

Plan to Reimagine Policing

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.
For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth;
for he hath not another to help him up.”

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

African Proverb

A long list of people of color, specifically Black men, have died at the hands of law enforcement. Many believe these deaths are the result of feelings of bias and fear held by law enforcement officers toward Black people. These deaths sparked the “Black Lives Matter” movement. The recent death of George Floyd, a Black man, at the hands of four White Minneapolis police officers ignited protests internationally, which are being led by advocates and supporters of the “Black Lives Matter” movement. Protests are occurring in Memphis. These protests make it clear that policing and police culture must change. To develop reforms for Memphis and Shelby County, we plan to employ three approaches, often in concert—convene stakeholders, conduct empirical research, and draw on existing studies.

Years of biased and improper treatment has damaged the relationship between the community and law enforcement. Memphians need to be heard to repair this relationship and heal the hurt. Thus, any process to reform policing must include community conversations. Also, any reforms regarding the quality and effectiveness of the police and policing strategies should consider baseline information on policing activity that is needed to develop performance measures. Finally, experts have worked for years to research and propose evidence-based policing strategies that should not be ignored. Therefore, this document strives to establish a process that utilizes stakeholder input, empirical data, and expert research to guide and document the creation of democratic policing that is responsive to community needs.

Step I. Develop a Preliminary Set of Reforms

Schedule a facilitated meeting with organizational and movement leaders – protest organizers, advocates, reformers, and faith leaders to develop a set of preliminary reforms. Agreement on the list is not necessary. Proposed changes will be presented to the community to determine community support, and empirical data and expert research will inform final recommendations.

Step II. Request Data

Request that local higher education institutions collaborate to establish a team to (1) develop and submit comprehensive data requests; (2) organize and analyze data; and (3) make data-driven recommendations. The data needed include but are not limited to detailed information about 911 calls, which will be used to determine the scope of police work, daily duty

assignments to assess how human resources are deployed, and police recruitment and training practices.

Step III. Perform a Literature Review

Survey the literature regarding policing strategies. Synthesize the information into a summary that identifies gaps in current knowledge, includes limitations of theories and points of view, formulates areas for further research, and reviews areas of controversy. The review should describe the state of the art in policing strategies.

Step IV. Seek Community Input

Schedule multiple facilitated in-person and online discussions throughout Memphis communities to afford anyone who wishes an opportunity to (1) react to the preliminary set of reforms; (2) describe the tasks police should perform; (3) communicate who should be responsible for some of the functions that the police are currently responsible for, but are not qualified to do; (4) describe how police should treat civilians; (5) prioritize the allocation of funds.

Solicit support from organizations to schedule and arrange community discussions. Potential partners include but are not limited to those listed below. Through coordination with protestors, community discussions can also serve as opportunities for peaceful protest action.

- Advocacy Organizations
- Community Development Corporations
- Faith Institutions
- Neighborhood Associations
- Neighborhood Watch Organizations
- Schools
- Sororities and Fraternities
- Unions

Use surveys and interviews to supplement community input.

Step V. Prioritize and Advocate for Reforms

Prioritize the reforms, utilizing community input obtained during facilitated discussions and reach out to the parties responsible for instituting each change. For change to occur, we will strive to build community capacity through leadership development, increased civic participation, and leveraging power through partnerships and relationships that broaden accountability.