

Community Development Commission (CDC)

Resolution: CDC Recommendations regarding Reimagining Public Safety

WHEREAS, in the Spring of 2020 a national movement for social justice in light of the killing of unarmed black men at the hands of police officers including Austin resident Mike Ramos has highlighted historic and institutional racism within the City of Austin; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Police Oversight [published](#) 227 formal complaints over use of force related to protests of police brutality which resulted in the discipline of 11 officers and further investigations of 7 more; and

WHEREAS, multiple lawsuits have been filed on behalf of protesters who sustained injuries from now banned “less-than-lethal” bean bags and foam bullets; and

WHEREAS, a new joint report by the Office of Police Oversight, Office of Innovation and the Equity Office found that people of color in Austin are stopped, cited and searched at a disproportionate rate compared to their white counterparts; and

WHEREAS, some communities of color and members of the unhoused community have expressed reluctance to call law enforcement or report crimes out of fear of the police; and

WHEREAS, police officers are not trained social workers and are often called to the scene of incidents that do not require an armed response but could result in unnecessary escalation without the presence of the appropriate professional social workers; and

WHEREAS, many in the Austin community have demanded City Council action in the form of justice and reforms to prevent the over-policing of communities of color, the militarization of the police, the killing of unarmed citizens and that promote social programs focused on equity; and

WHEREAS, claims by opponents of public safety reforms that rising crime, a national trend during COVID-19, are a result of cuts to police departments is not backed by research; and

WHEREAS, a recent [Houston Chronicle](#) report cited a study by a team of criminologists at the University of Cincinnati which found that the “overall effect of police force size on crime is “statistically not significant, and ”policy makers who want police to have an impact on crime would be better suited investing resources in new evidence-based strategies than funding surges in police hiring”; and

WHEREAS, the Austin City Council voted unanimously to begin the process of reimagining public safety and reallocate more than \$20 million from under the Austin Police Department to address root causes of crime, poverty, and homelessness which has not resulted in the firing of any police officers;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Community Development Commission supports efforts by the Austin City Council to utilize its limited budget to implement policies that result in equitable public safety outcomes regardless of race, gender, religion, citizenship status or zip code; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this includes alternative first responders such as EMS responders, Community Health Paramedics, mental health first responders and Austin's EMCOT— Expanded Mobile Crisis Outreach Team."; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such policy shifts also include a bolstering of social programs such as family violence prevention and sheltering, victim services, Permanent Supportive Housing & Services, and workforce development.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Community Development Commission supports continued efforts by the City of Austin to reimagine public safety including a full assessment of policing policy with transparency and accountability.

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