2020, I interviewed eight individuals who played a role in shaping conversations about public safety budgets. Selecting people to interview was an imprecise process. Many of the people I spoke with thanks to personal introductions from Neeraj Mehta, whose decades of activism in Minneapolis has led to strong relationships with local organizers, advocates, and policymakers. A personal friend connected me with several others within Minneapolis' activist left ecosystem. And others I reached through direct outreach.[40] Conversations ran for approximately 45 minutes to one hour, and were recorded with participants' consent for accuracy. The individuals I interviewed were:

1. **Aisha Gomez** -*Minnesota State Representative*
2. **Alondra Cano -** *Minneapolis City Council Member*
3. **Chanda Smith Baker -** *Vice President of Impact at the Minneapolis Foundation*
4. **Don Samuels** - *Former Minneapolis City Council Member and resident of Minneapolis' North Side*

[39] Shin, *A Good Time For The Truth: Race in Minnesota*.

[40] Some of the organizations leading the defund movement in Minneapolis – Reclaim the Block and Black Visions Collective – are not represented here, nor are some of the Minneapolis Council Members who most ardently champion the dismantling of the Minneapolis Police Department, including Council Member Ellison and Council Member Cunningham. I reached out to these groups and individuals several times in September and October, but received no reply. It was a challenging moment to ask any person for their time. Many of the people I reached out to shouldered heavy responsibilities and commitments related to antiracist action and movement-building, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, crafting policy, mobilizing voters for an immensely consequential general election, and more. I'm deeply appreciative of those who chose to contribute their time to this project.

5. **Justin Terrell** - *Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Center*
6. **Kieran -** *Activist with the Worker's Defense Alliance*
7. **Ricardo Levins Morales -** *Activist with MPD150*
8. **Steve Fletcher** - *Minneapolis City Council Member*

These individuals brought such richness and depth to these topics that, though my initial intention was to select a few quotes from each, I decided that their words deserved more space. In the appendix, I have included transcripts from my conversations, edited for length and clarity. I introduce each interview with a conceptual framework I've developed to clarify and differentiate perspectives on questions of public safety funding, and lift up themes and concepts from our conversation that seem particularly relevant to this work. To ensure that the people I interviewed felt well-represented by their statements to me, I shared edited transcripts with each person in mid-December 2020 to provide them opportunities to offer edits. All edits I received were minor and have been incorporated. I have made the subjective decisions to place each of the individuals I interviewed along the conceptual frameworks I introduce; any errors in categorizing perspectives are mine alone. Once interviews and reviews were complete, without prior notice, I provided small gifts to participants to thank them for their time in the form of direct payment or contributions to affiliated non-profit organizations.

These perspectives stand on their own, and are worth reading in full. Cumulatively, they reflect a small selection of the many profoundly inspiring and courageous individuals seeking to bring about a fairer and more just Minnesota.

Over the course of the interviews, it became clear to me that while I was asking similar questions of each person I interviewed, our conversations went in quite different directions. Some, like Minneapolis Council Member Andrea Cano and Don Samuels, focused their attention on the immediate challenge of rising levels of crime this summer, and how to address it. Others, like Ricardo Levins Morales at MPD150 and Kieran[41] at the Worker's Defense Alliance, took a longer-term view, focusing on the long history of police abuses and inherently oppressive nature of police departments. Disagreement emerged about what to aim for; and among people who did agree, disagreement about how best to get there.

I came to see that four questions helped me differentiate perspectives on public safety budgets. These are:

First, what role do you primarily see yourself taking on in conversations about public safety?

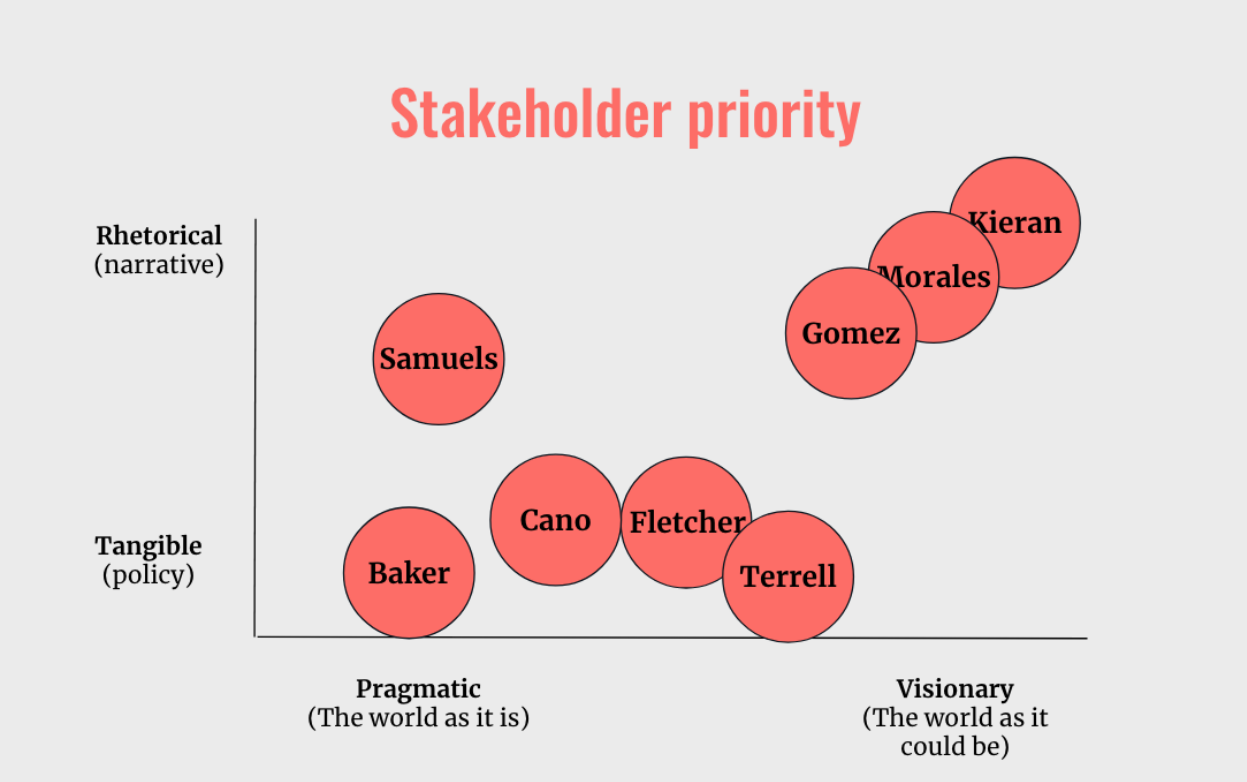
Individuals I spoke with occupied different roles in ongoing conversations about public safety. Interestingly, many were quite conscious of these roles, and offered clear assessments of them.

Based on my conversations, I came to see an individual's role as existing along two spectra, which are displayed in the chart below: from pragmatic to visionary (the horizontal axis), and

[41] Whose last name has been withheld upon request

from rhetorical to tangible (the vertical axis). I've placed the names of each person I interviewed within these axes, based on my conversations with them.

It's worth noting that these categorizations are malleable, not static. A person can shift from speaking in rhetorical terms to tangible ones in a single conversation, just as they can shift from a pragmatic to a visionary mindset. But over the course of these conversations, I found that individuals tended to prioritize one combination of these categories. For this reason, I call a person's focus and self-described role as their "priority."



Ricardo Levins Morales is a good example of someone in the upper right quadrant. He sees his role as highly visionary, thinking about the world as it could be, and rhetorical, advancing narrative change, rather than specific policy proposals. Morales told me: "MPD150 became very clear that we were about narrative. We're not about endorsing this or that policy, or meeting with the chief. We're oriented toward the community. That's where the power is."[42] His primary aspirations are to reach hearts and minds, and many of his comments spoke to that priority.

Local elected officials, such as Council Members Alondra Cano and Steve Fletcher, on the other hand, tend to be closer to the lower left quadrant. They are more pragmatic, prioritizing the immediate needs of their constituents and short-term timelines like annual budgets and upcoming elections, and tangible, seeking specific policies that can be enacted. Council Member Cano told me, for instance, that:

[42] Conversation with author, October 2020

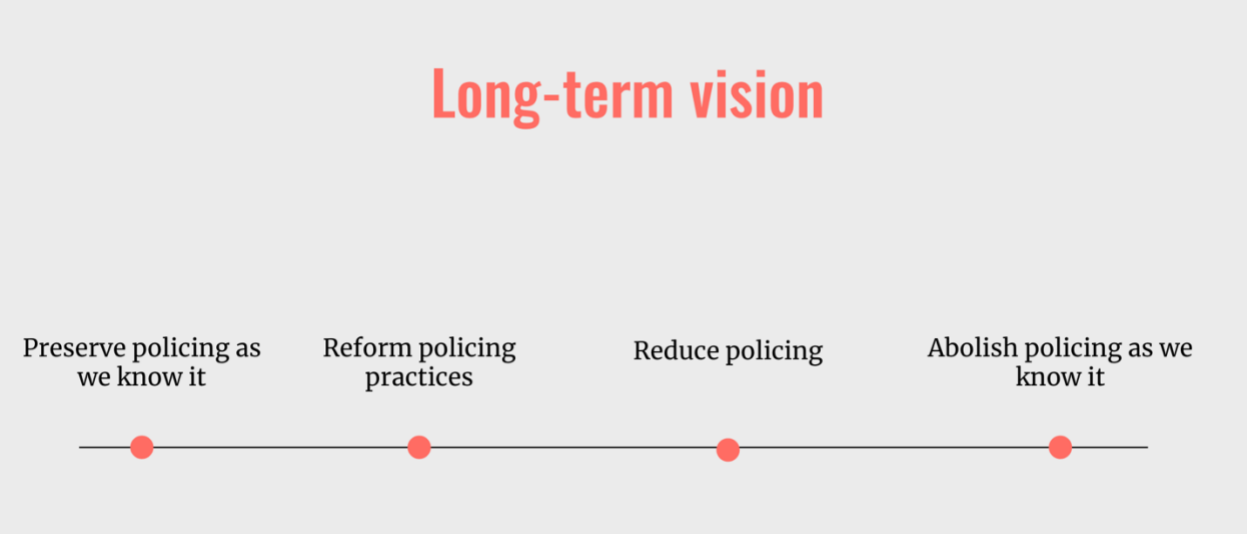
"I wish we would have had a conversation with all of the organizers back in May to say, yes, we can divest from MPD, but first let's build the systems that have been proven to work, to end gun violence and address robberies and theft and all that before we pull the plug on the old system. I can't keep voting to reduce the budget because I have to have an actual plan so my people aren't dodging bullets or being robbed every year."[43]

Cano feels compelled to vote for a specific proposal to reimagine systems of public safety. Meanwhile, Council Member Fletcher noted that: "2021 is going to be a very interesting year, because there are going to be a lot of programs getting piloted around violence prevention… And at the same time we're all up for reelection."[44] As an elected official, he and his colleagues couldn't afford not to consider the short-term political consequences of his actions.

Individuals in the upper left quadrant, such as Don Samuels, focus their attention on the world as it is – in the case of Samuels, responding to what appears to be a police officer slowdown and a surge of violent crime in his neighborhood – and spend time advancing rhetorical arguments as well as tangible policies. Samuels clarified to me: "I'm not trying to add more police. I'm trying to return the police that are missing… In North Minneapolis, we've got every vice being exercised. Now, do you have a solution for that? Because until you do, you can't tell me anything about taking cops away. Don't be naive. This is the real world here." Drawing on his lived experience, Samuels prioritized the immediate risks of rising crime rates above long-term visions for reimagining public safety.

People in the lower right-hand quadrant, such as Justin Terrell, meanwhile focus more on the world as it could be, but with an eye for tangible policies that can move us in that direction. Terrell made the case that "If 'defund the police' means 'put more resources in the community' there needs to be a strategy in place that ties public safety dollars to investments that empower communities to be able to protect themselves." He believes that a profound transformation in our society is necessary, and seeks ways to make this visionary perspective tangible through legislation and budgeting.

Second, what is your long-term vision for public safety?



[43] Conversation with author, October 2020
[44] Conversation with author, October 2020

Perspectives in my interviews fell somewhere along a messy spectrum, from preserving policing as we know it to abolishing policing as we know it. Some, like Chanda Smith Baker and Don Samuels, believe that reforms are necessary but are adamant that police departments should continue to be fully funded. Baker told me, "I have not been able to hear a vision from anyone in the Defund movement on what policing looks like without a police department. You're still going to need policing." She went on to state that most significant efforts to transform institutions usually cost more money, not less; accordingly, she sees removing funds from public safety systems as deeply counterproductive.

Others, like Council Member Steve Fletcher, seek to gradually reduce funding for policing while investing in alternatives. In his interview with me, Fletcher spoke of his goal to "fund replacement services" for the Minneapolis Police Department, expanding pilots and routing calls away from the MPD. His perspective might be categorized as seeking both to reform policing practices and to reduce our reliance on policing overall.

Ardent activists, like Kieran at the Worker's Defense Alliance, believe that policing needs to be abolished entirely. He told me that "based on how they are structured, the police cannot help but be oppressive. There's not a reform that would change that baseline purpose of the police." His vision for public safety includes eliminating the institution of policing entirely and replacing it with hyperlocal neighborhood defense organizations, mental health responders, and other alternatives. Minnesota State Representative Aisha Gomez, who represents the district where George Floyd was murdered, is one of the few Minnesotan politicians who is unabashedly a police abolitionist. Gomez told me, "believing in abolition is an act of hope and vision that's really fucking hard in such a dark time. But as human beings, we have to be able to imagine and work for something that's better. I realize I'm one of like 50 people in the state who actually believes in police abolition."

Third, what strategic approach do you believe will get us there?

My interviews revealed that people belonged to one of three strategic camps when it came to translating visions for public safety into reality. The first, advocated by activists who believed most ardently in police abolition, can be described by the statement "we can't transform the system while maintaining policing as it is." Activists like Kieran and Ricardo Levins Morales saw existing policing institutions as fundamentally incompatible with their long-term visions for public safety. In their *Enough is Enough* report, MPD150 states this argument simply. They write: "Why not fund the police and fund all these alternatives too? … It's not just that police are ineffective: in many communities, they're actively harmful."[45] This view is echoed by national advocates for defunding the police. In her essay "We Should Still Defund the Police," Princeton professor Keeanga-Yamatta Taylor writes:

"The argument to defund the police begins with the recognition of the relationship between robust funding for police and the consistent lack of adequate funding for the programs and institutions that may have the most impact on improving the quality of life for poor and working-class Black people… Bottoming out police budgets will not, on its own, create the resources necessary to build communities anew. But it would shift the balance away from the decades-long orientation on law and order toward treatment and care. The abolition of policing may seem farfetched to some, but, in effect, the racist batter of the police has already been baked. We cannot go back now and decide to take out this or that thing. The whole cake has to be discarded, starting with its most vile ingredient—the presumption of Black criminality and guilt. The reimagining of a just society has inevitably come into conflict with the racist barbarism of American police. We must begin again."[46]

A second strategic camp was defined by people like Council Member Alondra Cano, who believed in fully funding policing while new experiments in public safety took place. Reflecting on her actions in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's murder, Cano told me, "If I were a different city and if I was thinking about doing something like this, I would try to have tried and true systems in place first, before divesting from the police. Right now, we're essentially rock

[45] MPD150. "Enough Is Enough: A 150-Year History of the Minneapolis Police Department." Accessed October 14, 2020. https://www.mpd150.com/report.

[46] Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. "We Should Still Defund the Police." The New Yorker. Accessed October 30, 2020. https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/defund-the-police.

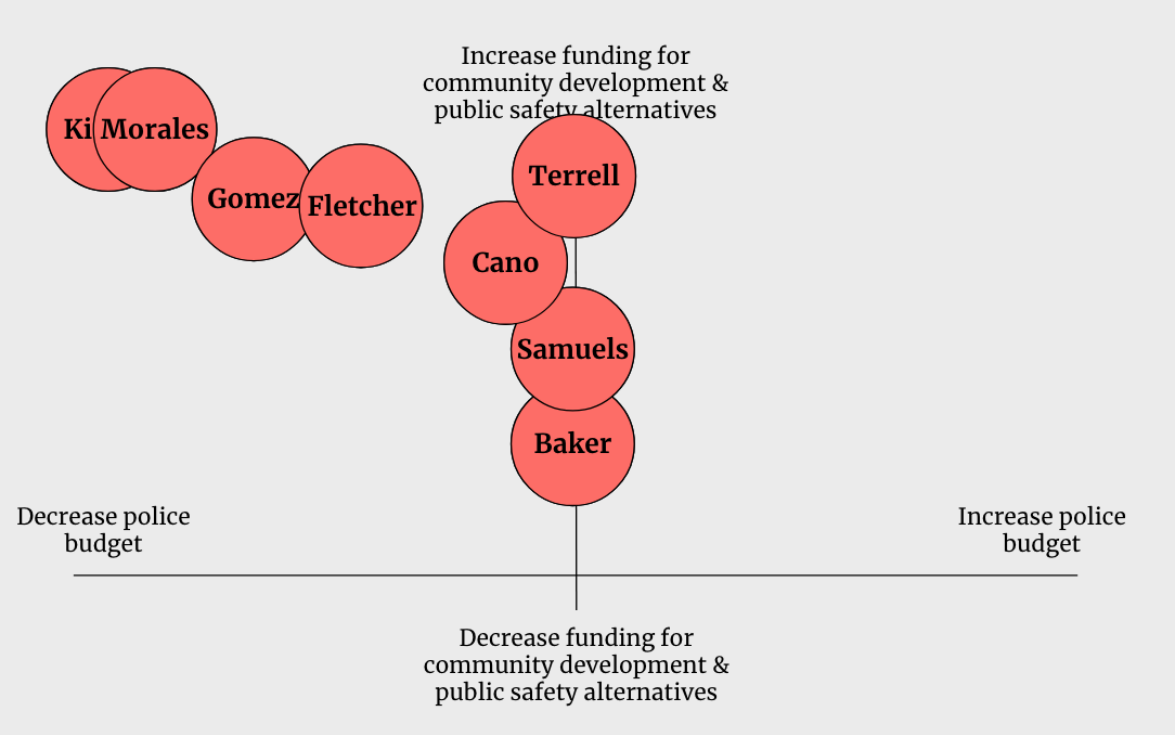
climbing without a rope."[47] Months after pledging to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department alongside eight other Minneapolis City Council Members, Cano came to believe that traditional systems of policing should largely be maintained as alternative models are tested.

Chanda Smith Baker and Don Samuels defined a third strategic approach, which can be summarized by the statement "the police aren't at fault for underlying challenges, and strategies to address each should be decoupled." Baker and Samuels readily acknowledge that aspects of modern policing are persistently unjust, and that society's failure to address root causes of crime are leading to unsafe conditions. Yet by and large, they view these challenges as requiring distinct strategies. Baker make the case for "de-centralizing" police in ongoing conversations, observing that mass protests over the summer raised issues of officer accountability, ensuring justice for victims of crime, emergency response protocols, unmet community needs, and other challenges. Baker told me that these issues "are all related, but [require] different strategies. And right now they're being developed and communicated as though they're the same." Samuels, a former Minneapolis City Council Member, noted that he's been concerned about policing practices ever since he moved to North Minneapolis decades ago, but that in his mind, this was "a secondary issue" to the "inferior quality of life" that his neighbors were living amidst widespread criminal behavior and violence.[48]

Fourth, what tactics in the short term do you believe are needed?

Based on their long-term vision and strategic approach, people I interviewed adopted different tactics when it came to public safety budgets. The chart below lends insight into these tactics. Across the horizontal, individuals ranged from wanting to decrease police budgets to wanting to increase them. Along the vertical axis, individuals expressed varying degrees of support for increasing funding for public safety alternatives such as violence prevention teams, mental health services, and jobs programs.

[47] Conversation with author, October 2020
[48] Conversation with author, October 2020



Those at the forefront of the abolitionist movement, including Morales, Kieran, and Representative Gomez wanted to cut police budgets and redirect the money to alternatives immediately; people like Terrell and Cano generally sought to maintain police budgets while investing in new models; and still others, including Baker, believed that more funding wouldn't address the underlying systemic challenges at play. During our conversation, Baker told me: "my position is that money won't solve [public safety]. I think that this has become a monetary argument – and I do think there need to be deeper investments – but I don't think this is [just] a money issue. I think that racism is at the root."[49]

Collectively, the eight individuals I interviewed had some amount of agreement on a tactical approach to budgets. Most agreed that new investments in community development and alternative approaches to providing public safety were necessary, though some were less confident that these investments alone could address underlying challenges. And perspectives on police budgets ranged from 'dramatic cuts' to 'maintain budgets as they are.' Notably, the strongest supporters of funding the Minneapolis Police Department, Don Samuels and Chanda Smith Baker, stopped short of calling for increasing funding for the department. Unlike some other perspectives in the Twin Cities, as will be explored in the following section, the people I interviewed had a common interest in exploring the underlying structural inequalities within existing systems of public safety, even if they differed on potential responses to them.

[49] Conversation with author, November 2020

Advancing conversations on public safety budgets in Minnesota requires reconciling different roles and visions

"We are living in the midst of one of the greatest challenges in human history: how to stitch together a demographically complex public. Only when we address this challenge will we have the capacity to build equitable, just, and truly democratic communities."

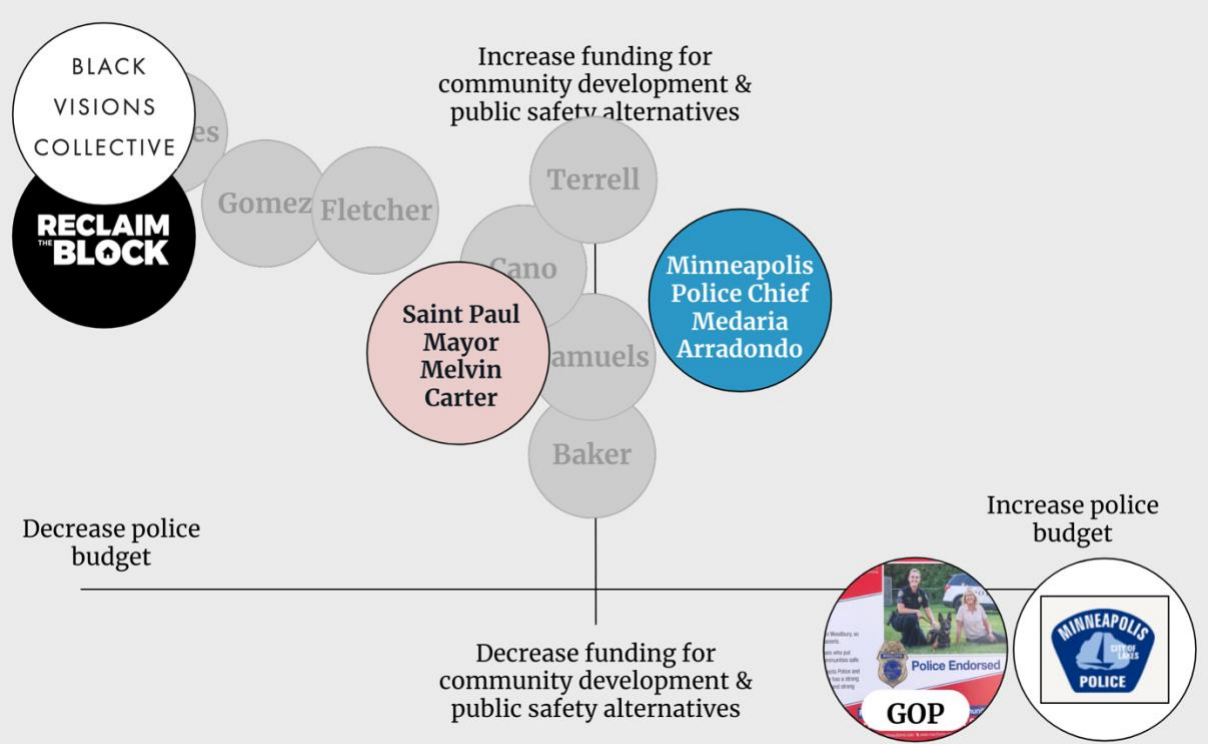
- *MIT Professor Ceasar McDowell*

My interviews revealed that current conversations around public safety budgets in Minnesota to complicated by differing roles, visions, and tactics. Ultimately, as Professor Ceasar McDowell articulates in the quote above, the work of democracy is to reconcile with this complexity and determine paths forward that produce a fairer and more just society than the one we live in today. This requires an understanding of the range of viewpoints. This section builds on the conceptual framework developed previously, adding in other prominent voices that define conversations around public safety budgets in Minnesota today.

I find that prominent stakeholders take on significantly different roles, as can be seen in the chart below.

In the upper right quadrant, Black Visions Collective tends to focus on organizing and direct action in support of an aspirational society. Reclaim the Block seeks to put those principles in action by lobbying local officials, and therefore tends to engage in a more tangible, policy-based way.[50] Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter sits squarely between pragmatic and visionary, and closer to tangible than rhetorical, as he works to reconcile competing visions to maintain his city's police force while investing in alternative models. Minneapolis Police Chief Arradondo focuses primarily on immediate threats to public safety and the concrete actions he and his department can take. Meanwhile, state GOP leadership has focused intently on the world as it is, responding to and stoking fears of violence and lawlessness in cities like Minneapolis; rather than offer tangible policy proposals, Republican officials have offered sharp rhetoric. The police federation of Minneapolis is similarly focused on its current membership – the officers who are currently serving in the department – and has staunchly resisted calls to reimagine public safety.

Key stakeholders propose substantially different tactics to achieve visions of public safety as well.



Reclaim the Block and Black Visions Collective are clustered in the upper left quadrant: like MPD150's Ricardo Levins Morales, and Kieran from the Worker's Defense Alliance, they push for immediate, dramatic cuts to the police budget and major increases in community

[50] The strategic distinctions between Reclaim the Block and Black Visions Collective are blurry at best; Reclaim the Block and Black Visions manage their finances jointly and regularly collaborate, as they did in the now-famous community meeting in Powerhorn Park with nine Minneapolis City Council Members. These organizations, like all organizations and individuals placed in the graphic above, do operate across all quadrants to varying degrees. One example of a tangible, pragmatic action from these organizations is their ongoing effort to distribute more than $30 million in donations they received in 2020 to partner organizations and individuals who share their vision.

development and public safety alternatives. For several years, Saint Paul's Mayor Melvin Carter has indicated his preference for not adding more police officers to his force and gradually diverting funding to alternatives. Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo has asked for increased funding to respond to the surge in violent crime in 2020, while indicating support for additional investments that can address social challenges police officers aren't equipped to handle. Republicans in the state, meanwhile, have politicized "defund the police" and staked out a strong position against cutting police budgets. They have shown little interest in raising new revenues and directing more funding to public safety alternatives. Clustered in the bottom right alongside Republican officials are police unions, such as the Police Officers Federation of Minneapolis, which have demonstrated their strong support for additional funding. Placing stakeholders on a graphic like this is an inexact process, to be sure; yet it shows the contours of existing debates about how governments should invest their public safety dollars.

By my estimation, movements to spark social change require some combination of the roles revealed in my interviews and analysis. They need people to create narratives that resonate with broad audiences, and people to translate narrative into tangible policies; people to think deeply about what the world could be, and people to respond to the world as it is. None of these roles seems inherently less valuable than any other, though some may be more helpful than others in certain contexts. For instance, it's clear that visionary, narrative-driven activists like Ricardo Levins Morales have profoundly reshaped conversations about public safety budgets in the state. It seems likely that without these efforts to call attention to the resources cities and other governments spend on traditional systems of public safety, and to consider how else systems of public safety might operate, far fewer of us would be talking about public budgets in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

Yet these narratives will matter if they succeed in shifting budgets, policies, and practices in tangible ways. Narrative without policy is inadequate, as is policy without a broader narrative. Each perspective holds important truths, and facilitators and participants in future conversations should recognize the power of bringing these roles together.

When it comes to participants' long-term visions for public safety, the strategic camps they belong to, and the tactics they propose to advance their vision, however, common ground is likely to be harder to find. It's clear that there are profound and possibly irreconcilable disagreements between some of the individuals and organizations shown in the charts above. Any particular jurisdiction must ultimately advance a singular vision for how to provide safety for its residents. The Minneapolis Police Officers Federation and MPD150 organizers, for instance, hold near-oppositional visions for public safety. Which vision is carried out in the coming years depends on the political coalitions that are built around each.

Section IV

Guiding questions for public safety conversations

Despite fiscal pressure, most cities' and counties' public safety budgets remain unchanged in 2021

Lessons from Austin, Los Angeles County, and Oregon

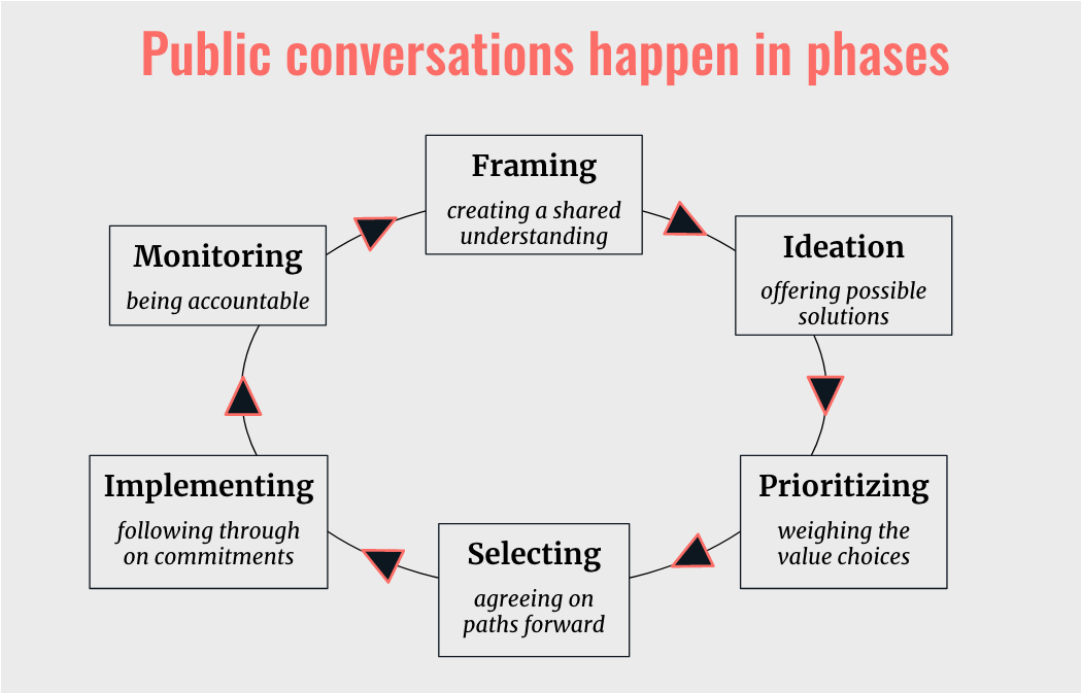
Expanding conversations about public safety budgets in Minnesota

Guiding questions for public safety conversations

The nuanced and sometimes conflicting perspectives of the people I interviewed suggests that the process to collectively reimagine systems of public safety in Minnesota will be a long and challenging one. Yet these interviews also surfaced questions that I believe can help guide further conversations about public safety.

These further conversations will necessarily take many different forms and pursue different goals. There is a need for many different conversations. As alluded to in the conceptual framework described above, some conversations are needed to explore and attempt to reconcile starkly different long-term visions for what public safety can look like. Others will be more tangible, considering and selecting specific initiatives to invest in.

One thoughtful articulation of the many types of public conversations that are necessary to democracy comes from what MIT Professor Ceasar McDowell calls the "Civic Design Framework." The framework describes six "conversation types," each of which hold a different purpose. "Framing" conversations create a shared understanding of the problems at hand. "Ideating" conversations offer potential solutions. "Prioritizing" conversations weigh the merits of different solutions. "Selecting" conversations seek agreement over which paths to take. "Implementing" conversations explore how agreed-upon solutions are carried out. And "monitoring" conversations explore how effectively the chosen paths have addressed the problems that were initially identified. These conversation types can be thought of as phases of deliberative public processes. The following graphic visualizes these phases as a continuous cycle, though these conversations can – and, in my experience – do take place in any order, and simultaneously.



The six conversation types, from Professor Ceasar McDowell's Civic Design Framework

This conversation typology from the Civic Design Framework provides an organizing structure for the questions that surfaced in my interviews. Some questions helped to frame the issues at hand; Chanda Smith Baker calls us to lead our inquiry with the question: "what does community need?" Other questions provide a touchstone to monitor successful interventions; Council Member Steve Fletcher asks "would our new approach to public safety have kept George Floyd alive?"

Here are some of the most powerful questions that emerged from my interviews, organized by which type of public conversation they would support:

Framing *(Creating a shared understanding)*

- What is *your* role in efforts to build a more equitable, just society? *(Morales, Kieran)*
- What problem are we trying to solve? *(Cano)*
- What problems can't be solved by rhetorically connecting funding levels for police and corrections to funding levels for social services? *(Baker)*
- What does community need? (*Morales & Baker*)

Ideation *(offering possible solutions)*

- What is our state's commitment to supporting young people, people with mental health issues, with chemical dependency issues? (*Baker*)
- What investments are needed to provide security for poor people? *(Kieran)*
- What problems can't be solved solely by redirecting public funds? *(Baker, Terrell)*

Prioritizing *(weighing the value choices)*

- How can we move emergency response for non-violent situations out of the hands of law enforcement? *(Fletcher)*
- Which investments address population-level, "horizontal" social problems, and which address more individualized "vertical" ones? *(Morales)*

Selecting *(agreeing on paths forward)*

- What investments align with the principle "nobody gets seconds until everyone has had firsts"? *(Morales)*

Implementing *(following through on commitments)*

- How will different levels of government – including state, county, and city agencies – coordinate to implement new approaches to public safety? *(Cano)*
- Where can money come from to address the needs we have? *(Cano)*
- What role will grassroots community organizations play in implementing public safety strategies? *(Kieran)*

Monitoring *(being accountable)*

- Are public investments helping to address the harmful dynamic that Americans with means tend to distance themselves from poor people, leading to disinvestment and lower-quality public services for poorer communities? *(Samuels)*
- Would our new approach to public safety have kept George Floyd alive? *(Fletcher)*

Despite fiscal pressure, most cities' and counties' public safety budgets remain unchanged in 2021

The questions raised in my interviews come in the midst of a particularly contentious time in Minnesota. Local governments in the state typically finalize their budgets in December for each new year; accordingly, officials set budgets for 2021 in the wake of mass protests against police brutality, the onset of COVID, and an accompanying economic crisis, and amidst financial shortfalls. Still, my initial review finds that with the notable exception of Minneapolis, local governments' public safety budgets in Minnesota remain largely unchanged for 2021.

After comparatively low rates of COVID-19 infection in Minnesota during the summer of 2020, infection rates began to rise sharply in the fall. By the end of the year, more than 7 percent of the state's population (417,000 people) had tested positive for COVID, and more than 5,400 Minnesotans died from the virus. The pandemic put stress on Minnesota's medical infrastructure and led to widespread business closures, layoffs, and furloughs. The impact of the pandemic and accompanying downturn hit people on the margins of society hardest, including the poor, the elderly, those with pre-existing conditions, and Minnesotans of color. Local governments faced fiscally constraints twice over: as constituent needs for health and emergency services grew, cities' revenue projections fell as a result of declining sales and property tax revenue.

At the same time, as Council Member Cano, Council Member Fletcher, Don Samuels, and others noted in their conversations with me, 2020 coincided with a surge in violent crime in some parts of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and other communities across the state. In lengthy community meetings and budget hearings in these cities – held remotely to prevent the spread of COVID – residents called in to demand a response to these unfolding crises. Many called for an increased police presence to keep violence under control; others called for immediate divestment from the police.[51]

The budgets passed by city and county governments in December 2020 therefore reflect the first annual budgets since the onset of the pandemic, the economic downturn, George Floyd's murder, and mass protests across the state. These budgets offer insight into how local leaders across the state are beginning to respond to calls to rethink public safety budgets.

The City of Minneapolis has remained at the epicenter of the ongoing debate about public safety budgets, and its budget process received extensive statewide and national news coverage. Mayor Jacob Frey, who activists have criticized for his unwillingness to embrace calls to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department, initially proposed a $17 million budget cut to the MPD, approximately 9% of the agency's budget. Council Members Lisa Bender, Philippe Cunningham, and Steve Fletcher pushed for additional cuts, ultimately succeeding in redirecting an additional $7.7 million from the MPD to 311 services and programs that provide victims of violence with job training, education, legal help, and housing assistance. The city's final 2021 budget – which was 6% smaller than its 2020 budget due to revenue shortfalls - thus resulted in a 13% budget cut

[51] Author's observations of Minneapolis budget hearings, November 2020

to the MPD from the previous year and invested millions in new emergency response and social services.

Reclaim the Block organizer Sheila Nezhad called Minneapolis' 2021 budget "a tremendous win," and aligned organizations like Black Visions Collective and MPD150 expressed similar positivity about the outcome. Still, these organizations call for much greater funding shifts. In December, these groups, alongside more than 70 other organizations with ties to Minneapolis, released a "People's Budget" for the city. The People's Budget offers the clearest articulation yet of how activist organizations in Minneapolis seek to reinvest public safety dollars. The Budget calls on the city to invest a total of $84 million in community services. This includes:

- $12 million in health, including a rapid-response mobile mental health team, trauma counselors in schools, and safety improvements to the city's streets.
- $50 million to invest in housing for low-income and homeless populations and provide counsel for renters facing eviction
- $12 million in violence prevention, including through street outreach teams, restorative justice processes, and more
- $11 million to support participatory budgeting, services for sex workers, local artists, and other initiatives to support a thriving community.

The People's Budget also demands that the city not increase the size of the police force or involve the MPD in providing the services above. Reclaim the Block, Black Visions Collective, and their partners are the staunchest supporters for police abolition in the state; accordingly, this People's Budget serves as a benchmark for how far activist organizations believe they can push, at least in the short term.

Minneapolis' public safety budget seems poised to change even more in the coming years. Voters will likely have the opportunity to vote on charter amendments in 2021 which would eliminate minimum police staffing requirements and enable the Council to replace the MPD with a new public safety agency. And if the pandemic abates, the city's revenues are likely to increase, creating space for additional investment in the services that groups like Reclaim the Block call for.

Public safety budgets in other major cities in Minnesota remained largely unchanged between 2020 and 2021. Saint Paul's police budget was cut by just 0.8% ($800,000)[52], as the city's total spending declined by 1%. That said, other budget changes are likely in the coming years: the city launched a public safety commission to re-envision its approach to emergency response, which will likely result in lower-level offenses being referred to agencies other than police. Meanwhile, dozens of local organizations, including Roots & Restore Saint Paul, have pressured the city to cut $20 million from its police department, which equates to a 19% cut, and invest it in systems of collaborative governance, community wellness, and racial justice.[53]

[52] Saint Paul's police chief equated this to a $3.8 million (3.5%) cut, due to previously-negotiated salary increases.
[53] The public letter signed by 17 St. Paul-based organizations does not offer specific funding amounts for each category of investment.

City leaders in Duluth and Rochester seem even less swayed by calls to reinvest police budgets. Each city faced budget shortfalls, but maintained their police budget at approximately the same levels as in 2020. Meanwhile, the inner-ring suburb of Edina closed a budget shortfall with a tax increase and added a new police officer.

This preliminary scan of 2021 budgets suggests that outside of the core cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, few cities across the state of Minnesota appear to be actively considering changes to their approach to public safety. While there have been reports of constituents in the Twin Cities suburbs asking local officials about public safety funding, when it comes to budgeting, calls to reimagine policing are indeed limited in their geographic extent.

Minnesota's largest counties have also have not implemented significant reductions in their public safety budgets. Hennepin County's total budget declined by 13% in 2021 – yet the county's corrections spending fell by just 2%, and its sheriff's budget actually *grew* by 1%. The county's health expenditures did increase by 8%, though it's unclear whether these expenses grew in response to the pandemic or calls for better health services instead of policing.

Ramsey County, where Saint Paul is located, cut its sheriff spending by 1.7% in 2021 and its corrections budget by 3.6%, while reducing its total expenditures by 2%. Washington County's budget increased 2% from 2020, and its public safety spending increase by 1%, while its health spending decreased. Anoka County, north of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, increased its public safety expenditures by 6% between 2019 and 2021.[54]

News reports and budget documents of the handful of counties I surveyed contained no mention that these budget shifts were the result of a desire to rethink public safety budgets in the wake of George Floyd's killing. Instead, county leaders spoke of seeking to provide financial relief to lower-income residents suffering during the pandemic, which most counties achieved by keeping tax levies flat. Put another way: advocates' calls to redirect funds from policing to care-based alternatives do not appear to have reached county commissioners, whose budgets fund approximately 25 percent of local policing services statewide.[55]

This review of 2021 budgets reveals that few, if any, cities and counties in Minnesota outside of the city of Minneapolis are intentionally redirecting funding from police budgets towards alternatives. Many of the largest local governments in the state don't appear to be cutting police and corrections budgets much at all. On one hand, it's not unusual that police and corrections budgets are either stable or slightly increasing: as documented in Section II, a majority of cities and nearly all counties in the state have dedicated increasing shares of their budgets to these public safety systems over the past twenty years. On the other, 2020 was a remarkable year. It's striking that Minneapolis appears to be one of the only large cities in the state – and across the United States, according to a CityLab analysis – to respond to these pressures with sizable budget cuts for police. Calls to reimagine public safety are localized, not statewide, at this point.

[54] For reasons that aren't immediately clear, Anoka County's total expenditures doubled between 2019 and 2020, from $342 million to $661 million, and its public safety budget similarly increased. Such a large fluctuation is unusual; accordingly, I have opted to compare the county's 2021 budget to its 2019 budget.

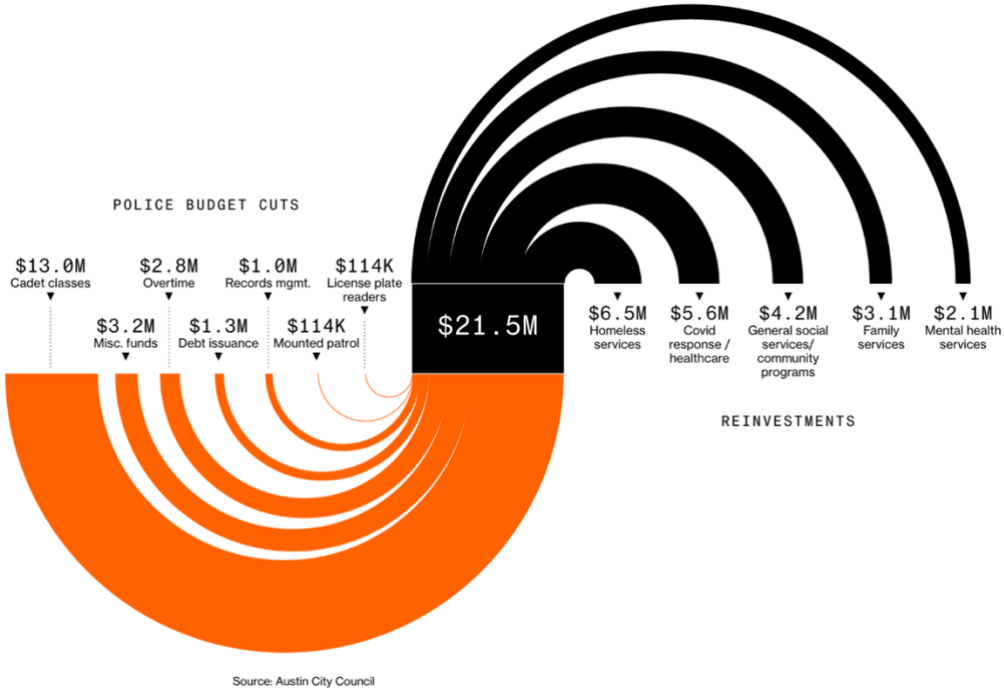
[55] Estimates based on 2018 current expenditures, and are calculated based on the combined total costs from municipal police expenditures and county sheriff expenditures.

Lessons from Austin, Los Angeles County, and Oregon

Does Minnesota's experience – a state at the epicenter of mass protests against police brutality that nevertheless takes only a few tentative steps towards reimagining public safety through budgets – suggest that bolder, more dramatic changes aren't possible in the near term? Not at all. Organizers, advocates, and local officials across the country have been pushing to reinvest public safety budgets, pursuing a vision for public safety in which all residents are safe. Many of these efforts gained momentum in 2020, while others have existed long before then. They have made remarkable progress – and their experiences offer a number of lessons for the movement to build better systems of public safety in Minnesota. Austin, Texas; Los Angeles County, California; and Oregon each provide glimpses of what changes are possible.

Divestment and investment in Austin, Texas

Unbundling of police services & tangible re-investment in alternatives



Austin, Texas has made headlines for being one of the few cities in the United States to make sizable cuts to its police budget in the wake of mass protests in 2020. A CityLab analysis of 34 major cities in September 2020 revealed that Austin made the largest percentage cut to its police budget (34%) and one of the largest aggregate cuts ($150 million) of any city. Though a closer inspection raises questions about how transformative these changes will be for the city's public safety systems, Austin nevertheless offers a compelling example of how cities in Minnesota might reimagine their public safety investments in the near term.

The killing of George Floyd, combined with the Austin Police Department's killing of unarmed Black and Hispanic resident Mike Ramos the month before, sparked mass protests in Austin. Trust in the Austin Police Department continued to erode after their aggressive response to

protests seriously injured at least 41 people, including teenager Brad Ayala; in June, the mayor and all ten City Council members pledged to not accept political donations from the city's police union. As city leaders considered the city's 2021 budget, hundreds of Austin residents offered testimony about their experiences with police brutality and urged that funding be redirected to other strategies to achieve public safety, led by local organizations like the Austin Justice Coalition and Communities of Color United.

In August, the City Council voted unanimously to cut the Austin Police Department's budget by $150 million within the next year, which would represent a 34% decrease to the department's $434 million budget. This marks a striking reversal from recent years: Austin's police budget increased each year since 2009, and has grown by 50% since 2013.[56]

There are three broad categories of redirected public safety funds in Austin. The first is an immediate cut of approximately $20 million, primarily through the elimination of three future police cadet classes, to be reinvested in services to respond to COVID-19, homelessness, mental health, and more. (The graphic above, produced by the Austin City Council, offers a detailed look at how this funding was cut and reinvested). An additional $80 million will be removed from the Austin Police Department over the course of 2021 as part of an effort to "unbundle" services that were deemed to not be essential police responsibilities, including forensics, the 911 call center, and victim services. Another $50 million was pledged to be removed from the police budget and reinvested in "alternative forms of public safety and community support," as identified by a year-long reimagining process.

This budget faced criticism for not going far enough and for going too far. Advocates in Austin pointed out that the immediate $20 million budget reallocation represented just 5% of the police department's budget, and called for actions that go beyond restructuring existing services. One resident noted that "reimagining public safety does not simply mean reorganizing departments." One of the organizations at the forefront of police divestment/investment strategies, Communities of Color United, is pushing for a $220 million cut to the APD – which would be approximately 50% of the department's budget – and reinvestment in public health, low-income housing, and the city's racial equity office. Meanwhile, Texas' conservative governor Greg Abbott threatened cut state revenues for cities like Austin that defunded their police departments. While Abbott hasn't yet used state authority to punish Austin for its budget decision, doing so would constitute yet another example of Abbott's inclination to preempt local policy decisions he disagrees with.

What this means for Minnesota

Austin's example offers at least three potential lessons for Minnesota's cities.

- First, **Austin provides a benchmark for how much of a police department's budget might be redirected to alternative strategies in the short term**. Setting aside the $80 million of funding for services that Austin unbundled from the police department but kept largely intact, the Austin City Council's decision to redirect around $70 million from its

[56] Reigstad, Leif. "How Austin Cut One Third of Its Spending on the Police Department." Texas Monthly, November 17, 2020. https://www.texasmonthly.com/politics/austin-police-department-defunding/.

police department constitutes a 16% reduction. An equivalent 16% reduction for Minneapolis' police budget would enable the city to invest an additional $30 million in alternative strategies to support public safety. Austin-sized reductions would correspond to around $17 million in Saint Paul, $4.4 million in Rochester, $3.8 million in Duluth, and nearly $2 million in Edina. These sums may not meet MinnesotaH activists' goals for reinvestment, and clearly cannot fix underlying wealth inequities in cities, yet they are not trivial sums. With these funds, Minneapolis could support 24/7 mobile mental health teams, street outreach teams to prevent violence, and invest millions in affordable housing.[57] Saint Paul would be able to extend its "People's Prosperity" guaranteed income pilot, currently serving 150 low-income families in the city, to nearly 3,000 new families. Edina would be able to double its community development budget.

- Second, Austin's example suggests that **unbundling services currently overseen by police departments may be a useful tactic to restore trust and reduce undue departmental influence** without eliminating essential services. While some residents are rightly skeptical that moving the city's 911 Call Center outside of the police department will change anything, it's also possible that such a move will enable call center leadership to adopt a broader definition of success and coordinate more effectively across departments.

- Finally, **Austin's 2021 budget helps to expand definitions of what public safety means**. By explicitly linking cuts to the police department with investments in homelessness prevention, COVID-19 emergency response, and mental health services, the Austin City Council affirms that these services, too, constitute part of the city's systems to provide public safety. Minnesota's cities could take a similarly broad-minded view; it may be easier to justify investments in social services when they are seen as essential pillars of a municipal public safety strategy.

It's worth noting that cities that divert Austin-level amounts from police budgets aren't dooming their police departments to failure. A 16% cut would result in Minneapolis investing about the same amount per resident in policing as Saint Paul currently does. Saint Paul cutting its police budget by 16% would result in per-capita investments in policing on par with the suburban city of Bloomington. Edina's reduced police budget would still surpass the per-capita police spending of neighboring suburbs like Minnetonka and Plymouth.[58] Austin's 2021 budget is a signal to cities across Minnesota, and across the United States, that new approaches to investing in public safety are possible.

[57] The "People's Budget" published by Black Visions Collective estimates that mobile mental health teams would cost $4.5 million annually; street outreach teams at least $6.5 million; and calls for $10 million annually for affordable housing.

[58] Author's calculations based on 2018 State Auditor data. With a 16% cut, Minneapolis' per-capita police spending would fall from $412 per resident to $345, still greater than any other city in Minnesota. Saint Paul's per-capita spending would fall from $343 to $287; Edina's would fall from $233 to $196, still surpassing per-capita investments by nearby suburban communities like Plymouth ($184) and Minnetonka ($183).

Los Angeles County's "Measure J" initiative

How a ballot measure centered on community reinvestment won big

Los Angeles has been home to several dramatic public safety budget shifts in recent months. After initially proposing a budget increase for the LAPD in 2020, Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti supported his city council's proposal to cut $150 million from the LAPD's $1.86 billion budget in the wake of George Floyd's killing. Around the same time, the Los Angeles Unified School District reduced its school police budget by a third, from $70 million to $45 million, laying off 65 officers. But it's Los Angeles County that may be implementing the most novel, and most promising, experiment in public safety investment in the region.

This summer, a coalition of nearly 100 local racial and criminal justice organizations in Los Angeles County successfully pushed the county's Board of Supervisors to put a question about public investment on the 2020 ballot. Measure J, known as "Reimagine LA County," would require the county to spend 10 percent of its unrestricted general funds – somewhere between $360 million and $900 million annually – on social services and alternatives to policing. Promotional materials shared by the Reimagine L.A. Coalition connected Measure J to the Movement for Black Lives and mass protests against racial injustice, yet didn't mention budget cuts to police or corrections. Instead, it sought to rally voters around proactive investments in community needs, including community-based restorative justice programs, mental health services, housing vouchers, and more. Voters approved the measure overwhelmingly, with 57% in support. This measure will be implemented starting next year; with no sunset clause, it will channel hundreds of millions of dollars to social service programs that offer alternatives to incarceration for many years to come.

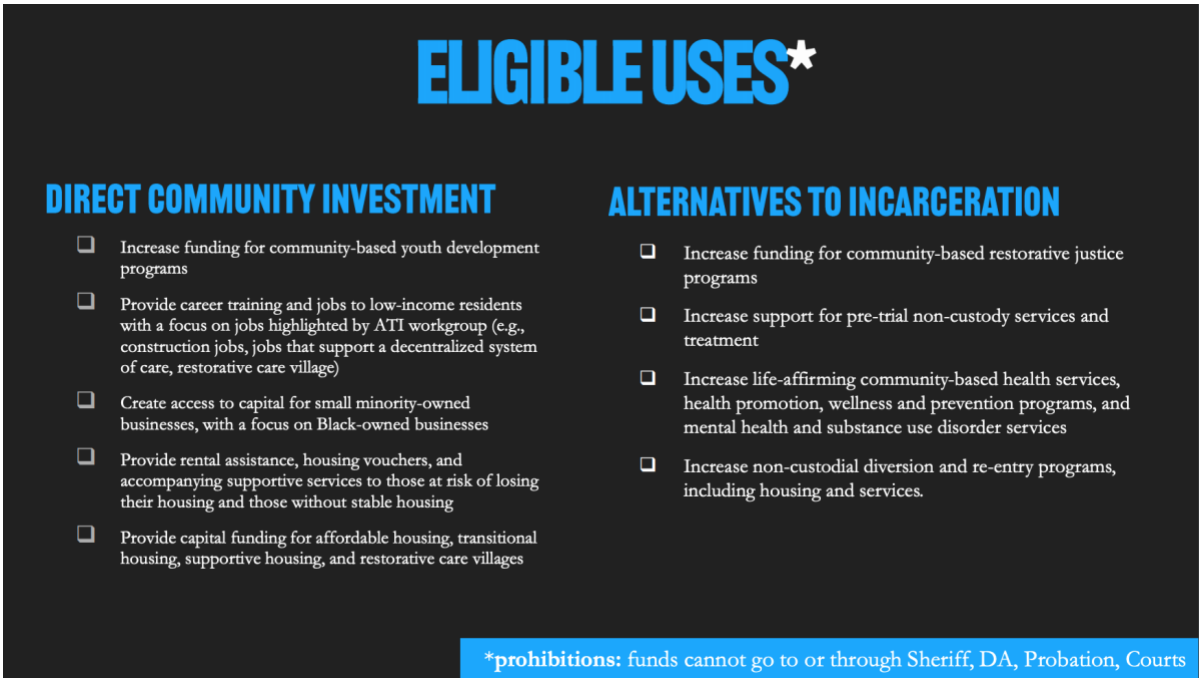
What this means for Minnesota

Los Angeles County's Measure J offers several lessons for ongoing efforts to reimagine public safety budgets across Minnesota.

- First, **Measure J provides one example for how efforts to reimagine public safety budgets can center counties**. As explored earlier in this report, counties play enormously important roles not just in funding traditional public safety services like policing and corrections, but also in funding public health, human services, and other components of this country's safety net. The advocates for Measure J devised a way to redirect county investments towards community needs for the foreseeable future.

- Second, **Measure J suggests the power of putting questions of public budgeting to voters directly**. Rather than pressing the county board of supervisors to make changes through the county's annual budget process, advocates for this ballot measure identified a simple, accessible question and asked voters to decide it. This legally binding decision may well endure for longer than a proposal brokered by the board of supervisors would have. In passing, Measure J joins a long tradition of voters in cities, counties, and states approving progressive legislation that has been stymied by other political processes, including investments in affordable housing and public transit, minimum wage increases, and marijuana legalization. Minnesota's state laws place more restrictions on the use of ballot referenda than California's do, and other obstacles to this approach exist - as evidenced by the Minneapolis charter commission blocking the City Council's proposal to place question of police staffing on the 2020 ballot – yet the approach of appealing to voters directly still holds great promise.

- Third, **Measure J provides one model for how reimagined public safety budgets could be structured**. The measure sets a clear investment baseline – 10% of the county's unrestricted general funds – and identifies two broad categories to invest in: "direct community investment" and "alternatives to incarceration." Reflecting widespread belief among activists that sheriff, police, and correctional agencies should not be the ones to lead community investments, Measure J also clarifies that these investments cannot be directed through traditional public safety agencies. The following graphic, produced by the Coalition to Reimagine L.A. County, offers greater detail into the measure's structure for investments.



Graphic produced by the Coalition to Reimagine L.A. County, 2020

This structure already mirrors how some Minnesota-based activists are thinking about reimagining public budgets: "direct community investment" seems roughly equivalent to MPD150's Ricardo Levins Morales' articulation of "horizontal investments," while "alternatives to incarceration" equates to "vertical investments."[59] Differentiating between investments in community needs and investments in public safety alternatives, and underscoring why both are necessary, can continue to be a powerful organizing structure in Minnesota.

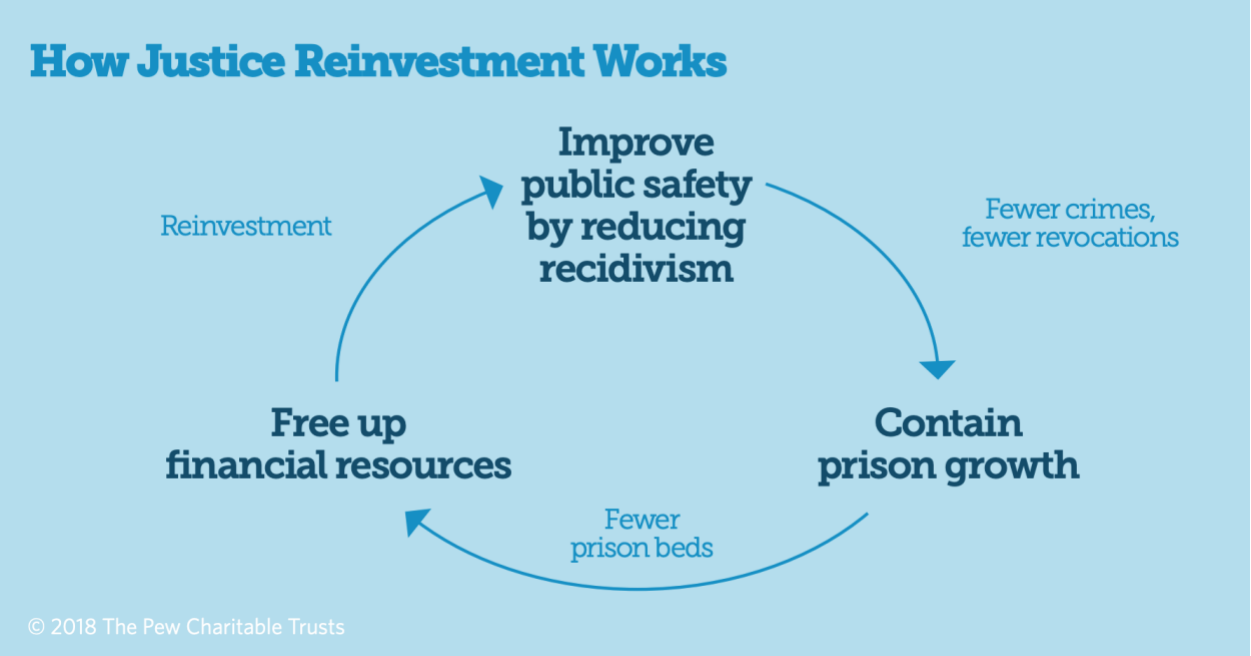
- Finally, **Los Angeles County's Measure J illustrates the possibilities of political strategies that center a positive vision of community investment**. One of the persistent findings across recent public polling on issues of policing and criminal justice is that calls to redirect funding from police and prisons enjoy much higher levels of support than calls to "defund" or "abolish" policing across all racial and ethnic groups.[60] Though public opinion shouldn't be the only criteria for defining policy strategies to address public safety concerns, the success of Measure J at a time when ideas of "defunding the police" have attracted sharp criticism from many state and federal officials suggests that framing questions of public safety in ways that are sensitive to public perception can provide a path forward.

[59] In Morales' telling, "horizontal" investments improve community-wide health, while "vertical investments" fund targeted interventions to specific problems. See my interview with Morales for additional context.
[60] City University of New York Professor Michael Javen Fortner offers a comprehensive summary of Black Americans' attitudes towards policing, public safety investment, and police defunding. See: Fortner, "Reconstructing Justice," *Niskanen Center*.

Measure J may have been one of the first successful ballot measures to explicitly connect themes from the 2020 protests to reimagined public safety budgets, yet given its success, it will hopefully not be the last.

Oregon's Justice Reinvestment Grant Program

Redirecting criminal justice savings towards community-based investments across a state



Guiding philosophy of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, a U.S. Department of Justice-led partnership with state governments, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and other organizations

Oregon, one of the 36 states that participate in the US Department of Justice-led Justice Reinvestment Initiative, offers a model for how the state of Minnesota can shift criminal justice resources towards effective public safety strategies.

Oregon implemented reforms through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative in 2013 in an effort to curb the rapid growth of its prison population and associated expenses. Between 2000 and 2012, Oregon's prison population grew by 50%, and continued growth was projected to cost the state an additional $600 million by 2022. The state passed laws to reduce prison-related expenses, including by shortening probation periods and increasing judicial discretion when sentencing less serious crimes, and proposed to invest the cost savings in housing and reentry services, employment and education services, and behavioral health treatment.

Oregon is unique across all states in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative for reinvesting in partnership with its 36 counties. The state's Justice Reinvestment Grant Program offers each county a minimum of $100,000 annually to invest in proven safety strategies, and provides millions of dollars more to counties through a competitive grant process. This structure

incentivizes county governments to think creatively about how to provide services that meet their particular needs.

The state estimates that its Justice Reinvestment Program reforms have saved more than $350 million in avoided costs since 2013, including by delaying the need to construct two new prisons. The Justice Reinvestment Grant Program has distributed approximately $98 million in criminal justice savings to counties across the state. This includes more than $18 million in community-based services and $11 million towards compensating victims of criminal justice procedures. That said, not all funds have been reinvested in alternatives to traditional public safety systems: the grant program has also funded parole officers, local corrections agencies, and law enforcement.[61]

What this means for Minnesota

Oregon's experience with the Justice Reinvestment Grant Program offers several potential lessons for Minnesota.

- First, **the Justice Reinvestment Grant Program provides an example of how states can play important roles in channeling cost reductions from traditional systems of public safety towards better alternatives**. This program, and the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, serves as a reminder that calls to redirect funds from wasteful, harmful public safety interventions to more effective ones are not new. In fact, these policies have been implemented across all levels of government. Minnesota is one of 14 states that do not participate in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, and state leaders may want to consider the benefits that this national network can offer as they seek to make the most of their public safety investments.

- Second, **Oregon's Justice Reinvestment Grant Program offers a model for what a durable and smart state-local partnership looks like.** By providing counties with a baseline funding amount each year, the program ensures that all counties across the state benefit from cost savings; and by offering grants to counties on a competitive basis, the state can catalyze local innovation and problem-solving that are responsive to each county's specific needs.

- Finally, **state leaders in Minnesota could explore how to refine, extend, and adapt the approach of Oregon's Justice Reinvestment Grant Program to meet the state's public safety needs**. The grant program focuses on curbing costs associated with state prisons; what if state leaders in Minnesota led efforts to reduce unnecessary policing expenses as well? Could state leaders incentivize cities and counties to redirect policing and corrections spending to community-based alternatives? What if state leaders provided funding for public engagement processes in counties, cities, or neighborhoods to ensure that redirected funds went towards local priorities? As Minnesota Justice Research Center Executive Director Justin Terrell mentioned to me, the state government of Minnesota

[61] For a detailed breakdown of Oregon's and other states' reinvestments in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, see: Welsh-Loveman and Harvell, "Justice Reinvestment Initiative Data Snapshot," *Urban Institute.*

> holds tremendous power to shape public safety budgets through legislation, technical assistance, and their own funding. State leaders can get creative to find ways to direct state and local public safety budgets towards strategies that keep everyone safe.

The examples of Austin, Los Angeles County, and Oregon affirm that there are indeed ways to reimagine the use of public safety budgets across every level of government in today's political climate. These jurisdictions are beginning to answer some of the questions that surfaced in my interviews.

Council Member Fletcher asks: "How can we move emergency response for non-violent situations out of the hands of law enforcement?" By "unbundling" municipal services from its police department, such as the 911 call center, Austin is beginning an experiment to de-center law enforcement within its emergency response.

Ricardo Levins Morales asks: "What investments align with the principle "nobody gets seconds until everyone has had firsts"? By requiring that Los Angeles County spend at least ten percent of its budget on community investments and alternatives to incarceration, the "Reimagine L.A. County" measure ensures that these essential services are well-funded before resources are allocated to sheriffs and corrections.

Chanda Smith Baker and Justin Terrell ask: "What problems can't be solved solely by redirecting public funds?" Oregon's Justice Reinvestment Initiative exemplifies an approach that combines policy changes – in Oregon's case, sentencing reforms that reduce the state's prison population – with new investments to achieve more just public safety outcomes.

These are just a few of the countless efforts undertaken by in cities, counties, states, school districts, and other jurisdictions to rethink their existing budgets in response to the crises we face today. To paraphrase Louis Brandeis' famous observation, these communities serve as laboratories for democracy, and their successes – and failures – can serve as a guide for the future of public safety in this country.

Expanding conversations about public safety budgets in Minnesota

"Budgets are moral documents."

- *Quote frequently attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr., and echoed by many others since*

"I think for a lot of people, safety just equates with policing. We think about safety, we think about police. But there are so many other things that keep us safe, or not. Connections in the community, support for kids who are struggling, housing, mental health support, issues related to drug use. I am hopeful that the conversation that we are having right now in Minneapolis will be centered in values that are largely shared in our community, and that we are on the path to building a much better system of safety than the one we've had."

– Minneapolis City Council President Lisa Bender[62]

Over the course of my research, I came to better understand my own aspirations for this project. Initially, I saw this work as an effort to persuade other privileged Americans like myself; I wanted to expand the coalition of people fighting for visions of a more just world, to convince people who risk becoming what Martin Luther King, Jr. famously described as the "white moderate" to take action to change systems that have produced immense harms. This remains an enduring personal goal, and I hope to make some small contribution to it with this project.

I realize that this research has also been driven by a much more modest aspiration, which is to understand things that I didn't understand. I had only a limited sense of how governments defined public safety, or which ones funded these services. I had no idea how public safety budgets varied across the state, nor had I seen research that explored the issue. I wanted to better understand how local leaders conceptualized the many intersecting challenges that George Floyd's murder spotlighted, what their goals were, and how they sought to accomplish them in the face of simultaneous crises and immense political opposition. This thesis became an opportunity for me to learn.

I see it as a privilege to conduct this sort of research. Antiracist trainings I've attended in graduate school and in workplaces, along with conversations I've participated in since George Floyd's murder, have helped me understand that people in privileged positions – especially ones in systems of higher education – often respond to injustice by intellectualizing it. Doing so renders matters of life and death abstract to people who are not imminently threatened by the status quo. It can provide people like me the sense that intellectualizing is our contribution to

[62] Gustavo, Solomon. "Minneapolis Council President Lisa Bender on George Floyd, 'Defund the Police,' and Her Decision Not to Run for Re-Election." MinnPost, November 16, 2020. https://www.minnpost.com/metro/2020/11/minneapolis-council-president-lisa-bender-on-george-floyd-defund-the-police-and-her-decision-not-to-run-for-re-election/.

anti-racist efforts, while underlying systems remain intact.[63] Yet it is my hope that this research sheds light for others as it has for me, facilitating new ways of understanding and reimagining the role that our systems of public safety play in society.

This research has prompted several other reflections:

First, it is an essential and profoundly patriotic undertaking to question how we spend public dollars. Budgets *are* moral documents, and the choices we make with them define our collective values. It's not new in American history to seek to shift funds away from institutions that are understood to be harmful, and towards ones that better uphold Americans' rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Efforts to politicize issues of police defunding and abolition that do not acknowledge the patriotism and morality of these movements, exemplified by Republican political leaders in Minnesota in the 2020 elections, do us all a disservice.

Second, my interviews with deeply principled, thoughtful leaders like Chanda Smith Baker and Don Samuels affirm that not everyone sees the harms caused by today's public safety systems as reason to diminish or eliminate them. Baker's and Samuels' perspectives align with what sociologist Patrick Sharkey calls the "one of the most robust, most uncomfortable findings in criminology," which is that "putting more officers on the street leads to less violent crime." That police departments can be responsible for both killing unarmed Black men like George Floyd and for reducing rates of violent crime in majority-Black neighborhoods like Minneapolis' North Side speaks to the complexity of existing public safety systems. This suggests a need for more inquiry, conversation, and experimentation to produce outcomes that improve public safety for us all.

And finally, I remain convinced that communities across the state are past due for much broader, more holistic conversations about public safety. We all have a role to play in building systems of public safety that keep us all safe.

To that end, those seeking to initiate conversations about how public safety budgets across Minnesota can change in the wake of George Floyd's murder could take action in the following ways.

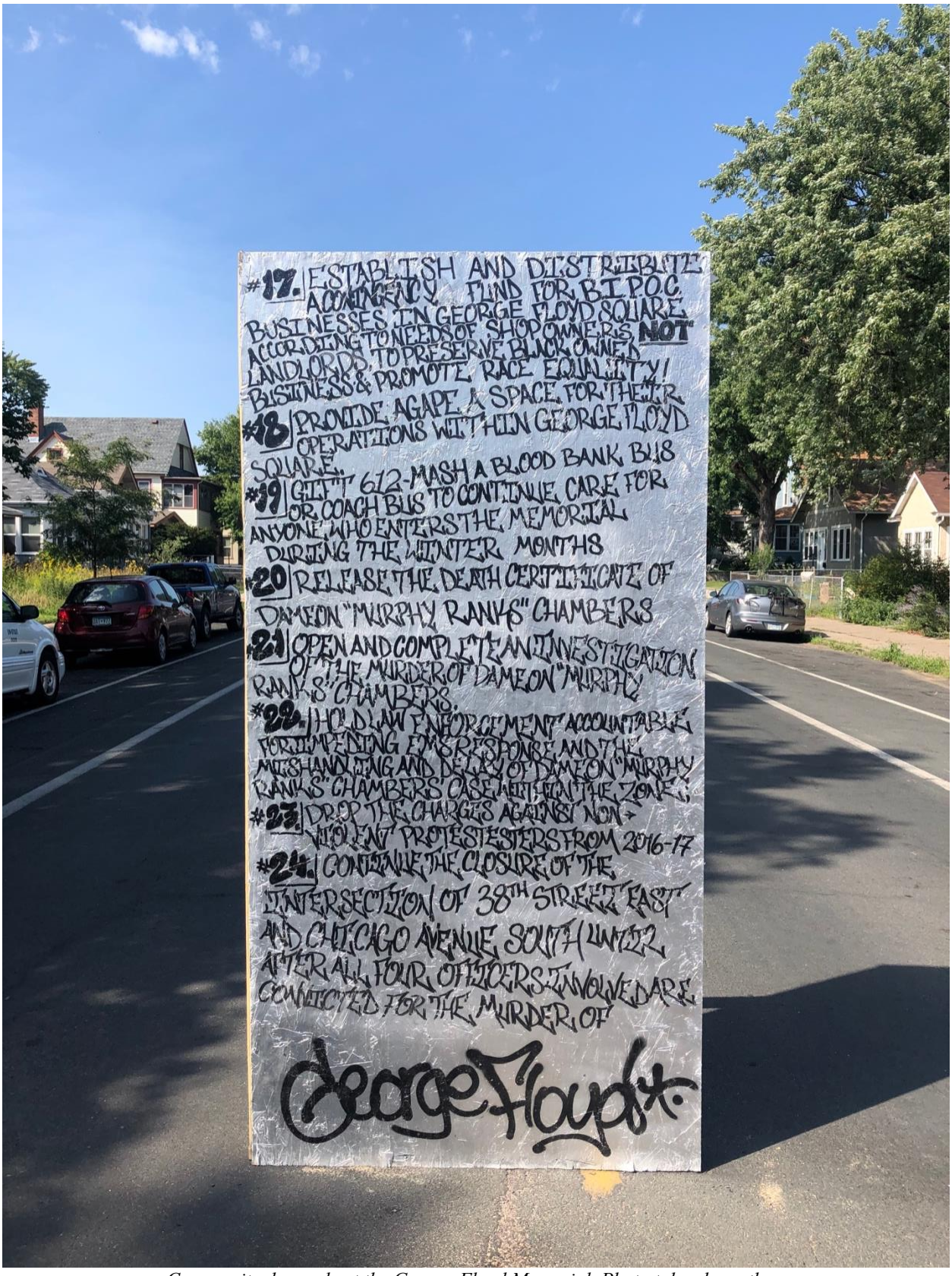
1. Understand how much your community is investing in public safety services annually and how it compares to peer jurisdictions. This will provide a baseline for the current resources available to invest in strategies that keep your community safe.
2. Evaluate the efficacy of existing local public safety services, including the short-term and long-term harms that they may inflict on residents. Systems of policing and corrections tend to leave lasting marks on the people caught up in them.
3. Explore what needs remain unmet in your community. Are mental health and addiction treatment services accessible to all who need them? Are any residents unhoused or living in unstable housing? Are quality jobs plentiful? If not, what existing public initiatives are seeking to address these needs, and why are they falling short?

[63] Saul, Roger, and Casey Burkholder. "Intellectualizing Whiteness as a Response to Campus Racism: Some Concerns." *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*, July 19, 2019. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/01419870.2019.1654116?needAccess=true.

4. Consider which conversational role you feel suited to taking on: narrative or tangible, pragmatic or visionary. These roles can serve complementary purposes in supporting movements for change, so if there are roles that are less visible in your community, seek ways to elevate them.
5. Ask questions that have the potential to uncover new ways of thinking. Questions like "what problem are we trying to solve?"; "what investments are needed to provide security for poor people?"; and "What problems can't be solved solely by redirecting public funds?" can clarify goals, intended outcomes, and strategies for achieving them.
6. Explore strategies that have been implemented in places like Austin, Los Angeles County, or Oregon to reimagine uses of public safety dollars, and consider how they might inform your own efforts to keep everyone in your community safe. Public pressure, ballot measures, and legislative reforms are all proven methods to make structural changes to existing systems.

The intersecting tragedies of 2020 revealed how far this country is from living up to its highest ideals. Our collective failure to reconcile with our long history of racial injustice, with punitive systems of public safety, and with our indifference towards people at the margins has led to unfathomable trauma. And yet the year offered glimpses of how to bring about a better future. As Minnesota State Representative Aisha Gomez told me, "the conversations that we're having right now about public safety are different and more expansive than I've ever experienced in my life." Better systems of public safety are indeed possible.

It seems fitting to conclude this research not with an answer, but with a question. What can you do to bring about a society that truly keeps us all safe?



Community demands at the George Floyd Memorial. Photo taken by author.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to so many people who made this thesis possible. My advisor, Professor Ceasar McDowell, provided steady guidance, insightful questions, and suggestions large and small that helped me see new connections within my work and tell a clearer story. I'm truly appreciative of the many hours he invested in this collaboration and found it a joy to work with him. Neeraj Mehta was far more than a reader for this project – his deft understanding of political dynamics in Minneapolis, his willingness to make personal introductions to people at the forefront of social change, and his lightning-fast (and well-reasoned) responses to drafts and questions I sent his way shaped my research profoundly. And I'm in awe of Karilyn Crockett, who held down not one, but two seemingly full-time jobs as a professor at MIT and the Chief Equity Officer for the City of Boston and still found the time to read through my draft, attend my defense, and offer incisive commentary that reoriented how I understood my work. Karilyn's insistence that I not bury my own voice within this research pushed me to think much more about what messages I wanted to leave readers with.

I appreciate the people who took the time to offer their thoughts on these difficult and contentious issues to a grad student in the middle of a global pandemic: Aisha Gomez, Alondra Cano, Chanda Smith Baker, Don Samuels, Kieran, Justin Terrell, Ricardo Levins Morales, Ruth Richardson, and Steve Fletcher. I'm inspired by the work you each do to make our world a safer, fairer, and more just one.

Thanks to John Jernberg at the Minnesota State Auditor's Office for providing the datasets that formed a substantial part of my budget research, and for cheerfully and carefully explaining their nuances over the course of our months-long email conversation; to Alex Halverson for introducing me to folks in Minneapolis' activist community; to Laier-Rayshon Smith and Madeline Wrable for exploring new ways to visualize Minnesota's county sheriffs expenditures with me in our class on Big Data, Visualization, and Society at MIT this past fall; and to the family, friends, classmates, and mentors who joined for my virtual thesis defense in January 2021.

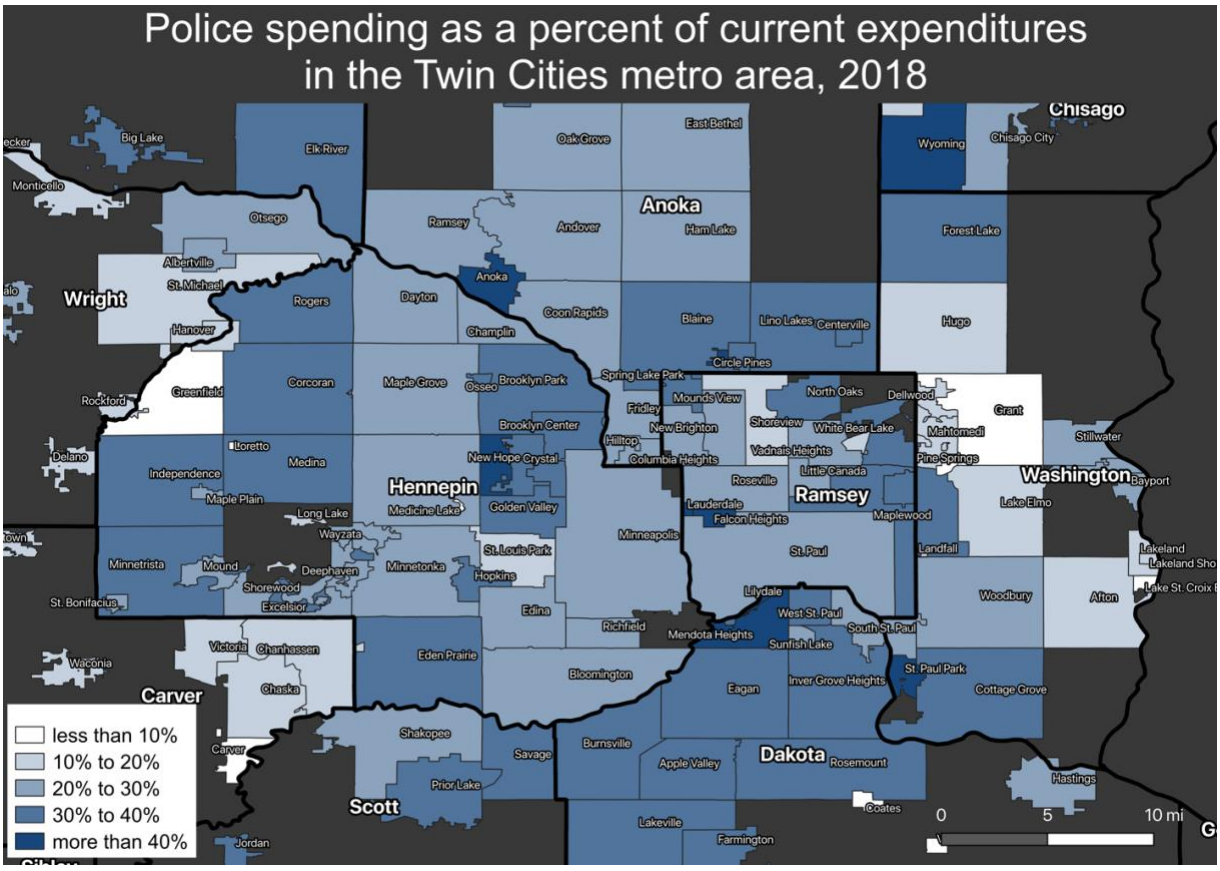
Lastly, thank you to my wife Raffie, who supported and encouraged me throughout this lengthy research process! No person deserves to get stuck living with a partner who is writing their thesis, and you've now done it twice.

Appendix

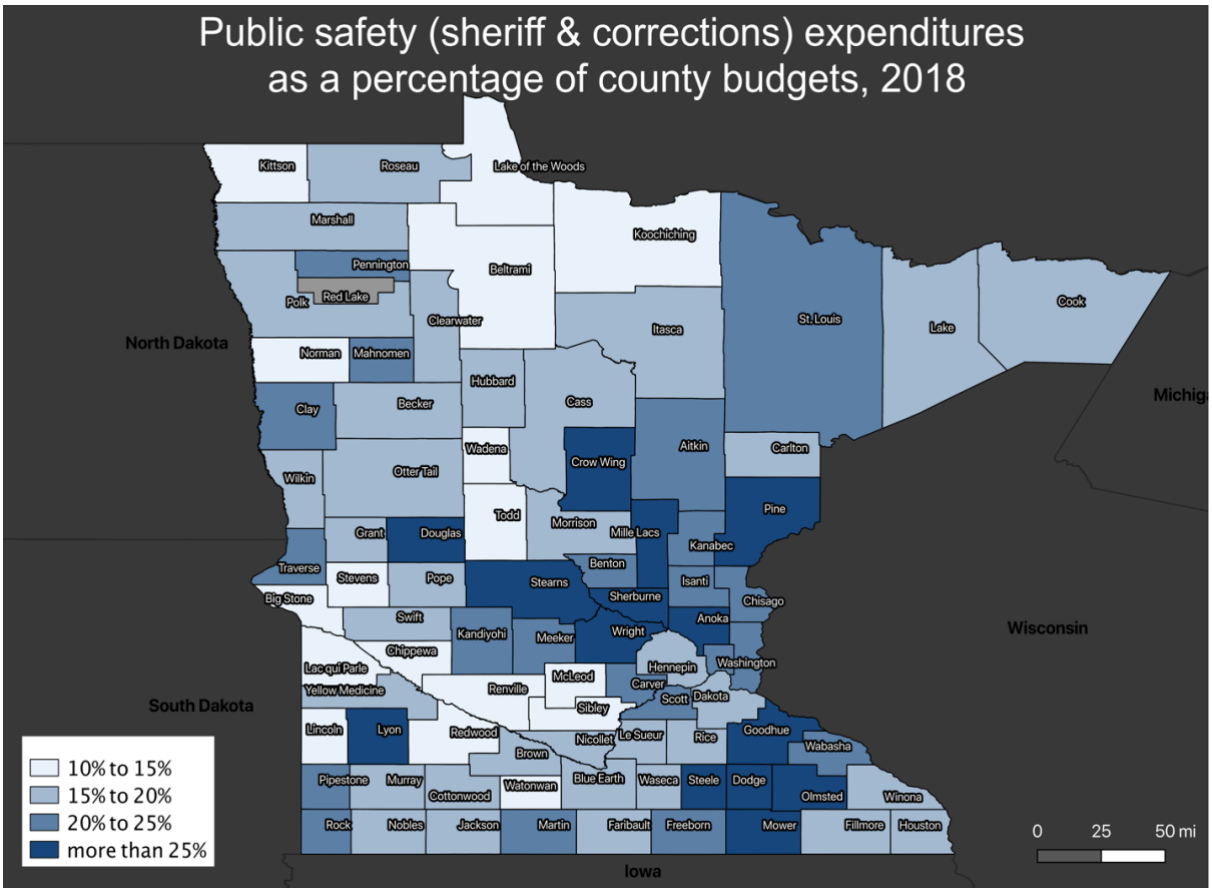
Additional visualizations of public safety budgets in Minnesota

Public safety expenditures as a percentage of local budgets

Suburban jurisdictions tend to spend a higher percentage of their budget on policing. The map below displays police spending as a percent of cities' current expenditures in 2018, and reveals that a handful of suburbs – including Mendota Heights, New Hope, and Anoka – spent more than 40% of their budgets on public safety. Other jurisdictions like Blaine, Medina, and Eagan are spending between 30% and 40% of their current expenditures on public safety. Meanwhile, Minneapolis and Saint Paul spent a comparatively small share of their budgets – less than 20% of current expenditures – on policing.

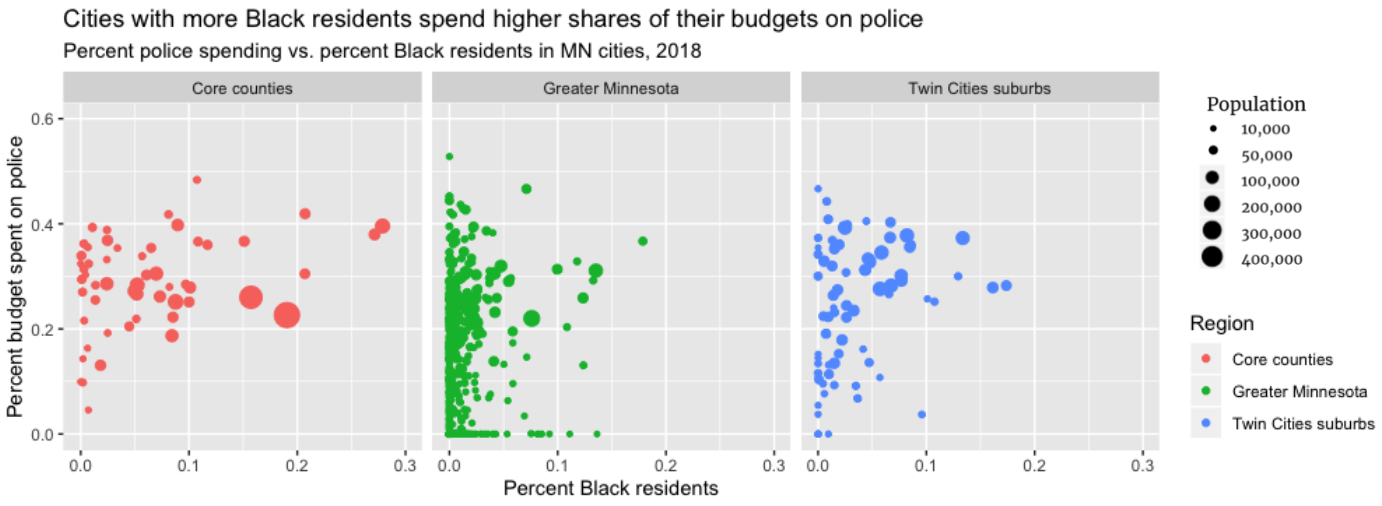


Suburban and exurban counties clustered in Central Minnesota spend the highest percentage of their budgets on public safety. Wright, Stearns, and Mille Lacs Counties all spend more than a quarter of their budgets annually on sheriffs and corrections. Stevens and Big Stone Counties, and other counties in the eastern part of the state, meanwhile, spend less than 15% of their budgets on public safety, as can be seen in the map below.

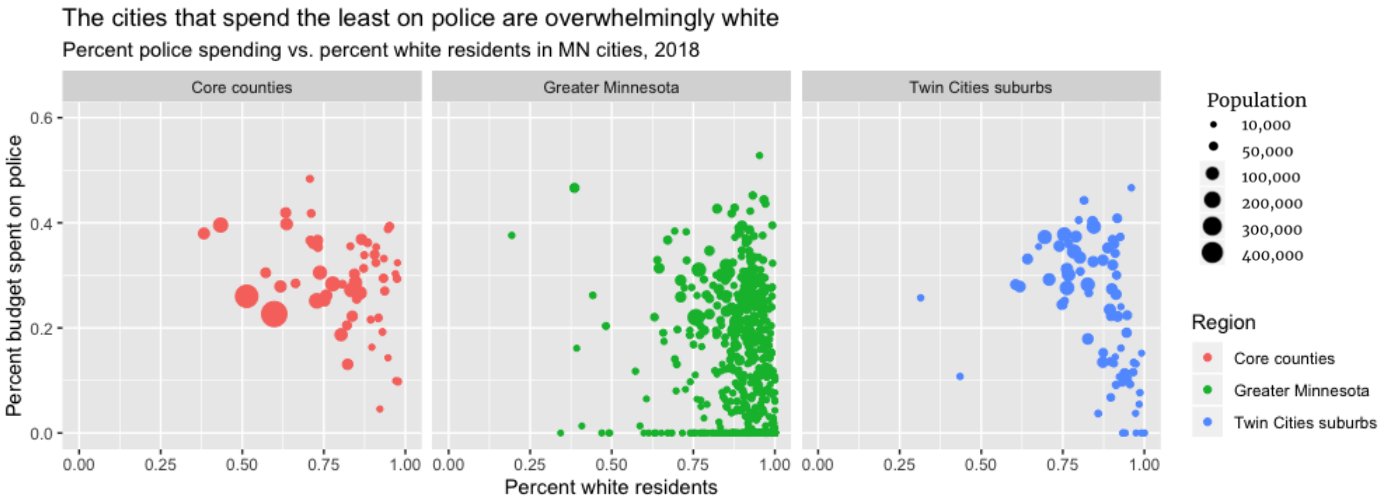


How public safety spending varies by cities' race demographics and income

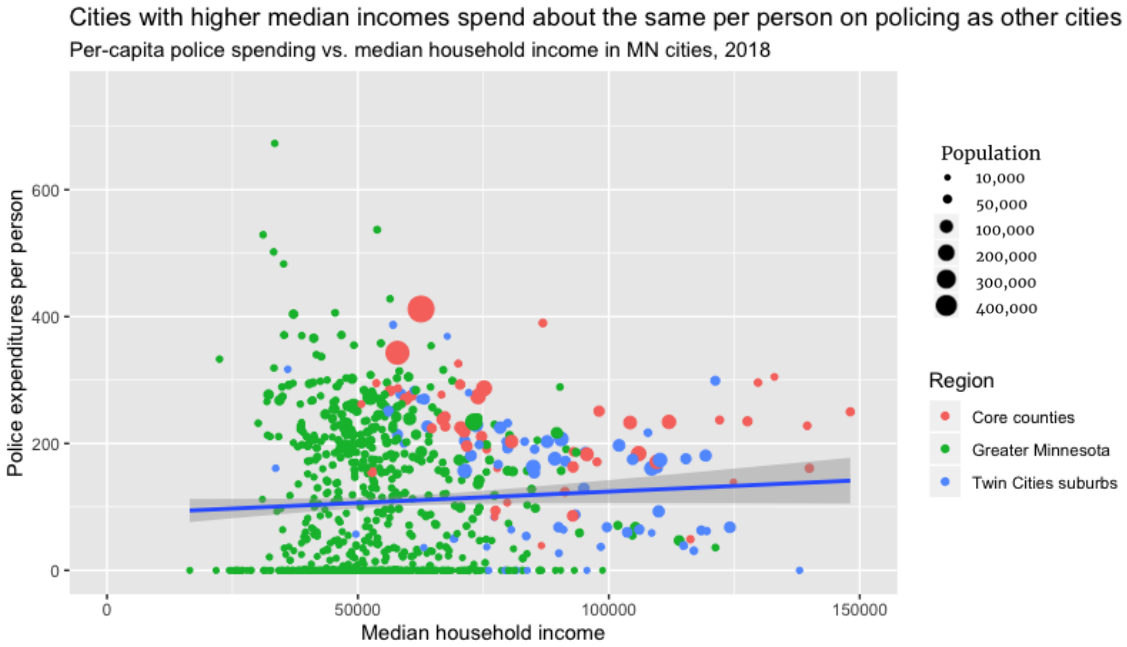
Cities with more Black residents generally spend somewhat more of their budgets on police. The scatterplot below charts a city's share of current expenditures going towards police (on the y-axis) against its share of Black residents (on the x-axis). These regions are plotted separately to reduce visual clutter. The scatterplot reveals a loose correlation: as the percentage of Black residents in a city increases, so does a city's police budget. Contrary to this pattern, Minneapolis and Saint Paul, each with some of the highest shares of Black residents of any city in the state, spend no more than an average amount on police.



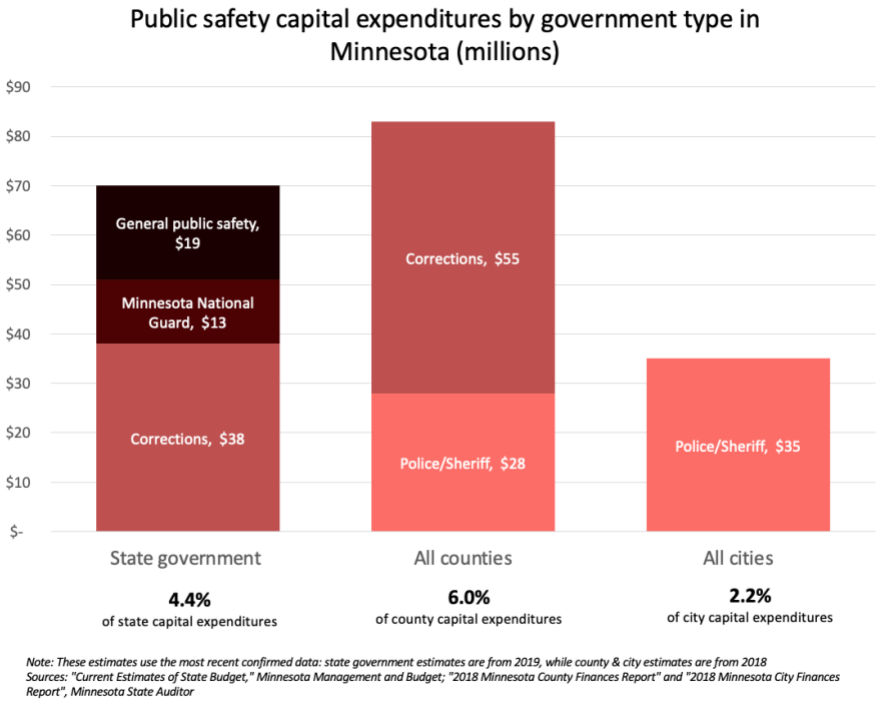
Cities with higher percentages of white residents tend to spend less of their budgets on police. Cities that spend less than 20% of their current expenditures budget on police tend to be at least 75% white, and many are much more homogenous than that, as can be seen below.



A city's income doesn't seem to be a strong predictor of its police spending. The scatterplot below visualizes a city's median household income (on the x-axis) against its per-capita spending on police, and finds essentially no correlation between the two variables. Higher-income cities don't appear to consistently spend more or less per resident on police.



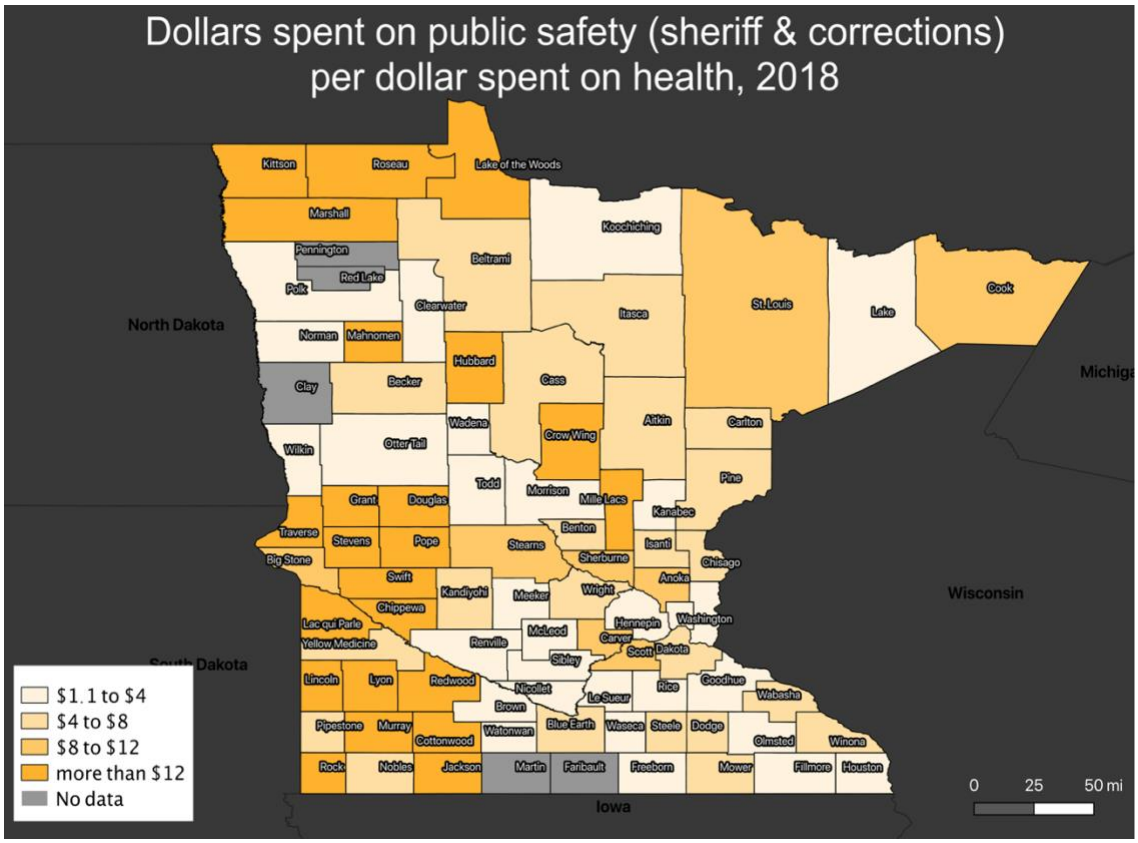
Public safety capital expenditures



Note: These estimates use the most recent confirmed data: state government estimates are from 2019, while county & city estimates are from 2018
Sources: "Current Estimates of State Budget," Minnesota Management and Budget; "2018 Minnesota County Finances Report" and "2018 Minnesota City Finances Report", Minnesota State Auditor

Public safety and public health investments in Minnesota's counties

No county in Minnesota spends more on public health than it does public safety. Hennepin and Ramsey Counties each spend more than $3 on sheriff and corrections for every dollar spent on public health; most counties in the state spend even more. The ratio of dollars spent on public safety versus public health per resident can be seen in the following map. Counties in gray did not have available data on health expenditures.



Public safety spending tables: Cities

Some small cities in Minnesota spend half of their budgets on police

The 10 cities that spend the highest percentage of their budget on police (2018 current expenditures)

Rank	City	Region	Population	Police Expenditures	Total Expenditures	Percent of city budget spent on police	Police expenditures per resident
1	Orono	Core counties	8,102	$ 4,188,582	$ 7,881,352	53%	$ 517
2	Floodwood	Greater Minnesota	518	$ 348,569	$ 660,319	53%	$ 673
3	Lauderdale	Core counties	2,408	$ 709,240	$ 1,466,549	48%	$ 295
4	Lilydale	Twin Cities suburbs	947	$ 265,344	$ 568,729	47%	$ 280
5	Worthington	Greater Minnesota	13,510	$ 4,081,907	$ 8,751,884	47%	$ 302
6	Cold Spring	Greater Minnesota	4,201	$ 1,192,738	$ 2,638,310	45%	$ 284
7	Wyoming	Twin Cities suburbs	8,037	$ 1,733,688	$ 3,905,858	44%	$ 216
8	Saint Paul Park	Twin Cities suburbs	5,581	$ 1,297,552	$ 2,931,211	44%	$ 232
9	Pequot Lakes	Greater Minnesota	2,346	$ 839,490	$ 1,924,543	44%	$ 358
10	Dilworth	Greater Minnesota	4,514	$ 959,482	$ 2,238,249	43%	$ 213

Source: Minnesota State Auditor, 2018 City Finances Report

Minneapolis spends an unusually high amount per resident on police among big cities

The 10 cities with the highest per-resident police expenditures in Minnesota (2018 current expenditures)

Rank	City	Region	Population	Police Expenditures	Total Expenditures	Percent of city budget spent on police	Police expenditures per resident
1	Floodwood	Greater Minnesota	518	348,569	$ 660,319	53%	$ 673
2	Gilbert	Greater Minnesota	1,785	958,351	$ 2,549,840	38%	$ 537
3	Isle	Greater Minnesota	779	412,433	$ 1,576,812	26%	$ 529
4	Orono	Core counties	8,102	4,188,582	$ 7,881,352	53%	$ 517
5	Deer River	Greater Minnesota	925	464,181	$ 1,208,105	38%	$ 502
6	Deerwood	Greater Minnesota	535	258,240	$ 1,133,172	23%	$ 483
7	Nashwauk	Greater Minnesota	962	411,983	$ 1,563,291	26%	$ 428
8	Minneapolis	Core counties	428,483	176,506,000	$ 779,818,704	23%	$ 412
9	Babbitt	Greater Minnesota	1,454	589,816	$ 2,200,835	27%	$ 406
10	Virginia	Greater Minnesota	8,439	3,411,341	$ 16,292,135	21%	$ 404

Source: Minnesota State Auditor, 2018 City Finances Report

Public safety spending tables: Counties

Some small counties in Minnesota spend more than one-quarter of their budgets on sheriff & corrections

The 10 counties that spend the highest percentage of their budget on sheriff & corrections (2018 current expenditures)

Rank	County	Population	Sheriff Current Expenditures	Corrections Current Expenditures	Combined sheriff & corrections expenditures	Total Current Expenditures	Percent of budget spent on sheriffs	Percent of budget spent on corrections	Percent of budget on combined sheriff & corrections expenditures	Sheriff expenditures per resident	Corrections expenditures per resident	Combined expenditures per resident
1	Steele	36,933	$ 4,140,901	$ 6,160,403	$ 10,301,304	$ 30,416,854	14%	20%	34%	$ 112	$ 167	$ 279
2	Mille Lacs	26,080	$ 5,836,428	$ 4,359,224	$ 10,195,652	$ 34,689,484	17%	13%	29%	$ 224	$ 167	$ 391
3	Pine	29,490	$ 4,661,355	$ 4,759,428	$ 9,420,783	$ 33,137,877	14%	14%	28%	$ 158	$ 161	$ 319
4	Sherburne	96,208	$ 9,522,770	$ 10,547,512	$ 20,070,282	$ 70,958,838	13%	15%	28%	$ 99	$ 110	$ 209
5	Wright	136,510	$ 21,081,551	$ 6,903,469	$ 27,985,020	$ 99,511,036	21%	7%	28%	$ 154	$ 51	$ 205
6	Goodhue	46,540	$ 7,055,353	$ 6,425,296	$ 13,480,649	$ 48,502,395	15%	13%	28%	$ 152	$ 138	$ 290
7	Dodge	20,842	$ 4,621,427	$ 801,423	$ 5,422,850	$ 19,684,809	23%	4%	28%	$ 222	$ 38	$ 260
8	Mower	40,017	$ 4,480,401	$ 6,456,540	$ 10,936,941	$ 39,988,736	11%	16%	27%	$ 112	$ 161	$ 273
9	Lyon	25,700	$ 4,963,495	$ 539,687	$ 5,503,182	$ 20,473,244	24%	3%	27%	$ 193	$ 21	$ 214
10	Crow Wing	64,975	$ 8,590,131	$ 9,280,996	$ 17,871,127	$ 66,547,050	13%	14%	27%	$ 132	$ 143	$ 275

Source: Minnesota State Auditor, 2018 County Finances Report

Some smaller counties in Minnesota spend hundreds of dollars per resident on sheriff & corrections

The 10 counties with the highest per-resident sheriff & corrections expenditures in Minnesota (2018 current expenditures)

Rank	County	Population	Sheriff Current Expenditures	Corrections Current Expenditures	Combined sheriff & corrections expenditures	Total Current Expenditures	Percent of budget spent on sheriffs	Percent of budget spent on corrections	Percent of budget on combined sheriff & corrections expenditures	Sheriff expenditures per resident	Corrections expenditures per resident	Combined expenditures per resident
1	Traverse	3,316	$ 1,238,188	$ 757,585	$ 1,995,773	$ 9,350,000	13%	8%	21%	$ 373	$ 228	$ 602
2	Cook	5,390	$ 2,395,813	$ 578,133	$ 2,973,946	$ 19,400,379	12%	3%	15%	$ 444	$ 107	$ 552
3	Mahnomen	5,526	$ 2,649,544	$ 102,855	$ 2,752,399	$ 11,400,132	23%	1%	24%	$ 479	$ 19	$ 498
4	Lake of The V	3,801	$ 966,389	$ 587,917	$ 1,554,306	$ 10,515,363	9%	6%	15%	$ 254	$ 155	$ 409
5	Aitkin	15,896	$ 3,425,190	$ 2,953,045	$ 6,378,235	$ 27,959,759	12%	11%	23%	$ 215	$ 186	$ 401
6	Mille Lacs	26,080	$ 5,836,428	$ 4,359,224	$ 10,195,652	$ 34,689,484	17%	13%	29%	$ 224	$ 167	$ 391
7	Kanabec	16,213	$ 2,606,470	$ 3,622,734	$ 6,229,204	$ 25,804,612	10%	14%	24%	$ 161	$ 223	$ 384
8	Lake	10,590	$ 2,296,337	$ 1,668,604	$ 3,964,941	$ 22,729,108	10%	7%	17%	$ 217	$ 158	$ 374
9	Wilkin	6,293	$ 1,591,507	$ 723,416	$ 2,314,923	$ 13,679,596	12%	5%	17%	$ 253	$ 115	$ 368
10	Kandiyohi	42,924	$ 5,913,941	$ 8,685,022	$ 14,598,963	$ 63,691,241	9%	14%	23%	$ 138	$ 202	$ 340

Source: Minnesota State Auditor, 2018 County Finances Report

Narrative interviews with leaders in Minnesota

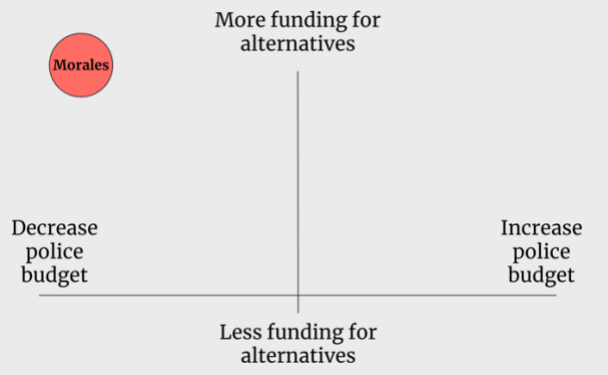
Interviews are ordered as follows:

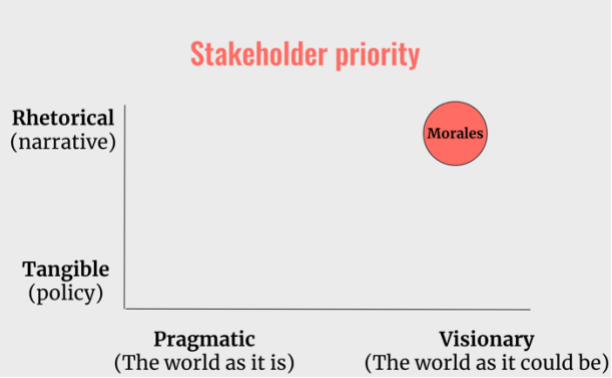
1. **Ricardo Levins Morales -** *Activist with MPD150*
2. **Alondra Cano -** *Minneapolis City Council Member*
3. **Kieran -** *Activist with the Worker's Defense Alliance*
4. **Chanda Smith Baker -** *Vice President of Impact at the Minneapolis Foundation*
5. **Justin Terrell** - *Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Center*
6. **Steve Fletcher** - *Minneapolis City Council Member*
7. **Aisha Gomez** -*Minnesota State Representative*
8. **Don Samuels** - *Former Minneapolis City Council Member and resident of Minneapolis' North Side*

Ricardo Levins Morales

Activist with MPD150

Situating Morales' perspective





Themes to lift up

- **Clear roles within social movements create space for multiple actors**. It's noteworthy that in Morales' telling, MPD150 has remained clear about what its role is and isn't in the movement to reimagine policing. By focusing on narrative, MPD150 provides an intellectual foundation for the movement while creating space for organizations like Reclaim the Block and Black Visions Collective to play complementary roles.
- **Investments can be categorized into horizontal and vertical strategies**. Morales borrows a framework from public health to differentiate strategies that target specific problems from ones that are broadly beneficial across a population.
- **Demand and need aren't equivalent**. Morales differentiates "demand" from "need", arguing that public investments should respond to what communities need. Starting from the question of need is a powerful way to center potential solutions to structural challenges.

Edited interview

Nathan: To start, I'd love to hear what brought you to this issue.

Ricardo: I first came to the States in the late sixties, when I was eleven years old. I was inclined to go to protests, but it was really a series of police murders of some leaders of the Young Lords and the Black Panther Party in Chicago that got me involved in organizing.

Any movement I've been involved in has been viewed by the police as an enemy. In terms of their function as an instrument of political control, they've always been there observing, harassing, sometimes intervening in nastier ways. It's not that any one thing brought me into dealing with the police. They've always been part of the equation.

MPD150 grew out of some conversations, after we noticed that by chance, the Minneapolis Police Department had been founded in 1867. At that time it was early 2016 and a quick calculation revealed that next year was going to be their 150th anniversary.

We noticed that some municipal police would use their anniversary as a way to shore up their credibility in the community. We just said: we should do a performance review and really shine a light on what the police really are, because people take them for granted as an institution that just exists. It's totally ahistorical. Some of us already knew some of the connections to slave patrols and things like that, which were not widely known at the time. So that's really how we started coming together, just having one-on-one discussions with organizers.

MPD150 isn't based on organizations. It was not meant to be a coalition. We didn't want to be dealing with the baggage that organizations have with each other or their sense of turf. We wanted to put wind in everyone's sails by providing a narrative that was different than the dominant one.

Part of our agenda was to shift the conversation so that when police atrocities occur, people aren't reaching for those same tired and useless reforms that they've been demanding for a hundred years that get implemented, eroded, and abandoned, before the cycle begins again.

"Part of our agenda was to shift the conversation so that when police atrocities occur, people aren't reaching for those same tired and useless reforms that they've been demanding for a hundred years that get implemented, eroded, and abandoned, before the cycle begins again."

- *Ricardo Levins Morales, organizer for MPD150*

We had no idea that the shift in narrative would happen anywhere with the speed at which it did. But we did notice from the beginning that people were far more receptive than we imagined.

Nathan: Could you describe what has happened in the intervening couple of years between the report coming out and George Floyd's murder? How has that dynamic changed this year?

Ricardo: From the beginning, we started having influence on the conversation. Several of our members were part of another project that sent a questionnaire to city council candidates in 2016. One of the questions was, 'can you imagine a future without the police in Minneapolis?' and a bunch of the candidates said yes. The next day, the president of the Minneapolis City Council and the head of the Downtown Council held a joint press conference to announce to the world what a terrible idea that was. Who could ask for better publicity than having the power structure say, 'hey, pay no attention to this idea'?

In the first few days after George Floyd was murdered, people were demanding a civilian review board with teeth, residency requirements, all the same things. But it only took a few days before people started to say that this institution is entirely criminal. It needs to be replaced.

And I think partly because of the groundwork we laid, this spark was amplified nationally. It helped propel it like ripe dandelion spores when a tornado hits.

In the meantime, you have the emergence of Black Visions Collective, which grew out of Black Lives Matter, whose origins were in dealing with police brutality. And Reclaim the Block, which began as a coalition and included a number of people from the core group of MPD150 who wanted to be more involved in policy work.

MPD150 became very clear that we were about narrative. We're not about endorsing this or that policy, or meeting with the chief. We're oriented toward the community. That's where the power is. On the other hand, Reclaim the Block was perfectly interested in sitting down with city councilors. They started out with the radical demand of reducing the police budget by 5%; they were hoping they could push the narrative that far. So it's a big leap from that to the City Council saying, 'we're going to abolish the police.' That's evidence of a shift in power.

But [the City Council] is also under the liberal illusion that they actually are in charge. The way in which their bold declaration has been chipped away, their second thoughts and backtracking comes from the urban power system stepping in and saying 'You're not the bosses here.' It's really the real estate industry, the hospitality industry, the sports franchises, the police department, that are, to borrow a phrase from the Trumpists, the 'permanent state.'

We're going way ahead of the understanding of abolition. There are a lot of people whose embrace of abolition is emotional but not necessarily practical. We at MPD150 understood very clearly that it's not enough to have people imagine this future where everyone takes care of each other. You have to actually demonstrate that there's a pathway to get from here to there. There are practical steps, there are existing traditions, there are other ways of dealing with crisis intervention. There are other ways of dealing with scarcity. That part hasn't caught up yet although the concept has caught people's imagination.

"There are a lot of people whose embrace of abolition is emotional but not necessarily practical. We at MPD150 understood very clearly that it's not enough to have people imagine this future where everyone takes care of each other. You have to actually demonstrate that there's a pathway to get from here to there."

- *Ricardo Levins Morales, organizer for MPD150*

We find that the people who argue against abolition, whether they're right wingers, liberals, or radicals have one thing in common. And that seems to be that they've never read our material or actually sat down and engaged with our positions. They're responding to this sort of knee-jerk idea that we're advocating for waving a magic wand and making the police disappear, then criminals take over the streets and a nightmare dystopian future quickly comes into play. We have a chance to reach people when they realize that we've actually thought this stuff through. We take very seriously the reasons that people reach for 911 when they're in crisis, as well as the reasons that they're scared.

Nathan: I'd like to ask about the path forward. The charter amendment was one setback, and it doesn't look like this year will result in budgetary cuts for the police. Given this political context, what do you see as the ideal next step?

Ricardo: What we really need is an ideal mix of strategies more than a next step. It's in part a strategy of erosion: keep doing the work we're doing. That includes the policy work, the street work, the educational work. To some degree the police are doing our job for us with every incident. They're making it clearer and clearer that they are not part of the solution.

In the meantime, the system is going to try to co-opt the movement with halfway measures, of course. And we just need to keep hammering at it. That includes going after the tentacles that connect them to the rest of society.

I believe Reclaim the Block is going to go after the charter commission again. Hopefully there'll be some questioning of the legitimacy of the charter commission because it turns out to be a secretive, elite, corporate safety valve for the system. Shining a light on it might help.

I think that the charter amendment that the city council came up with, frankly, went too far. Public education wasn't at a point where people would say, 'oh, we're going to create this new entity.' I think they should have just removed the requirement that police be funded at a certain rate to open the door to possibilities, rather than being so specific about the solution. You need to bring people along in organizing, help them start thinking that stuff through, before they'll be comfortable with it. That's my opinion.

Nathan: I would love to hear what types of long-term investments you think that cities like Minneapolis need to be making? What agencies, organizations, or efforts do you see as being promising?

Ricardo: When we talk about defunding - which is the rubber meets the road aspect of abolition - we're talking about shifting resources, not making them evaporate right from the beginning. It's a shift into filling the gaps that create both emotional and financial crisis.

It really comes down to, to borrow some language from public health policy, horizontal solutions and vertical solutions. A vertical solution is you look at what diseases or conditions that are affecting people and you come up with a pharmaceutical intervention to be able to address that illness. A horizontal solution is that you raise the immune resilience capacity of an entire population through clean water, healthy food, satisfactory work, stable housing, which increases the resistance to whatever comes people's way.

Now, when you have horizontal strategies, you still need vertical interventions for specific things. But it lowers the need for those. And it's the same thing we're talking about here, when we're talking about investments. We need to think about the police as a vertical intervention. What are the horizontal strategies that would lower the need for those interventions?

"What would a successful community-driven investment strategy look like? You need to be able to establish centers of activity in communities that are based on need and not demand. The market talks about demand. Communities talk about need."

- *Ricardo Levins Morales, organizer for MPD150*

We're talking about challenging the way our economy is set up. If you're a doctor in Colombia and you are dealing with an outbreak of dysentery, If you identify the microbe that is causing the dysentery, you might get a prize. If you identify a polluted water system as being the underlying cause, you can be thrown in jail. In order to deal with real solutions, you actually have to get, quote unquote, political. You have to deal with the issues that could get you in trouble.

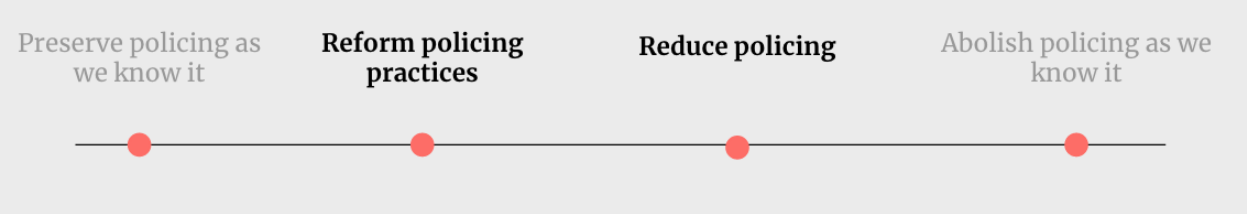
So what would a successful community-driven investment strategy look like? You need to be able to establish centers of activity in communities that are based on need and not demand. The market talks about demand. Communities talk about need. There's a need for accessible housing; there's not a demand for it. That's why we don't have it.

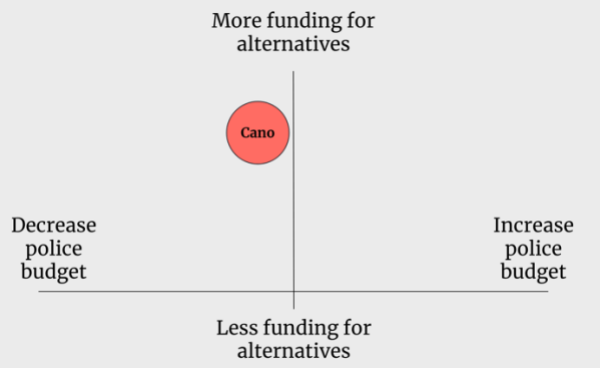
Any victories that are won in political struggle are transitional. You need to be able to protect and defend community needs for a period of time, so that people start feeling entitled to them. We want people to feel that actually healthcare is a right, that well-funded schools are a right. My personal political program starts with the clause: “Nobody gets seconds until everyone has had firsts.” That's a moral value that almost everybody will agree makes sense. And it’s completely incompatible with our current system. It’s important to popularize these different ways of thinking, and you do that through organizing.

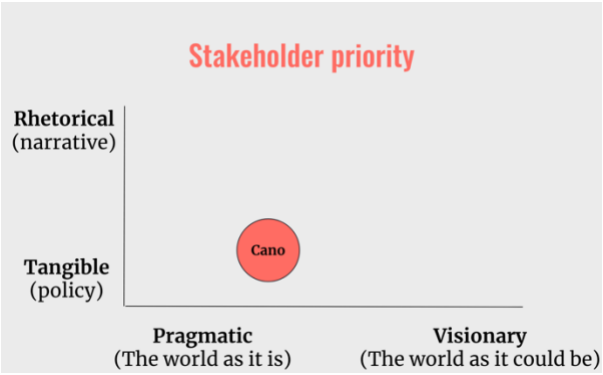
Alondra Cano

Minneapolis City Council Member

Situating CM Cano's perspective







Themes to lift up

- **A surge in violence in CM Cano's district has shifted her priorities**. CM Cano was one of the nine Council Members to pledge to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department in the wake of George Floyd's murder. Months later, following a rise in gun violence, sexual assault, robberies, and other crimes in her district, she is most focused on the immediate need to address the rise in violence.
- **The City of Minneapolis faces major fiscal pressures, which limit its ability to innovate**. COVID-19 and the economic downturn have produced a projected $32 million budget deficit.
- **Intergovernmental coordination is a big challenge**. CM Cano described the difficulty of coordinating with other City Council Members, the mayor, and County officials on providing the comprehensive, long-term services that residents need.

Edited interview

Nathan: I'd like to understand how you got involved with the movement to defund the police. What motivates you?

CM Cano: In college I was involved with anti-police brutality cases, including through 'prosecute the police' campaigns and others. I didn't really become familiar with the terminology 'abolish the police' until earlier this year, when [George] Floyd was killed.

I've been on the city council for seven years. Prior to this year, people from Reclaim the Block were the only organizers who were coming to city hall to ask for a redirection of funds from the police into mental health responders and other social service outreach efforts. But they never asked us to abolish the police.

Two years ago, we put together a package of a million dollars to take money away from the police department to put it into youth violence prevention programs and other things. We did it because it made sense to try new things. But there weren't so many eyes on that decision.

Most of the work [on policing] was focused on reform, and Minneapolis has done reform very well. Our body camera compliance rate is almost a hundred percent. We are diversifying the workforce like crazy. Unfortunately, those are the people that we're going to lose when we continue to defund the department, because they don't have seniority and as much union protection as employees who have been there longer.

So Minneapolis isn't new to redirecting funds from MPD to other things, and Minneapolis isn't new to reform.

After Floyd was killed, I remember thinking to myself that I couldn't possibly issue another press release talking about how horrible this was, and how we're going to do more training, and how we're going to buy more gadgets to make sure we're doing the right thing.

It felt to me that something was missing. It was something we weren't going to be able to fix [through reforms] anymore. I remember feeling that there was something about the informal culture of MPD and the way policing works - that it was going to have to be disinvestment from that entire structure to set the table in a different way.

For me, defunding means 'taking money away from.' Defunding has always been a strategy for a bigger goal. We were never really articulate or clear about what that bigger goal was. Reclaim the Block didn't do it, the Council didn't do it.

A day or two after [Floyd] was killed, I called [Minneapolis Council Member] Jeremiah Ellison and I said, what would it look like if we took an abolish the police vote? We're tired of the system that seems to be irredeemable and we can't keep throwing money at it to fix it. He agreed we should do it. We started to brainstorm, and I remember thinking to myself 'this is a moment

to be an organizer. This is not a moment to be a policymaker. What would I do as an organizer in this moment?'

I knew that whatever I did had to have enough people behind it, so that it would show strength and power and momentum.

We met with Reclaim the Block and Black Visions Collective every night to plan this potential event and announcement. We worked on language together. We had about four or five nights of organizing with them.

At Powderhorn Park, the nine of us decided to say reform is not enough. We want a new path. We want to abolish our current policing system. We want to engage our community for a year to figure out what safety looks like for people. And we want to take immediate steps to demonstrate that that's the direction we're moving in.

Nathan: I heard the interview you had on Vox's Today Explained podcast a couple of days ago. To quote something that you said: "it's fine to talk about what you don't want, but I think what's more valuable, more strategic and more important is to double down on what you do want, what things you can invest in now, that can be the systems that carry your city forward." I'd like to spend the rest of this interview talking about what we do want. What sorts of short and long-term investments do you think that Minneapolis needs to make to respond to the crises elevated by George Floyd's murder?

CM Cano: This is a complex question. There is a lack of data, research, knowledge around what causes gun violence, for example. We don't have any data that shows that ending homelessness is going to end gun violence, because I don't think we understand scientifically what causes gun violence.

Right now we are experiencing a high level of gun violence. It has gone up dramatically. It's now common in areas of the Ninth Ward where it didn't exist at all before. It is killing a lot of people of color. On 38th and Chicago alone [where George Floyd was murdered], we've had five people shot and killed.

There are people who believe in abolishing the police department because they want to live in a world where there is no capitalism, and where there are no arrests, and where there is no carceral system. That's one group of people. I'm never going to be able to reconcile myself with those people because I don't align politically in that direction. We can probably agree on some things, but my goal is not to meet their standards. My goal is to meet the standards of the 30,000 people I represent.

In order to provide a solution to something you have to agree on the problem you're trying to solve. Right now, the problem I'm trying to solve is gun violence, because that is what's happening in my district.

"In order to provide a solution to something you have to agree on the problem you're trying to solve. Right now, the problem I'm trying to solve is gun violence, because that is what's happening in my district."

- *Minneapolis City Council Member Alondra Cano*

The bike shop on the Greenway has been broken into and robbed eight times this summer, and the business owner says he cannot open until things are better. The same thing happened to Jakeeno's [a pizza restaurant] on Chicago Avenue. The same thing happened to the Somali daycare that's four blocks away.

We're seeing that these problems are bubbling up now that we've sent a message to the general public saying [that] we're going to reduce our police force.

So I think that we need to figure out true and tried models to reduce gun violence, to address theft and robberies, to address violence against women.

That's different than saying 'I want to solve homelessness' or 'I want to provide mental health services to people.' I think those things are good, but I don't think they're comprehensive enough to get at the culture of violence. If we're in a project of abolishing capitalism through abolishing the police, then let's be real about that conversation. Let's not pretend that enough homeless shelters are going to end gun violence.

So it's complicated. It's not probably what you wanted to hear, but I'm in a really difficult space right now where the ebbs and flows of this conversation are having some really serious negative impacts on the very people that we claim to be helping in abolishing a policing system.

Nathan: I appreciate your honesty. It's interesting that you're mentioning things like programs to solve gun violence, robberies, violence against women. I understand that the city of Minneapolis already has efforts underway to address those concerns. Could you speak about which organizations or agencies are doing this work, and what you think they need to address it in the way that they have not been able to in the past?

CM Cano: When we're talking about helping a woman who has been forced into prostitution for the last 15 years of her life, there's inevitably going to be a wrap around series of interventions and supports that are needed, not just for a year, but for five to 10 years until that person is better… Supports around housing, supports around trauma, supports around health, chemical

dependency, children, familial supports, transportation issues. There's going to have to be some conversation about jobs training and what kind of a job this person could eventually do to sustain themselves without having to depend on the support systems. And potentially guided support over a long time in case they relapse or they go back into their old habits. So imagine that times a hundred for all of the individuals on Lake Street. And that's just talking about the American Indian women there.

You would need a lot of money and that money needs to be there for a long time. And then government jurisdictions would need to really collaborate at a deep level. That's a big challenge because there's 13 council members plus a mayor, and seven county commissioners and their county coordinator and a lot of us don't do the best job at coordinating.

You probably saw what happened with the city's community engagement plan, which we authorized five months ago. It hasn't gone anywhere. We have a pretend website that has been published, but it's not that great. I don't want to share it with people because I'm not proud of it. It's a challenge to have the dedication and support and attention that [these efforts] need.

It's hard to go at it alone as a city. We eventually will hit a ceiling because we are part of a much bigger system of criminal justice that is not only backed by laws, but also entire economies. We need some sort of national effort to address these issues, instead of assuming that if we only created enough homeless shelters, we'll figure this out. That's not serious enough for me. That's not a rich enough conversation for me to really buy into it. Morally, I understand it, but pragmatically, it just feels a little bit too naive.

We need to bring the capacity together to help [us] think through this in an organized, supported, coherent way, with goals and results. Otherwise, it just feels like people are sitting at their desks, thinking, 'what would be helpful to fund today to help the people in our community? What about more youth centers? Let's do youth centers.' There's no blueprint that where we as a society have gotten together to say 'this is what really makes a difference.'

Nathan: In the absence of that national plan, what do you think you and the council can do?

CM Cano: About two months ago, I led the charge to redirect $1.1 million from MPD's budget into the office of violence prevention. This [came from] me going to neighborhood meeting after neighborhood meeting, hearing from my constituents about how they were forming community-based patrols to respond to the need. Their goal is to try to interrupt violence before it happens.

In East Phillips, for example, men in low-income immigrant families will stay up all night, patrolling their block because they are being inundated with negative activity. They don't get any sleep anymore. They are suffering from what I would consider post-traumatic stress disorder. They are always on alert, they are typically armed, and they use walkie-talkies to communicate on the block. I started hearing these stories of how constituents were coming together on their own to keep their block safe. I think we, as the city, should be paying you to do that work.

Right now we have a legally codified threshold for how much money the Minneapolis Police Department should get. If the voters next November decide that they want to change the charter,

Minneapolis could be in a position where they could take $170 million from the police department and put it into [community patrols], group violence intervention, shelters, chemical treatment centers. It's hard to know how far $170 million would take us. And then that would reduce the MPD budget to about $20 million.

You could do the math and figure out how many officers that is. Which parts of the city would they be deployed to? I don't know if that's a reality we can count on because there are so many steps from here to there. So the real question is: 'where does the money come from for programs like this?'

During COVID-19, with an economic recession and $32 million budget shortage next year, where do we get the money? The County isn't ponying up resources to help us through this. The state isn't either.

Nathan: It seems like a key challenge is not feeling that there is a blueprint yet. Are there other organizations or individuals in Minnesota who you feel like are helping shape perspectives on what this blueprint could look like?

CM Cano: One of the areas for learning would be the Little Earth Community [a residential housing area in Minneapolis with a high share of American Indian residents]. They've had a community protectors program for a while now, because there are a lot of young folks engaged with gang violence and gun violence. We should really focus on supporting and understanding it. What does this culture of violence look like? And what kinds of things can we do as a community to help?

It feels really overwhelming. There's not a lot of capacity at the table to go above and beyond the immediate fire in front of you. The privilege to look at the bigger picture and to clearly and soberly understand what the path forward is sometimes doesn't lend itself to us as policymakers. Maybe this is where foundations and corporations and other people who don't have to be in the fog all the time can step in and help guide and support those of us who are in the fog.

"A few people have asked me if I regret my announcement on June 7th at Powderhorn Park. I told them absolutely not. What I regret is not talking to the community groups, whether it's Black Visions Collective or Reclaim the Block, about investing before divesting. If I were a different city and if I was thinking about doing something like this, I would try to have tried and true systems in place first, before divesting from the police. Right now, we're essentially rock climbing without a rope."

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So I wish we would have had a conversation with all of the organizers back in May to say, yes, we can divest from MPD, but first let's build the systems that have been proven to work, to end gun violence and address robberies and theft and all that before we pull the plug on the old system.

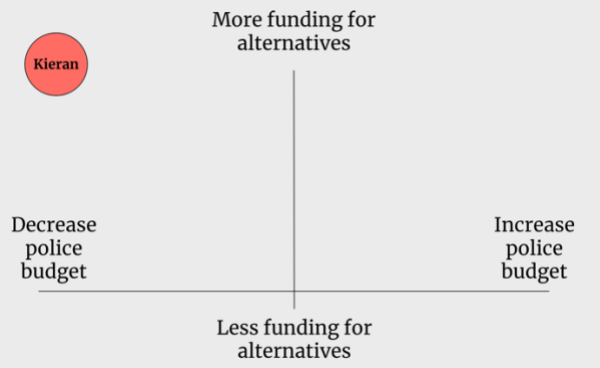
I can't keep voting to reduce the budget because I have to have an actual plan so my people aren’t dodging bullets or being robbed every year.

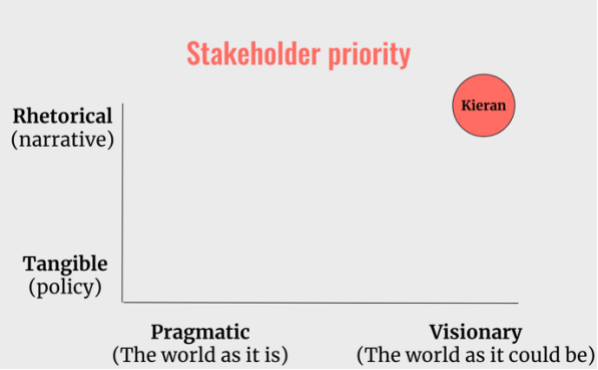
It's a very grounding, sobering moment. I want us to go deeper into it instead of walking away from the complexity and continuing to hashtag and meme our way through it. The complexity is beautiful, and we should engage it and dive into it and figure it out.

Kieran

Activist with the Worker's Defense Alliance

<u>Situating Kieran's perspective</u>





<u>Themes to lift up</u>

- **Activists like Kieran see the police as an actively harmful institution**. Kieran was explicit in stating that "to whatever degree the MPD is damaged, I think is a good thing. I think they're brutal." Whether the police can coexist with new investments and new ways of meeting community needs has emerged as a central disagreement among people who seek transformative change.
- **Kieran believes in the power of grassroots organizing**. He sees community defense organizations, or hyper-localized amateur patrols, as having the potential to replace police and provide public safety, and neighborhood organizations as the most promising basis for democratic decision-making.
- **The existing city budget isn't enough to meet the needs of the community.** Kieran notes that "What we need won't come from just redistributing the money that's already in the city's budget. There is wealth in this community… but it's not distributed to the poorest people." He makes a case that some of the state's largest employers, specifically, need to contribute more to meeting basic needs of poor people.

Edited interview

Nathan: I'm interested to hear what brought you to issues of policing. What motivates you in this movement?

Kieran: I'm 49 years old and I've been involved in organizing my entire life. In part I'm driven by my view of what's wrong with the world and what is needed to change it. Personal experiences, too: I was brutally beaten up by the police when I was a teenager, and had many friends that were also beat up by the police. I had a classmate who was killed by the police several years after we graduated high school. So the police have always been an antagonistic force in my life.

If you want to make change, you have to organize for it to happen. I'm a member of the Worker's Defense Alliance, a group that comes out of radicals in the labor movement. After the Minneapolis uprising, it's recruited a lot of young people who don't necessarily have experience in the labor movement, but who agree with our principles and have a shared analysis that based on how they are structured, the police cannot help but be oppressive. There's not a reform that would change that baseline purpose of the police, so while certain reforms might be useful, none of them are going to change [policing's] actual function.

"Based on how they are structured, the police cannot help but be oppressive. There's not a reform that would change that baseline purpose of the police, so while certain reforms might be useful, none of them are going to change [policing's] actual function."

- *Kieran, an organizer for the police abolitionist group Worker's Defense Alliance*

Initially, abolition wasn't a popular concept. We used the term because we thought it was important for when you got into the nitty gritty of discussing [policing] with people: 'what do you want? What is your positive vision?' It became useful for us to talk about abolition, but we didn't use it as a sort of primary slogan in the movement. We talked about justice for Jamar Clark, and we talked about building up what we call community defense organizations. Communities need to be able to defend themselves or from the police, but also from internal contradictions and antisocial violence within the community. [We see] community defense organizations as the seeds of an alternative to the police.

In the meantime, some excellent work was done by different organizations to articulate the history of the MPD, the history of policing in this country, and to raise the concept of a world without police.

What our difference would be with groups like MPD150 is that they take out the part where there's going to be a struggle between people who don't want the police and the police. It's almost presented as if something can be changed through a vote of the city council. Our approach is a little different. Our approach is that we need to build alternatives and organizations of struggle within working class communities, and that'll be the basis for abolition. That said, a lot of the stuff that groups like MPD150 and Black Visions have put out has been very good.

Nathan: How have you developed your analysis of this situation? Were there certain organizations or people who influenced your theory of change?

Kieran: Politically, I was most influenced by the history of the Black liberation movement in the United States, including figures like Malcolm X and organizations like the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and SNCC [Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee]. I was also influenced by anarchism – the working class history of the anarchist movement around the world. Those are my two biggest political influences.

I've been a part of different organizations and collectives going back to the eighties that organized solidarity with strikes, against rape and sexual assault, and against neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. Through that, I met people in the Black community who organized against police brutality – there were some pretty big cases that happened in Minneapolis in the late eighties and early nineties.

It was very educational, even though I'd grown up in a multi-racial community, and my parents were involved in the Jesse Jackson campaign. Being part of a movement that comes out of Black communities is a powerful experience: you learn how the police work, how the media works, how all the politicians work, how different opportunists within the movement work, and how different perspectives are fought out over the direction of the movement. I feel a great deal of indebtedness to the Black community for teaching me many political lessons.

Nathan: I'd like to talk about the path forward from here. What are the things that you personally are working for in the short and long-term?

Kieran: What we're trying to do is popularize [alternatives to] the myths of the police. We're all inundated with police television shows… for me growing up, all the best TV shows were cop shows, you were taught to sympathize with police. That was a typical profession that you hear mentioned when kids say what they wanted to be growing up. And it was all based on that kind of stuff. There's this big myth of the police. I think part of what we're trying to do is to take on that myth and talk about the actual function of the police.

We're fighting for justice for the victims of police brutality. I think that's going to continue to be a flash point. We've been trying to build up those movements, make them sharp politically and also strong physically so that they are able to do things, to challenge things…

The other thing we've been doing is trying to build up community defense organizations in the Minneapolis uprising. There were a number of community defense organizations that popped up around the city. Some were part of the George Floyd uprising. Some were community groups that came together because the police had just disappeared off the streets for several weeks. There was a need for social organization. We've tried to stay in touch with the groups that weren't white homeowner reactionary ones - if they were from communities of color or they had some kind of anti-racist perspective. We're trying to network these community defense organizations together. As we're talking about removing the police, [we're asking] what does community defense look like? And how do we get there?

Nathan: you mentioned making groups 'sharp politically and physically.' I'd be curious to hear any reflections you have on the physical part: what does that mean?

Kieran: [It means] a movement that's able to defend itself. During the uprising, there were thousands of people, mostly young, mostly people of color, but very multi-racial and, mostly poor people who were out in the street against the police and who took rubber bullets and tear gas. The medic hospital was attacked by the police, in a very sort of vindictive way. One of my son's coworkers was sitting on the curb, smoking a cigarette. He got shot by a tear gas canister and had to have surgery on his skull. There's quite a bit of vindictive violence by the police against the movement, and I think the movement has a right to defend itself.

Our approach is not a macho, tough guy vision of community defense, but we want communities to be organized. And the deeper our roots are in communities, the stronger we are.

We feel our role is to push in the streets and that that will have an impact on the policy discussions. We find all of the policy discussions inadequate, although some are better than others. Our organization is multi-racial, but it's majority white, and so we don't see ourselves as sort of leaders of this struggle overall, we see ourselves as participants in it, participants with opinions and proposals.

- *Kieran, an organizer for the police abolitionist group Worker's Defense Alliance*

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opinions and proposals. But I think it was a mistake by the movement as a whole not to keep up the pressure. And I think that allowed this charter commission to become pivotal.

To whatever degree the MPD is damaged, I think is a good thing. I think they're brutal. I think they are killers and to whatever degree an institution like that is weakened in my view is a good thing.

Now there's a whole bunch of questions [about the efforts to defund the Minneapolis police department] because there's been a spike in antisocial violence. Some of that is hyped, I think, but some of it is real. It hasn't just happened in Minneapolis. It's happened all around the country. and I think that there's a real need to try and take on this anti-social violence both in an immediate sense and in the long term – the bigger implications of why there's anti-social violence.

People who have living wage jobs aren't robbing people's houses. At some point we need to start talking about winning resources for poor people and working class communities. Ideally, that needs to be resources that are actually controlled by the communities themselves and not just doled out by politicians and nonprofits.

Nathan: You mentioned that you're less focused on the policy side of things, but I'd love to hear: what are the types of investments that you would like to see the city of Minneapolis or other cities in Minnesota making, instead of investing in policing as it is now.

Kieran: Poor people and working-class people need security. Security is the real basics: shelter, food, education, and employment. Right now, all of those things are precarious and have gotten more so during the pandemic and in the wake of the uprising. There should be a moratorium on evictions. There should be fresh food available in every part of the city and people should have access to it. There should be living wage jobs, real jobs that are unionized and pay enough money that people can have some safety and security.

I don't think those things can just be granted by the city without talking about the major corporations that control the life of this state and the wealth that [these corporations] hold. If you look at a corporation like Target that plays a major role in this state politically, socially, and culturally… Target has a huge footprint in downtown Minneapolis and has a huge amount of wealth and it has a huge number of employees in the metro area. What they want, they get.

We've got to expropriate some of the wealth that's been accumulated by the big corporations, like Target, 3M, General Mills, Medtronic, all these big corporations that are based in Minnesota. What we need won't come from just redistributing the money that's already in the city's budget. There is wealth in this community, there's a ton of wealth in Minnesota, but it's not distributed to the poorest people, the most oppressed people.

Nathan: I'd be curious to know what you think would be steps that are necessary to get to these goals.

Kieran: We need community groups that are actually controlled by everyday people. If neighborhood organizations are able to get funding, and can talk about development that isn't about gentrification and isn't about clearing the poor people out of the community. We also need to empower unions, which is the other type of organization that workers at least have the potential to control.

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>
> - *Kieran, an organizer for the police abolitionist group Worker's Defense Alliance*

With [the Bryant Ave neighborhood association] there was a real vision about creating a community center that would also be a training center. Helping to develop small Black businesses in the area, job training, land trusts to prevent gentrification and to keep people in homes. I think those are beginning steps. It's about changing the dynamics so that the grassroots is empowered to start making decisions about what happens in their own community and have some resources to actually put it into practice democratically. Protest movements could make those kinds of demands both on the city and on corporations.

If the city budget moves some money from the MPD to domestic violence, counselors, and other resources, that would be a positive thing. I would support something like that. It doesn't deal with the big problem overall, but it would be better than nothing.

Nathan: I'm interested by the question of community control. One example that comes to mind as a process that isn't effective community control are planning meetings, which tend to be non-representative. The people who lead those discussions tend to be wealthier, whiter, older homeowners. And as a result, they have these outsize perspectives in city policymaking. I'm curious to know how you think neighborhood association based community control could be done differently to be reflective of the needs of all residents within that neighborhood.

Kieran: I think it depends on momentum and organizers from the community. Something that is democratic and representative one day, could slide into being something that's corrupt and marginal a year from now. There's no perfect blueprint, but there need to be avenues that are participatory, that are open, and that have the potential to be democratic spaces. At times of mass interest in participation, like this summer, they really do become venues for democratic decision making in the community.

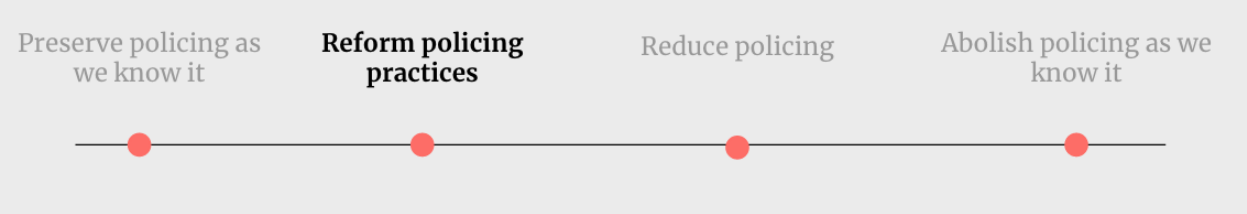
Nathan: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

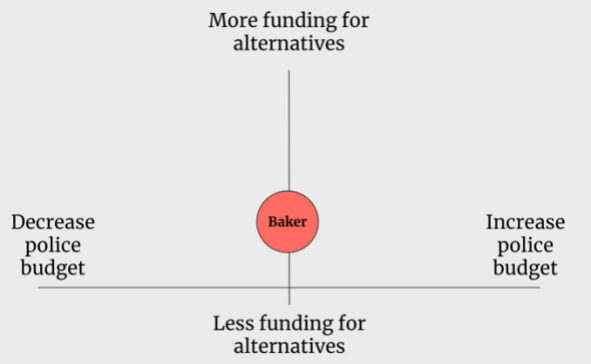
Kieran: This is an important moment. This summer, thousands of people, mostly young, mostly people of color, multi-racial, and mostly poor people who the system pretends don't exist really asserted themselves. It's to their credit that we're even having discussions about what to do about the police. I think there's a real chance to start talking about not only what's wrong with the society, but also what the possible alternatives are. I've been politically involved for 30 some years. This is a breakthrough.

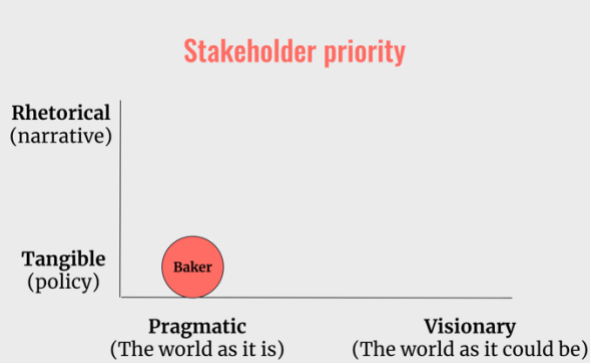
Chanda Smith Baker

Vice President of Impact at the Minneapolis Foundation

Situating this conversation







Themes to lift up

- **We are trying to solve many problems at once**. Chanda notes that while questions of police accountability, criminal justice reform, and the need for mental health services are interrelated, they are distinct challenges that require different solutions. She makes the case for decoupling policing reforms from conversations about community needs.
- **Money won't solve all problems**. Chanda shares her concern that merely adding funding wouldn't resolve problems whose root is racism. She notes that it's immensely important to reshape the practices and policies that guide public systems of education, mental health, chemical dependency, and more.
- **Chanda believes that the current discussion focuses too much on policing**. Chanda, who has strong personal and professional connections to law enforcement, believes that policing has effectively become the scapegoat for problems beyond its control. Instead, she calls us to ask: "what does community need?"

Edited interview

Nathan: What brought you to the issues of policing and public safety, and what motivates you when you think about this current moment?

Chanda: I live on Minneapolis' North side. My family has been here for generations, as has my husband's family. We're deeply embedded in the community. I'm from a community that has largely been underestimated, that has been a topic of discussion, and where lots of disparities exist. That's fundamentally how I got into the work.

In 2011, I became the president and CEO of Pillsbury United Communities. The same week that I officially started, I had a cousin who was murdered. He had just graduated from the police Academy. He was shot and killed by someone that I knew in high school who probably needed some additional support. I had been familiar with community violence, but it was deeply personal and [my thinking] moved from, 'this is happening to people who are doing wrong,' to 'this could happen at any time.'

I came to the Minneapolis Foundation in 2017. Conditional to me leaving the CEO role that I was in were two issues [on which] I was non-compromising: the ability to continue to work on addressing community-level violence, and criminal justice. I've been working on those issues at the foundation since that point.

Nathan: I'd love to hear your thoughts on the path forward. How do we create a better system of public safety? What are the short-term and longer-term goals that you have?

Chanda: I would try to de-centralize the police in this conversation. I would unpack it a bit. You have the catalytic event, George Floyd, in which we have a police chief who fired those four officers the next day. The problem was that they weren't charged initially - it wasn't what the leadership of MPD did.

Ideas for 'reimagined public safety' don't address the problem of people like Derek Chauvin. They don't get to accountability, early warning signs… what they get to is how to have fewer interactions with [officers like] Derek Chauvin, but all you need is one that results in the loss of life. I think that these are separate issues with different strategies.

We have officer accountability. We have issues of justice, [we have] responding to 9-1-1 and being able to deploy the type of resources that community needs. They're all related, but they're very different strategies. And right now they're being developed and communicated as though they're the same.

With the proposal that Minneapolis Council Members Bender and Fletcher and Cunningham put out for an $8 million cut [to the Minneapolis Police Department], there's $8 million that's needed for what they're proposing. They could raise that money overnight in Minnesota. They predicated that on a reduction [in the MPD budget] because they're moving from a political position of defund police and not from a motivation of re-imagining public safety. If you're looking to

reimagine public safety and you communicated what was needed, I think that in these times, with how people are feeling, that money would come forward.

So I think there has to be a decoupling. There needs to be some education on terminology. I think there needs to be some vision casting. and there needs to be less reactive political figures. I get that they need to respond to their constituencies. It feels like we are living in a moment of, a little bit of grandstanding and urgency: the combination of a sincere interest in making things better, but using solutions that aren't well thought out or bought into.

Nathan: It seem that you're touching on a point of disagreement: can transformational change happen at the same time that the police budget is maintained or expanded, or are those actions oppositional? I've spoken with some folks who are on the side of police defunding and abolition talk about policing as a harmful presence in its own right, so that cutting it is a path towards increasing community safety. You've mentioned previously that you believe in the chief's leadership and are concerned that he's being cut off from resources that he needs to be effective. So my question is: what makes you confident that the transformational reforms that you are calling for can also happen while funding the MPD as it is?

Chanda: 'Confidence' is strong, but I don't have confidence that you can create an [entirely] new system.

When people say 'let's abolish the police, but we still need to have someone that respond to issues'… So who are these people? Are you going to get them from a different United States of America and a different pool of people? You're not. You're still going to get people who come with their own set of biases. It actually feels scarier to me to have people who are untrained with weapons.

> "I have not been able to hear a vision from anyone in the Defund movement on what policing looks like without a police department. You're still going to need policing."
>
> - *Chanda Smith Baker, Vice President of Impact at the Minneapolis Foundation*

I have not been able to hear a vision from anyone in the Defund movement on what policing looks like without a police department. You're still going to need policing.

I understand [that some services] should have never been police services to begin with. I don't understand talking about mental health services and taking from a police budget when [mental health] is largely a county and a state-funded resource. I don't get the logic of that.

I don't know whether or not [these services] would ultimately reduce crime. I don't know what happens when we're in a pandemic and economic decline and you see a rise in crime. what is the response- do we assume that they're all mentally ill and chemically dependent?

I don't have enough clarity on how they're thinking. I understand emotionally why they're driving there: our hearts and our minds can't take watching another person die that way. I get that logically. But I need some vision casting that would allow me to see it.

Nathan: Looking at the short term question of how a city like Minneapolis should be spending its money, it sounds like you're supportive of increasing resources for the police?

Chanda: I don't know if it's about increasing as much as it's maintaining. I am not familiar with very many aggressive, significant change efforts that don't cost more money in the interim at any scale. It usually costs more money before it costs less. So I don't know why this would defy all the other changes that have occurred in every other system.

Nathan: Let's talk about the investment side of things. I'd love to hear your thoughts on what things you think are really important to invest in to support broader public safety at this moment.

Chanda: My position is that money won't solve [public safety]. I think that this has become a monetary argument - and I do there need to be deeper investments – but I don't think this [just] is a money issue. I think that racism is at the root.

That involves us having more ability to address the policies, the practices, and the behaviors that need to be stopped within all of our systems. For instance, in our school system, I don't think that literacy as a disparity is creating more criminals. I think that it's a school system that is not respectful and denies the identities of our students. There are structural issues that are pipelining young people into [bad] situations, that are reinforcing some of the narratives out there.

So my basic assumption is that we need to be very real about at each of our institutions. What are the ways in which we're operating that are creating harm and what do we need to do to stop it? I think it's an all-in exercise.

> "There's too much deficit thinking. Our mindset needs to be forward-looking. This moment is too centered on police and not centered enough on community. [We should be asking] 'what does community need?"
>
> - *Chanda Smith Baker, Vice President of Impact at the Minneapolis Foundation*

Do we care for people who are mentally ill, and people who have chemical dependency? Those are things that even if we weren't in a conversation around policing [we should address]. Our jails are largely made up of people who are mentally ill and chemically dependent.

We need to ask, what does this community deserve and what is the infrastructure to support it? We have to make investments and ensure that these essential services for our most vulnerable are not relegated to bankers' hours. What does a 24-7 annualized program look like and how expensive would it be? We can't just put more resources into broken systems.

Nathan: What would you say are the primary obstacles right now to making the changes that are necessary in these systems, whether that's new funding or whether that's policy and practice change?

Chanda: There's too much deficit thinking. Our mindset needs to be forward-looking. This moment is too centered on police and not centered enough on community. [We should be asking] 'what does community need?', not 'what does public safety need?'. What do we need to be able to be fully functioning?

The county, the city, the state, the feds, the schools all should be in the conversation. I do think that we need to get past the political moment. it's so politicized that it's a barrier. Hopefully that becomes less of a distraction so that we can get into the work. Because the conversation has been centered around policing, a lot of people are waiting to see what the mayor and the council members do. But we all own on a piece of the solution.

Nathan: Is there any thought you'd want to leave me with?

Chanda: In these conversations, we need to be asking: what is our state's commitment to supporting people with mental health issues? What is our state's commitment to supporting people with chemical dependency issues? What is our state's commitment to supporting young people? There are commitments and rights that if fully actualized, would get to what I think the defund moment is asking for. These have been disparities that have existed for years and years that we're centering around policing. We have never provided adequate services in any of these areas. To me, that's a bigger question. We can't be in a budget conversation every year around defunding the police so we can have adequate mental health services. Because you could take a lot of the budget of the police department and I don't think that those issues would go away.

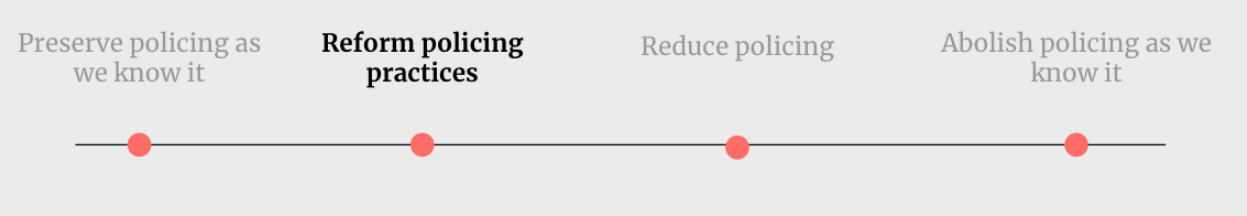
"In these conversations, we need to be asking: what is our state's commitment to supporting people with mental health issues? To supporting people with chemical dependency issues? To supporting young people? There are commitments and rights that, if fully actualized, would get to what I think the defund moment is asking for."

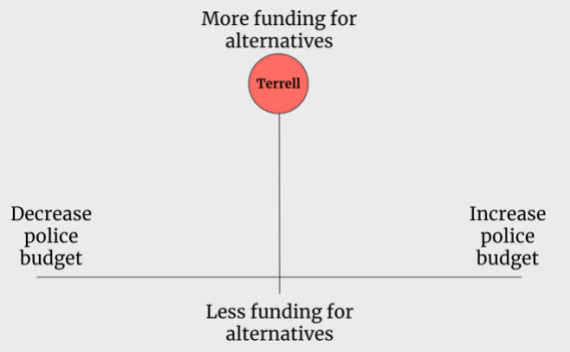
- *Chanda Smith Baker, Vice President of Impact at the Minneapolis Foundation*

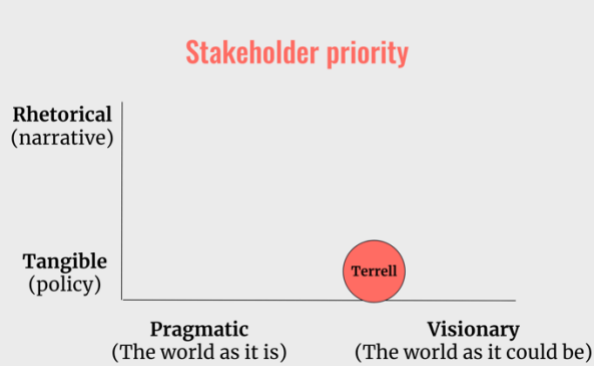
Justin Terrell

Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Center

Situating Terrell's perspective







Themes to lift up:

- **Perspectives on defunding the police vary based on exposure to violence**. Terrell observes that a left-leaning, white activist community in South Minneapolis is voicing more support for dismantling the city's police department than Black residents of Minneapolis living in the city's North Side, where neighborhoods face higher levels of violence.
- **Terrell notes that a sign of progress is whether new public dollars are spent on potential solutions.** He states that "there needs to be a strategy that ties public safety dollars to investments that empower communities to be able to protect themselves."
- **Terrell observes that conversations about policing need to extend beyond Minneapolis**. He notes that "the police kill more people in Greater Minnesota than they do in the Twin Cities," and makes the case that policing's failures affect more than just Black people.

Edited interview

Nathan: Justin, I wanted to start with what brought you to the issue of policing and the criminal justice system. What is motivating you?

Justin: So there's a long story and a short story. I grew up in South Minneapolis in a family in poverty. I was assaulted by a police officer for the first time at the age of 13, but my first ever interaction with policing was at the age of five or six. My father was arrested during a mental health crisis, which resulted in my family becoming homeless. So my experience with the criminal justice system since my childhood has shown me it has an overwhelming impact on communities, specifically communities of color, and on me.

I got involved in advocacy because, before Black Lives Matter, we had officer-involved deaths that were happening in the community that just weren't being tape recorded – it's the Adrian Maree Brown idea that 'things aren't getting worse, they're being uncovered.' Because I knew people in the community that died at the results of decisions by police, I decided to apply to join the Minneapolis Civilian Review Board in 2006. And I served on that board for six years.

And ultimately, I left that body because I watched how policy and the union and everything was just so entrenched in protecting officers who were making egregious misconduct. The majority of officers we worked with were great officers, and they would often reconcile with the people they interacted with in the community; you had these great experiences. But there were a handful of officers who were out of pocket. We could do nothing. We were powerless to get them to lose their job, for them to be disciplined.

There were some policies that went in place that really solidified that and I had to say that this is a waste of my time. Around the same time I became an organizer. I started working on criminal justice issues, specifically barriers to employment.

Nathan: You'd mentioned leaving the civilian review board after six years. What then led you to go into advocacy after that?

Justin: I spent the first 10 years of my career as an informal social worker. I was doing workforce development and work with the homeless. And I saw kids I was working with eight years ago showing up in the adult homeless population. And it was clear to me that these were structural issues… for them to show up in the adult system, I thought, there's something bigger at play here. So I studied policy through my master's program and in the midst of that program, I stumbled across this campaign manager job around fair hiring with Ban the Box and Take Action Minnesota. It was a wildly successful campaign because Target decided that to be a good partner with the community.

Out of that work came a lot of the current leaders were leading the defund the police campaign. Kandace Montgomery, who is one of the directors at Black Visions Collective, was the organizer that I hired for her first full-time organizing job, flew her across the country to work for me as an organizer at Take Action. A lot of the work to develop the infrastructure for the movement for

black lives Candice led as an employee at Take Action. A lot of the work at Black Lives Matter Twin Cities and Black Visions has come from her leadership.

After being an advocate for so many years, I left Take Action to lead the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage and worked really hard to prop up Black-led organizations. After two and a half years to rebuild that organization I decided to leave for my dream job to work as an Executive Director leading the Minnesota Justice Research Center, which focuses on research, education, and policy to transform our justice system.

Nathan: Describe where we are right now; what's your sense of the public conversation around defunding and policing in Minnesota?

Justin: It depends on what's the part of the public you're talking to. If you're a white progressive in South Minneapolis, you have a recently awakened activist community that wants to see radical change. People are being radicalized all over Minneapolis, white folks in particular. If you're talking to your North Side Black community, they are begging for the police to come back. I was talking to an officer the other day who said that on a Tuesday, we had 19 car jackings in one day. North high school has lost six students since school started to violence.

The Black community isn't fully supportive of defund the police.

"In South Minneapolis, you have a recently awakened activist community that wants to see radical change. People are being radicalized all over Minneapolis, white folks in particular. If you're talking to your North Side Black community, they are begging for the police to come back."

- *Justin Terrell, Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Center*

We did a statewide poll and found that Black folks' support for defund the police is around 60 percent. You have a small group of brilliant organizers in my opinion, who are doing an amazing job, forcing a conversation we should have had a long time ago. So what you have is a very complicated set of conflicting interests on this.

Then you have conservatives who are taking full advantage of the conflict and doing their best to paint a picture of the need for law and order. And honestly, the movement is really vulnerable for those folks to come out ahead.

At some point, and you're seeing this shift with the city council already, there is pressure to go running back to equip and fund the police because who else is going to stop the crime in the community?

Nathan: Going forward, what could be long term and short-term goals for this movement?

Justin: The first goal needs to be a robust statewide conversation. The reality is that our criminal justice system is not producing public safety. We are not getting what we think we're paying for, and that is true in the Twin Cities and in Greater Minnesota. All over the state, you can find that shared experience. My organization's goals are to lead part of that conversation by providing broad data to show what people pay for public safety. We need to have the conversation about what actually makes sense for our criminal justice system to provide.

We don't have a justice system in Minnesota. We have a crime and punishment system. We have a system that protects the profits and the property of the wealthy. And it divides and controls the rest of us.

Second, just looking at history – it's an uphill battle to draw a bright line and say defund the police. There will be more people on the side of funding the police, because there are bullets flying through their windows.

But if you look at another example: there's been a 40-year campaign to defund education, but school reformers never came out and said 'defund education.' They created charter schools. They created this entire alternative infrastructure to the public education system. And then they tied legislative dollars to it. Do you see where I'm going with this?

If 'defund the police' means 'put more resources in the community' there needs to be a strategy in place that ties public safety dollars to investments that empower communities to be able to protect themselves. If you can't solve the problem of violence in the community, you can't defund the police.

"If 'defund the police' means 'put more resources in the community' there needs to be a strategy in place that ties public safety dollars to investments that empower communities to be able to protect themselves. If you can't solve the problem of violence in the community, you can't defund the police."

- *Justin Terrell, Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Cener*

If you really look at the different layers around defund the police, what you're really talking about is creating more infrastructure for public safety, which is a campaign that starts with black people. There are some organizations like Night Out For Safety and Liberation, where the sole focus is on bringing people together in the community to celebrate safety and liberation. There are Black-led organizing efforts in the country that are focused on building up public safety in

the community, but what gets the national attention is defund the police. Some people are married to calling it defund, but what I actually care about is public safety.

And the third goal is to start taking on big ideas. We asked about economic investments in a statewide poll we did. And one of the things I was surprised about is that 72% of Minnesotans that we polled support a guaranteed jobs program. We're not even talking about that at the state legislature. That tells me that there are big economic investment ideas that we can really start working on. Another idea is reparations. Prosperity Now put out a report that said it would take 242 years for the black family to catch up with white wealth in America. 242 years. There's no other way to deal with that other than reparations. We're not talking about what it would take to make up the wealth gap. We're not talking about the need to regulate the black market economy by legalizing marijuana. There are people ready to lead these conversations. We just need to stop ignoring them.

I'm just really excited to get to work. I want to work with black neighbors to start sourcing new ideas from their experience. As per usual, the white, liberal base in South Minneapolis – which is what makes South Minneapolis South Minneapolis, so no shade - tends to run a little bit ahead of where black folks are, leaving the problems and the residue behind for us to fix.

Nathan: Could you tell me a little bit more about why it's important to talk about justice on a statewide level. What are the things that you would like to see happen outside of Minneapolis or St. Paul?

Justin: The reason why we need a statewide conversation and not a Twin Cities conversation is because the police kill more people in Greater Minnesota than they do in the Twin Cities. This is not just a Black people's problem. It is a policing problem. And part of the issue is that we are always making issues exclusive to black people.

Now I understand that Black people disproportionately are impacted by the justice system, but last time I checked injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. If someone in Greater Minnesota is dealing with police brutality, that's a problem too. In general, you need a broad coalition to transform a system.

> "The state controls peace officer licensing, it controls the prisons, it controls law enforcement. That is where those decisions are made. So trying to get it done at the city level isn't enough."
>
> - *Justin Terrell, Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Cener*

The state controls peace officer licensing, it controls the prisons, it controls law enforcement. That is where those decisions are made. So trying to get it done at the city level isn't enough.

Nathan: Part of what that I'm working on is a budget analysis to understand police and corrections expenditures. I'd love to hear your thoughts on budgets and what changes you'd like to see us make.

Justin: When you're doing an analysis on budgets, you have to break things down and understand how the money is spent. When the City Council moved a million dollars out of the Minneapolis police department budget [in 2018], they got rid of all the things that we'd been fighting to put in place: procedural justice, which gave way to the policies that recognize the sanctity of life.

You need to be careful when you go after budgets, because what you don't want to do is strip away the policies that have the ability to influence the practice.

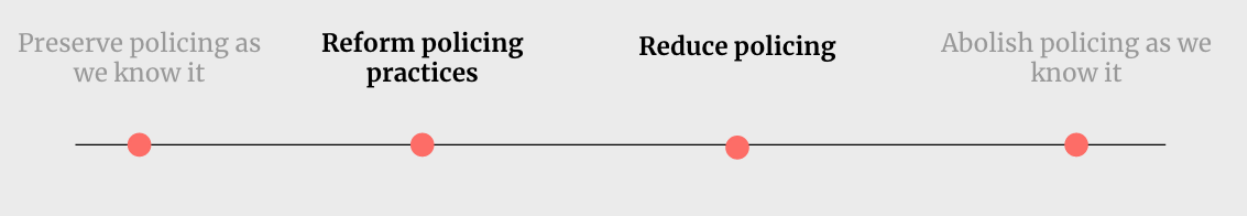
To your second question on what investments I want to see: we need to make some investments in juvenile justice. It is not news that 13 to 28 year olds are more likely to have violent behavior. Let's just make a plan to keep 13 to 28 year olds really busy. We need jobs for juveniles. We need meaningful investments for families to protect against things like bankruptcy from medical debt. Housing is a huge issue in Minnesota, where we have 22 percent homeownership rate for Black folks. I like the street outreach teams like MAD DADS and A Mother's Love. I think they're great. You have to invest more in those groups. But also there's a whole group that goes unrecognized. Churches that have been feeding hundreds of families since COVID-19 hit and they haven't seen a dime.

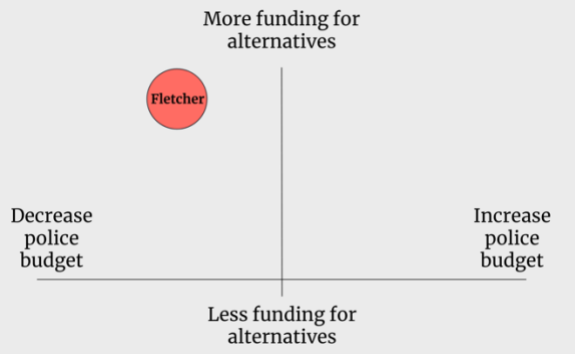
I think we need a broad strategy to make meaningful investments in civil society and the Black community.

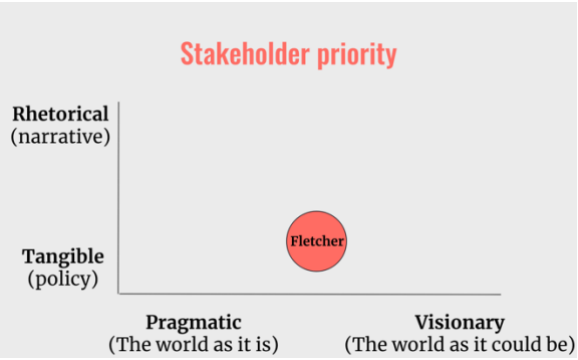
Steve Fletcher

Minneapolis City Council Member

Situating CM Fletcher's perspective







Themes to lift up:

- **CM Fletcher offers a potential definition for success**. Fletcher speaks of grounding his efforts to reimagine public safety in the event that ignited current conversations. He asks, would our new system have kept George Floyd alive?
- **Crime is not a monolith, and its solutions are multifaceted**. Council Member Fletcher identifies many potential catalysts for crime, and makes the case that mental health services, housing, and other supports need to be considered public safety strategies.
- **Public safety will be the defining issue of the 2021 elections**. Fletcher states that "there's going to be a year-long discussion about public safety - that's literally the only thing anybody's going to focus on." He also notes that while he feels confident in his position, he recognizes that some colleagues on the City Council may feel pressure to shift their perspectives to win re-election.

Edited interview

Nathan: How did you get involved with the movement to defund the police, and what motivates you?

CM Fletcher: My experience with the issue goes back to my work as a community organizer. I was the founding director of a community organization called Neighborhoods Organizing for Change. We encountered constant harassment of the black men and women who joined our canvas teams. We would notify the precinct about where we were to try to minimize the harassment, because we noticed they bothered us less if we called them in advance. We should not have to do that in a democracy.

I also have an academic understanding of biases in the criminal justice system – I did a PhD program in American Studies at NYU.

When I ran for office [in 2017], even before I knew who the mayor and the chief were going to be, I was saying we can't just leave this to the mayor and the chief, the way Minneapolis has been for forever. The community really has to get involved and have more ownership of what's happening with law enforcement, because there are a lot of problems that need to be solved. The sense of legitimacy of our police force was diminishing, even in 2017.

Nathan: Could you describe how George Floyd changed your thinking to some degree on what the response is, to what you're seeing?

CM Fletcher: Watching someone in a Minneapolis uniform do that to another human being created a lot of pain and trauma, including for anybody who identifies with the city.

I think if the rank and file officers through the Federation had expressed remorse for it, had distanced themselves from it - if there had been a kind of peaceful and mournful response when protestors first showed up at the third precinct, I think it could have looked so different.

What ended up happening was a battle between the police and the people that I think just solidified for a lot of people a deep mistrust of the institution of the Minneapolis Police Department. There was no going back. I had [previously had] a vision of being able to incrementally reform and pilot some things, then gradually shift some responsibilities away from the department, but it would have been a fairly gradual and thoughtful city process.

A lot of people don't think they're going to be treated fairly [by the police]. It means that a police response right now is not often the most effective response to a lot of situations.

The study drumbeat of national events have reinforced for everybody that our analysis isn't crazy. It wasn't just George Floyd, right? There's been this drumbeat of misconduct and new videos coming out that made people feel very connected to a national moment.

Nathan: What would you see as the short-term and the long-term actions that you hope for in this moment?

CM Fletcher: The first thing that we need to do is focus all kinds of community resources, including police, because we're still paying $195 million for a police department, on the very urgent and dangerous violence that's happening in a really concentrated way in a couple of parts of our community. If we can't get that under control, people's fear is going to drive the conversation in a way that's just going to make everything feel impossible.

"The first thing that we need to do is focus all kinds of community resources, including police, on the very urgent and dangerous violence that's happening in a really concentrated way in a couple of parts of our community. If we can't get that under control, people's fear is going to drive the conversation in a way that's just going to make everything feel impossible."

- *Minneapolis City Council Member Steve Fletcher*

Hopefully in this process we can model a lot of non-police interventions that show what kinds of creative solutions can be brought to bear.

It's a very hard moment. When the MPD is viewed as illegitimate, people don't contain their analysis to MPD. They view the whole government is illegitimate. They view the whole system as illegitimate. And that creates its own leadership challenge for mayors and council members and park board commissioners and everybody else who are all viewed as representatives of an unfair system. And we're the ones trying to lead change.

I represent Ward Three, which has some more affluent neighborhoods that are accustomed to a very high level of service from MPD and, can get very concerned about issues that frankly would never be addressed on the North Side. I think some people want a lot of police to come over and mess with [kids of color] who play in front of their condos. We've been trying to model other solutions by asking: how could we improve this situation without arresting people? Could you just go out and talk to people about how this is impacting you? Starting with a process to expand people's imagination about what's possible in those responses is going to be important.

Then there's a budget fight that is inevitably going to happen. That's the next touch point in this conversation. Because the charter amendment didn't pass, we are constrained about what kind of cuts we can make, which is probably fine because we don't have plans in place. The goal for me is to fund the replacement services. What are the things that we're currently piloting that we can make permanent? Can we establish new programs to dramatically reduce calls that used to get routed to MPD and are now getting routed somewhere else?

Then we're in a place where we can talk to people about why we think we need fewer police than what the charter currently requires. We have to be realistic that people have anxiety that we're just going to cut [police], but not have a plan for answering 911 calls. I think it's critical that we have answers to 911 calls. I just think a huge percentage of them don't need a police response.

2021 is going to be a very interesting year, because there are going to be a lot of programs getting piloted around violence prevention and violence disruption and other kinds of services. And at the same time we're all up for reelection and the charter amendment will be on the ballot. It is going to be a year long conversation about public safety. That is literally the only thing anybody's going to be focused on.

"There's this tendency to [think of] crime as a phenomenon that you can understand as single thing. And then the response to that thing is police. The truth is, crime happens for lots of different reasons."

- *Minneapolis City Council Member Steve Fletcher*

Nathan: I want to dig into the specific pilots that you think are interesting and valuable. Are there investments that you think are getting at these root issues?

CM Fletcher: There's this tendency to [think of] crime as a phenomenon that you can understand as single thing. And then the response to that thing is police.

The truth is, crime happens for lots of different reasons. There is some amount of crime that would stop if we had good mental health and addiction services in our county, because it's related to people struggling with the financial challenges of feeding their addiction.

There's a portion of crime that's related to the challenges of living without stable shelter.

So the right response to those issues are not policing. The right response is mental health, the right response is housing. The right response is outreach to people to understand what social needs are not being met and connect people with services.

Another portion of crime is from people who are on the wrong path and need a much more direct intervention, but if they had it, they might go a different way.

Then there's some actual predatory crime, people who have decided that the way they're going to make their living is stealing high end bicycles and transporting them out of state. We need to stop those guys.

For me, getting as much of our response to non-violent situations, out of depending on law enforcement, is the critical thing.

So I'm really interested in pilots that can do mental health response. I'm really interested in pilots around temporary shelter, that are moving people into addiction treatment and into housing. I view those as a part of our public safety strategies. I'm really interested in rethinking how we do security that respond to people more proactively and with more of an orientation towards service.

There's a model of mobile mental health teams that could be the direct responders to 911 calls that we are excited about. We're hoping that [Hennepin] County wants to own that because they have a mental health response capacity already. We're trying not to reinvent the wheel. But if those negotiations fell apart, I think we would probably go ahead and pilot something within the health department.

It would be so easy to use the tragedy of George Floyd's death to just design romantic stuff that wouldn't actually prevent the next George Floyd from happening.

"For me, that's how we judge if we get where we need to go: would we have not killed George Floyd? If we're not going to get there, we need to not invoke his name in this work."

- *Minneapolis City Council Member Steve Fletcher*

We need to challenge ourselves to respond with some other response than an arrest or charge for someone who's accused of a misdemeanor. It's not automatic that we're going to get there. For me, that's how we judge if we get where we need to go: would we have not killed George Floyd? If we're not going to get there, we need to not invoke his name in this work.

Nathan: how do the prominent defunding or abolitionist advocacy groups fit into these discussions?

CM Fletcher: I've got a pretty good picture of which things they're excited about and which things they don't care about, which is helpful.

There was a real disconnect in the unrest. They came out with a demand that we cut the police budget by $45 million. There was no universe where we even could do that in the mid-year

budget, even if we had wanted to. I wish that we had been more connected to them to help them craft a demand that would have been less demoralizing to their base when we just couldn't deliver on it. I'm hopeful that nobody feels so demoralized and out in the cold that they stop working on the issue or lose hope.

[Heading into the 2021 election,] I'm pretty clear about the position I've staked out. The reason I want this job is to finish what we started here. Transforming public safety in the city of Minneapolis is one of those legacy projects that probably isn't a one-year project. It's probably a 10 to 20 year project if we're really serious about it.

It would be a shame to leave what we started. I only want to win if I have a mandate to keep doing what I'm doing.

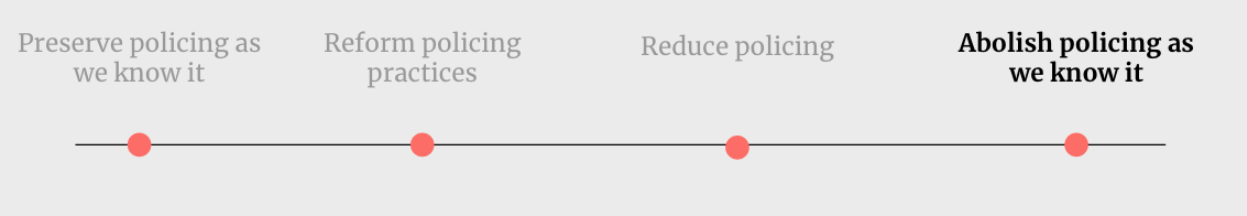
But I'm not sure that all of my colleagues are in that position. They've got some strategic choices in front of them, and I don't know what all of them are going to do.

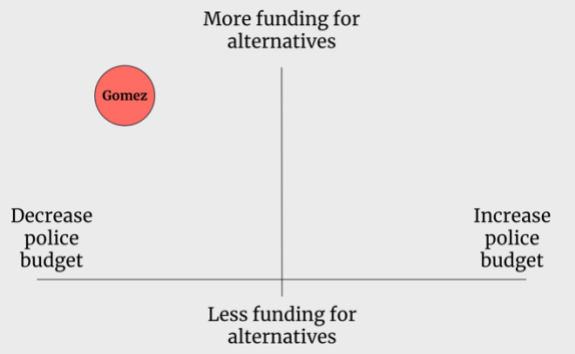
That's the other interesting question: how does a movement relate to an election cycle? It's a weird and messy question. I don't know what's going to happen.

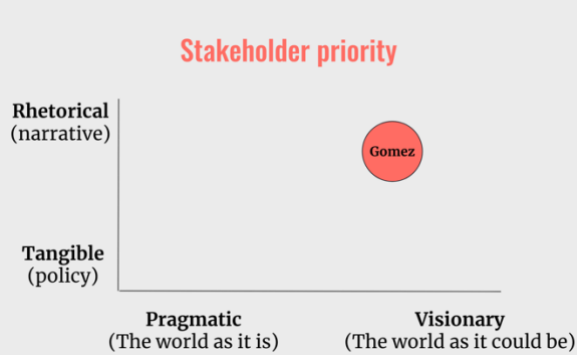
Aisha Gomez

Minnesota State Representative

Situating Rep. Gomez's perspective







Themes to lift up

- **Representative Gomez is one of very few state legislators in Minnesota who publicly supports police abolition.** Gomez speaks of her ties to the Minneapolis activist community, including lessons she learned from Ricardo Levins Morales and MPD150.
- **The state's political climate is much more conservative than the City of Minneapolis**. Gomez states that Republicans weaponized "defund the police" in the 2020 elections, leading with a law-and-order message. She describes the difficulty of making change in this antagonistic, politicized context.
- **The contours of the conversation about public safety are expanding**. Gomez notes that there is more space to discuss public safety now than there has been in previous years, and states that the laws passed this year went much further than would have been possible before George Floyd's death.

Edited interview

Nathan: What brought you to these issues of policing and public safety? What motivates you?

Representative Gomez: In part it's personal experience. I had domestic violence happening in my house when I was young, and also was a victim of crime as a teenager. In those times when I needed police, the way that they showed up was not only not helpful, it was actually damaging.

I grew up in in South Minneapolis. Even as a high school student, on Lake Street, you knew that when you saw a squad car with a three [3rd precinct] instead of a five [5th precinct], they were rough aggressive cops. They always were known to be that way.

For parts of my life, I've lived in over-policed communities, where there was higher crime and higher police contact.

Also, I'm part of a radical tradition and politics in this country, and our social movements have always encountered these problems. Our communities of color have always had these problems.

The history of policing in our country is about quelling uprisings of enslaved people and doing the work of bosses against working class people. Police are part of the carceral state, part of maintaining social control for capitalism.

> Believing in [police] abolition is an act of hope and vision that's really fucking hard in such a dark time. But as human beings…we have to be able to imagine and work for something that's better, that centers humans instead of money. I realize I'm one of like 50 people in the state who actually believes in police abolition."
>
> - *Minnesota State Representative Aisha Gomez*

Nathan: Did George Floyd's murder shift your thinking on these issues and what your response could be?

Representative Gomez: I was working at the city when Jamar Clark was killed [in 2015]. I saw some really concerning things. Working in a council office [Gomez worked for Council Member Alondra Cano], you're at the frontline of hearing from community and from business communities. Council Member Cano represents a central area of Lake Street between 35-W and Hiawatha Ave, the area that for decades has been one of the places statewide where there's commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking happening openly. It's in the middle of low-income neighborhoods that have been disinvested in, and so it has crime problems.

If you look at the boilerplate police reform ideas, Minneapolis has done all of them. We did all the training and we did all the community policing and we did all the body cams at great expense. And what it resulted in was just more and more of our budget going toward the police.

The MPD150 project really crystallized observations that had occurred to me, but hadn't been synthesized in a really coherent way. Like a lot of activists around my age, [my views have been influenced by] years of being around Ricardo Levins Morales. He's taught us all these ways of being critical about our history and about the place that we find ourselves right now.

Believing in abolition is an act of hope and vision that's really fucking hard in such a dark time. But as human beings, we need to be able to look at the pain of our current moment and the way that people are suffering unnecessarily at the same time that there's this incredible explosion of wealth and accumulation. We have to be able to imagine and work for something that's better, that centers humans instead of money. I realize I'm one of like 50 people in the state who actually believes in police abolition.

Nathan: How have conversations gone with your fellow state legislators?

Representative Gomez: This conversation has been weaponized against Democrats and against people of color and against the cities at the state level. It's intense. The Republican Party spent millions of dollars sending pictures of the third precinct burning down across the state this year. I'm very open about my views and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle at the Capitol think I'm a kook.

"This conversation has been weaponized against Democrats and against people of color and against the cities at the state level. It's intense. The Republican Party spent millions of dollars sending pictures of the third precinct burning down across the state this year."

- *Minnesota State Representative Aisha Gomez*

There's also a history of the right wing exploiting racial grievance. This isn't the first time that there have been images of African-American men, for example, used as a weapon. That's part of white supremacy and part of justifying some of the more draconian elements of our criminal justice and policing system. The law and order message is a cynical political ploy. They believe they can exploit it for political gain.

George Floyd was killed in my community. My community has expressed really strongly that they think that there are other ways that we can ensure the safety of everybody. Because if our public safety structure is not providing safety to a significant portion of its population, which is

one of the basic functions of government, then law enforcement has lost its credibility. Nobody wants that. Nobody wants the tension and strife that we are experiencing right now.

I do think that the conversations that we're having right now about public safety are different and more expansive than I've ever experienced in my life. It's been a very difficult six months, but there's also more space in this conversation than there's ever been before.

We passed a really good police reform package and I've spoken about my beliefs about the limits of a reform approach to this work. But there are things in that package that are absolute, unvarnished good, and will only have positive impacts on our community. Things that would have been absolutely impossible even three months before we did it.

The city council has a certain kind of political pressure on them around this stuff. At my level, at the state, there are 59 Republicans that I have to work with, who I have to have relationships with. They think I'm a kook, but when they get to know me, they say, 'oh, you're not as crazy as I thought.' I can't tell you how many times I've heard 'we thought you were insane and totally unreasonable and you're actually all right.' I have to find places of unlikely partnership in order to get shit done in that context, so there is a challenge to it, for sure. I'm trying to do my best to faithfully represent my community, knowing that I represent one of the most progressive districts in the state of Minnesota.

"The city council has a certain kind of political pressure on them. At my level, at the state, there are 59 Republicans that I have to work with. They think I'm a kook, but when they get to know me, they say, 'oh, you're not as crazy as I thought.' I have to find places of unlikely partnership in order to get shit done in that context... I'm trying to do my best to faithfully represent my community, knowing that I represent one of the most progressive districts in the state of Minnesota."

- *Minnesota State Representative Aisha Gomez*

Nathan: I'd love to hear what kinds of investments you think you could make in the state legislature.

Representative Gomez: I'm not on the criminal justice committee. I'm not going to be the person who knows all of the ins and outs of this. But I had a bill that was not included in the final deal [this summer] that established an Office of Community Public Safety inside the [Minnesota]

Department of Public Safety. It would have had some money to support community-led public safety initiatives. The data supports a public health approach to violence intervention.

Places like Minneapolis and around the country are making investments in alternatives to policing. I think that there's possibility within that. I think we'll see that moving a modest amount of money into 3-1-1 to take reports about stolen goods is just not such a scary thing. We need to start the practice of just interrogating what we're doing in order to make the next steps appear possible.

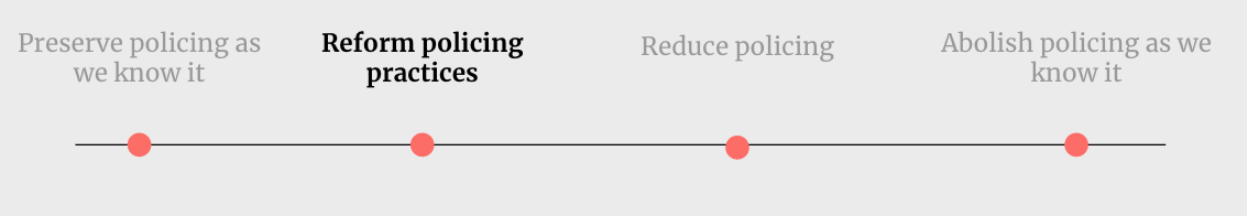
Nathan: Is there anything you'd like to leave me with?

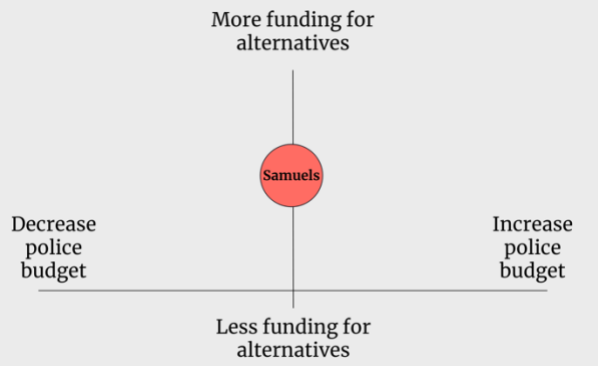
Representative Gomez: This is the kind of change that is hard, but it doesn't have to be as hard as it is right now. And hopefully it won't be. There's been a huge shift in this conversation in our country this year because of George Floyd.

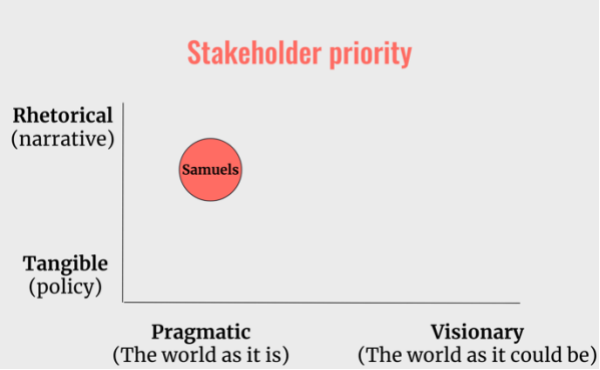
Don Samuels

Former Minneapolis City Council Member and resident of Minneapolis' North Side

Situating Samuels' perspective







Themes to lift up

- **Policing as a secondary problem**. Samuels sees providing safety as a more urgent concern than addressing the abuses of power by the police department, which is why he filed a lawsuit to compel the city to return cops to North Minneapolis this summer. He states: "I got to the city council with eyes wide open and nostrils flared: we going to end this inferior quality of life that the city has condemned us to. I knew that there was disrespect from the police. But it was a secondary issue."
- **Wealthier Americans' aversion to poverty is a root cause of challenges in communities like North Minneapolis**. Samuels, who was born in Jamaica, states simply that "the inequality of American society is largely based on the desire to get away from poor people."
- **Economically diverse neighborhoods as an antidote to structural inequalities**. Samuels and his wife are middle-class residents in a largely lower-income neighborhood

due to their belief that the presence of people like them will help the neighborhood's other residents get the services and resources that they deserve. He believes that the government should do more to incentivize other middle-class families to return to underinvested neighborhoods.

Edited interview

Nathan: I'm interested to hear what brought you to the current movement around policing.

Don: I was born a black child in Jamaica, and I grew up in a low-income Pentecostal home in Kingston. I went to school with upper middle-class kids and developed a really a high degree of consciousness about inequality. As I grew up, I got the sense that things could be fair. I was magnetized to the Civil Rights movement and the fact that religious leaders were calling for equality. For me, equality and faith got very bound up together. I was very attracted to the whole concept of loving resistance.

Motivation is a huge thing for me. It's important because as all over the world, people ask for change and then replicate the oppressor. If the motivation is wrong, then the revolution can be wrong. The process itself can't be too morally unsustainable or flawed.

One thing I've learned is that the inequality of American society is largely based on the desire of people to get away from poor people. From that, you have white flight, then black middle-class flight and the hollowing out of inner city communities of their leadership class. And so you have this concentration of poverty, concentration of social services, concentration of failure in communities that often were healthier before.

"One thing I've learned is that the inequality of American society is largely based on the desire of people to get away from poor people."

- *Don Samuels, former Minneapolis City Council Member and North Side resident*

I live in one of those communities: North Minneapolis.

The fact that the matter is [in North Minneapolis] you have low engagement, low voter turnout, low demand for quality services, low expectations from outsiders and even internalized low expectations. So people have more dysfunction in families and more policing. A third of the police are stationed in North Minneapolis, which is less than a fifth of the city's population.

So we have a lot of police, but because the black middle-class like me are not there in numbers, and because people cycle in and out of this neighborhood, the police are not as accountable for their behavior.

Because I'm middle class, I feel very empowered as a human being. I expect good policing for myself and my son. But I'm not here in numbers, right? People like me don't live in communities like this. And so the cops get a free rein to treat people badly and get away with it.

It's all related to fair housing laws. The exodus of the middle-class, the concentration of people who are not engaged, connected, or empowered, and then the insertion of these powerful agents to control them, who get away with bad treatment over time to the point where it's institutionalized.

I made a vow in college that I was going to live in low-income community all my life. I've lived in the Lower Eastside of New York. I lived in the low-income communities of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. I lived in Saint Paul near Selby and Dale when it was scary. And I'm in North Minneapolis. So I'm not naive. I might be stupid, but I'm experienced.

Nathan: You were a public official for a number of years and chaired the Minneapolis City Council's Public Safety Committee. What were your goals in that role?

Don: When I went to North Minneapolis to live, I owned my own business and was working at home, so I had this time to observe the social landscape. I got very involved in taking on drug dealing and violence. I was dealing with bad guys who worked for bad guys for bad guys who don't take shit from nobody. Back then a drug kingpin would come over to your house and say, 'Hey man, I hear you're calling the police. Aren't you worried somebody might burn your house down?' That's what I was experiencing.

[My neighbors and I] got active in dealing with intimidation, drug dealing, and so on, and we were so successful at it that my neighbors asked me to run [for City Council]. I got to the city council with eyes wide open and nostrils flared: we going to end this inferior quality of life that the city has condemned us to. Now I knew that there was disrespect from the police. But it was a secondary issue, not unimportant, but we were in survival mode.

We were very effective [on the City Council]. When I was public safety chair, we reduced crime by double digits for about six years in a row. Open street drug deals didn't happen in the city of Minneapolis anymore. That was some achievement.

But police brutality continued. We constantly got complaints from people who were suing the police, and we were constantly settling cases because it was too expensive to go to court, or because we thought we would lose.

We were constantly compromising the rights of the citizens by settling cases to avoid high court costs and the embarrassment of having [an abusive officer] come back and win in arbitration. If the officer does win, the chief has to take him back after firing him. And now he's this de facto insubordinate rehire, right? So the culture, the union contract, and the imperative to settle cases for the best financial outcome all conspired for us to create a department that coddled dysfunctional cops.

Nathan: What's interesting there is you're naming patterns of systemic bias, of police brutality, of lack of accountability, of unfair policing. But you've also spoken out very clearly against some of the organizations that are also talking about those issues and trying to change them. I would love to hear what led you to file the lawsuit that you did. How do you feel that adding more police will fix those underlying problems?

> "I'm not trying to add more police. I'm trying to return the police that are missing… In North Minneapolis, we've got every vice being exercised. Now, do you have a solution for that? Because until you do, you can't tell me anything about taking cops away. Don't be naive. This is the real world here. That's what we're dealing with. For me, it has to be safety first."
>
> - *Don Samuels, former Minneapolis City Council Member and North Side resident*

Don: I'm not trying to add more police. I'm trying to return the police that are missing. So you have to remember, I came to North Minneapolis in 1997… there were 35 bullet holes in the garage of the house behind me. Automatic gunfire was everywhere. People were getting killed on a regular basis… It was lawless. I know that reality, and it is dangerous.

In North Minneapolis, we've got every vice being exercised. Now, do you have a solution for that? Because until you do, you can't tell me anything about taking cops away. Don't be naive. This is the real world here. So that's what we're dealing with. For me, it has to be safety first.

I don't know if these guys understand reality. They've constructed a world that seems to me like what my father preached about. I'm talking about heaven… I love that world, but this is not it. This is a dog eat dog reality in my community.

Nathan: it sounds like what you're saying is you're supporting returning cops to the streets, because you don't want it to return to the past.

Don: I'm supporting 'both and' reform. We had a moment: a brutal cop kills a man in slow motion, presumptuously staring into the camera. It was the most irrefutable evidence of police brutality that was directly related to African American lives. We had this moment to eclipse all of that compromising that the City Councils have done over the years, to eclipse the union's power because everybody knew that the union was defending bad cops. We had a moment and they squandered it by overreaching. Now, even the good cops are mad at them because they hate cops.

Nathan: I think what I'm still struggling to understand is, what would it look like to address the systemic issues that you're talking about?

Don: The whole world was looking at the whole system and agreeing that something needs to be done. It's an opportunity for us to seize the moment and transform [policing] when we had the upper hand in negotiation. I'm talking about getting rid of the cultural things that support bad behavior, I'm talking about getting rid of bad cops, I'm talking about empowering the citizen review board.

You got 20 somethings saying that they have a vision for the future that will eclipse anything you ever came up with in the past and create a whole - how could a 20 something figure that out and tell me that I will.. 'Just wait. In a couple of years, you're going to thank me.' That's what [a Council Member] said to me. [The Council Member] was on a call with one of our senior black leaders, a guy who invested in the North side, who said that we need the police because he has a business on West Broadway. [The CM] told him, 'I'm embarrassed for you.' So it's not just a clash of ideas. It's a deep disregard for wisdom. I'm telling you this is so insulting to a 71 year old Black man who for the last 50 years has lived in the nastiest communities in six different American cities.

Nathan: What's interesting is that a lot of the people you're disagreeing with also care about public safety, as well as addressing the systemic challenges that you're mentioning. I'd like to spend a little time talking about what your vision for the future would be. What are the different investments the City of Minneapolis needs to be making to broadly address the challenges that you're describing?

Don: The root cause [of systemic challenges] is the American dream. Fair housing laws passed, people moving out to get away from black people and poor people… that's why my wife and I live where we live. We live here [in North Minneapolis] because we know it was black middle-class flight that sealed the coffin on our communities.

> "We live [in North Minneapolis] because we know it was black middle-class flight that sealed the coffin on our communities. There has to be a way to create economically diverse communities… We've got to put lower income people in communities that are homogenous, and we've got to incentivize the middle class to move into communities like mine."
>
> - *Don Samuels, former Minneapolis City Council Member and North Side resident*

There has to be a way to create economically diverse communities. It can't just be racially diverse communities, because people begin to [self-sort] by class. We've got to put lower income people in communities that are homogenous and we've got to incentivize the middle class to move into communities like mine. It has to be facilitated in some way by government.

We have to create safe communities and we have to incentivize middle-class people to come [to lower-income communities]. It could be help with the down payment for cops or teachers. Right now, teachers don't live in North Minneapolis. I don't know if one cop that lives in North Minneapolis, even though 30% of the police force works there. I think two firefighters live there. These are all middle-class middle-income people paid by the city government and they come there to make their money. We have to change that. To me, it all begins with a different philosophy.

Nothing is going to work until we have a philosophical shift in what an American community looks like. Because so far it's been white people over here, black people over there… now you have pulling across class lines and it's all middle-class communities, low-income communities, upper income communities. It's the new American landscape. That is not workable! It certainly is not workable for low income communities. It leads to all kinds of disparities.

Nathan: To be honest, I'm a little bit skeptical that policies to try to build economically diverse communities will resolve the underlying structural issues that you were mentioning at the beginning of this interview – the way that cops are racially profiling, the ways that they are abusing their powers, the ways that police unions through arbitration prevent discipline. So what do you think are solutions for those underlying issues?

Don: The underlying issue is the separation of people along class lines. Police would not have gotten that bad if they were arresting middle-class men. That would have been clipped a long time ago, but because they were tamping down the lower classes, keeping them from coming over into certain neighborhoods, it was good. As long as we have this philosophy that 'I'm going to hang out with my people', it's going to be an ongoing struggle.

I'm not just saying this - I'm living it. I'm not just sitting around in a tweed suit talking. And I'm not sitting on the council dais philosophizing or dreaming. My wife and I moved into the community to make a difference and we did.

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