

PHILADELPHIA NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AND COMMUNITY POLICING PLAN



OVERVIEW

The City of Philadelphia is experiencing a surge in crime and violence, especially over the past two years. Last year (2021) concluded with a record 562 homicides, the vast majority of them attributed to guns. Homicides only tell part of the story though. Violent crime, non-deadly shootings, carjackings, an increase in retail theft, and feelings that our City is wholly unsafe are on the rise. This is affecting every neighborhood and every facet of life, from Center City to the neighborhoods just inside City limits. It is impacting where we live, where we shop, where we work, and where our children play. To many, there is a growing perception of lawlessness, which in turn breeds a sense of hopelessness, fear, and apathy. It is also causing some businesses and residents to consider moving out of Philadelphia.

While these horrific incidents are traumatizing to individuals and families throughout our communities, the growing violence also negatively impacts Philadelphia's small businesses and entrepreneurs whose success is vital to the success of our City. As this violence seeps into Philadelphia's neighborhood commercial corridors, small businesses feel unsafe and close up shop early. In order for our City to grow, we need businesses to not just survive, but thrive. But no business owner is going to open and operate here if their workers can't get to and from work safely and feel safe at work, or if shoppers, residents, and visitors avoid these areas. The economy and ingenuity of these areas will begin to falter.

We are at the point where we must speak with one unified voice and say "Enough!" and then immediately follow our words with actions. We need intergovernmental cooperation at the local level - between the Police Department, the administration, City Council, the District Attorney's Office, the First Judicial District, and the Defender Association. We also need intergovernmental cooperation between the local, state, and federal levels of government. Our existing police force, led ably by Commissioner Danielle Outlaw, is working as best as they can to bring the violence down, but the City's police force currently has over 400 vacant positions. Via the General and Aviation Funds, the City budgeted for 6,517 positions in this Fiscal Year, but as of December 31, 2021, only 6,100 positions were filled, with the largest shortfalls for Police Officer positions (175 short), Police Recruit positions (130 short), and Police Sergeant positions (66 short). Moreover, approximately 900 additional officers are currently on some form of administrative or medical leave.

In order to shore up our police force and restore a sense of public safety and civil order in our communities, we must focus on five primary areas:

Community Policing
Hiring More Police and Addressing Other Personnel Challenges
Quality-of-Life Issues
Victim and Witness Services
Community Engagement and Investment

This Philadelphia Neighborhood Safety and Community Policing Plan will likely cost \$3 million to \$5 million in Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23). Some spending amounts - such as \$1 million more for police recruitment efforts - are clearly defined, whereas others - such as cameras, L&I enforcement, and street lighting - may first require the administration to conduct an audit to assess need. This Plan is also not intended to be exhaustive, but it does provide a clear, first step that we can take in FY23 to respond to ongoing public safety issues.

As we invest more in community policing to ensure neighborhoods and residents are safer, address quality-of-life issues like trash and blight, better support victims of crime, and invest more deeply in neighborhood programs to steer at-risk youth away from negative paths, we must also demand that every agency in our criminal justice system work more collaboratively to hold those individuals accountable for the violence wreaking havoc and heartache on our City. All of us - each and every last Philadelphian - deserve a safer Philadelphia.

COMMUNITY POLICING

Community policing better connects law enforcement with community members by fostering stronger relationships, bolstering transparency, and strengthening connections with businesses and neighbors. In order to have true community policing, police officers cannot only respond to emergencies. We need a well-staffed police force that can meet with residents and businesses to understand their concerns and to be proactive, not just reactive. Police officers should be a part of the fabric of our communities, and people need to consistently see a physical presence of known officers in their community.

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF POLICE OFFICERS DOING COMMUNITY POLICING

Community policing efforts must first and foremost be focused on increasing the number and prevalence of beat police officers in neighborhoods and along commercial corridors. For this current fiscal year - FY22 - the City budgeted for 4,531 positions with the title of "Police Officer," but as of December 31, 2021, only 4,356 of these positions were filled. This means that currently there are about 175 vacant positions in the Police Department with the title of "Police Officer." These positions are often officers who are relatively new to the job, and many, but not all of them, spend some time on "foot beat," or "walking the beat." **We need to work to fill these 175 positions as quickly as possible.** Filling these 175 positions should not technically cost the City any additional money because the dollars have already been allocated for FY22 and will likely be rolled over to FY23. The City's goal should be to at least fill these 175 positions in FY23. **In the longer term, we need to add at least 125 more positions with the title of "Police Officer" - for a total of 300 more "Police Officer" positions** - to ensure we have on-the-ground beat and bike patrol officers in every neighborhood in Philadelphia.

The City should also work to utilize officers who are Qualified Bike Personnel on a more regular basis. The total number of officers who are characterized as "Qualified Bike Personnel" for the Department is 785, but the Police Department currently has about 400 bicycles. Before purchasing more bicycles, however, the City should conduct an audit of how many bicycles are used on an average day and where. For example, if only 200 bicycles are being used on a daily basis and most are being used in Greater Center City, then we know how to make improvements.

The City's goal should be for all of its existing bicycles to be used on an average day, and then to steadily increase that number.

DISPERSE COMMUNITY POLICING OFFICERS ACROSS THE CITY

During the last few months of the Police Academy, recruits often work foot beat while shadowing a superior. Additionally, officers, usually those who are relatively new to the force or are recent graduates from the Police Academy, typically work foot beat for about 5-6 months. Foot beats help many new officers to see that people, irrespective of neighborhood, generally want the same things. Currently, the majority of the foot beat officers are assigned to the highest crime areas.

Once the City has hired more officers, the City should disperse beat officers across the City - to neighborhoods and commercial corridors beyond just the highest crime areas.

This will allow for the officers to become known in these areas and to act in a proactive manner. True community policing does not see foot patrol as an “inferior” position to officers in vehicles, or reserved only for recruits and new hires. Some of our most experienced officers value the ability to work closely with residents and businesses, and they are best suited to mentor newer officers. Officers in cars simply cannot establish the same rapport or prevent crime as effectively because 911 directs them to different locations throughout the day. Lengthening the amount of time officers work foot beat could also help with building relationships in the community. Research has found that there were statistically significant reductions in reported violent crime in areas patrolled by beat officers, but the effect faded once the officers were removed from their targeted beats. We know community policing works; we now must commit to it.



INSTITUTE LOG-IN SHEETS ALONG COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Log-in sheets, where officers record their visits to specific locations in an onsite ledger, used to be a common practice, particularly along commercial corridors. They help make the officers’ presence more visible to the community, therefore deterring crime and making community members feel safer.

HIRING MORE POLICE AND ADDRESSING OTHER PERSONNEL CHALLENGES

The biggest obstacle to providing more community policing is the lack of “manpower,” which makes effective police recruitment essential in addressing this issue. Ultimately, any community policing programs that are sustainable will have a positive impact on our neighborhoods and our City. But these programs can only be sustained if there is a commitment on the part of City leaders to fully staff the Police Department to its budgeted complement. That is why recruitment plays such a key role at this juncture.

Currently, the process of police recruitment entails at least 10 steps:

1.	Individuals apply, usually online at https://joinphillypd.com/
2.	The City’s Human Resources Department then gives the Police Department a list of eligible applicants
3.	Those eligible individuals are invited to attend an orientation session
4.	The individuals that show up take the Nelson-Denny reading test
5.	The individuals also take a physical fitness test
6.	Those that pass both the reading test and the physical fitness test then undergo a background evaluation
7.	Those that pass then undergo a psychological exam
8.	Those that pass then take a polygraph test
9.	Those that pass then take a medical exam
10.	And finally, those that make it through all those steps get an appointment letter to the Police Academy, where they then train for 9 months to become a police officer

The entire recruitment/onboarding process takes about 3-4 months. The Police Department has estimated that only about 10 percent of those who start the process actually become police officers. There are also many Philadelphians who want to be police officers, but they may not be able to currently pass the required tests or physical requirements. This can be addressed by investing more in education and training, as well as enhancing the Police Explorer Cadet Program (see below under “Improve the Pipeline into the Police Academy”).

Additionally, the Police Department is effectively in a race against time to maintain its current size, which already has over 400 vacant positions. While the recruitment process takes 3-4 months, recruits then spend 9 months at the Police Academy. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Police Department was graduating Academy classes approximately every 3 months, and these were 80-120 officers in size. This April 2022, there will be a graduating class of about 40 in size, and there is another class of about 80 due to graduate in September 2022. However, at the same time, the Police Department predicts that it will lose

about 1,000 existing officers over the next 4 to 5 years, most of them due to retirement. That equates to the Police Department losing at least 200 officers a year for the next 4 to 5 years (though more will be lost in the outer years than in FY23). **We must get back to at least where we were before the COVID-19 pandemic - graduating 80-120 officers from the Academy every 3 months.**

INCREASE FUNDING FOR RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

In order to achieve that goal, now is the time for the City to double down on its recruitment efforts. The City currently spends just over \$3 million on personnel costs related to recruiting each year. The majority of these costs go toward processing potential recruits, such as administering the Nelson-Denny reading tests, conducting background evaluations, performing psychological exams, and administering polygraph tests and medical exams.

The City must prioritize recruitment far more and budget \$1 million more in FY23 for this purpose.

This money should be spent on figuring out ways to shorten the recruitment time frame from 3-4 months to less than 2 months. For example, additional spending could be used to ensure there are experts available to administer the various exams or tests on all days of the week, and potentially outside of regular work hours. In FY22, just \$10,700 was budgeted for advertising to recruit more police officers. Recruitment efforts must include an increase in traditional advertising efforts (such as television, radio, and print advertisements, as well as things like SEPTA bus ads), but also less traditional efforts such as recruiting at places of worship, barber shops, and beauty salons, as well as recruiting from within our own City government workforce. Our police force must be diverse and reflective of our City's demographics. We want the police to look like the people they serve and protect.

ENSURE POLICE OFFICERS ARE DOING POLICE WORK

In the meantime, the City also needs to get creative to ensure that all working police officers are actually doing police work. **Due to long-standing precedent, there are some positions within the Police Department that are staffed by police officers but could just as easily be staffed by civilians.** These include roles such as delivering mail and watching the footage from security and body-worn cameras. If these roles were converted to civilian positions, then that could free up more police officers for active public safety roles. Expanding the Police Cadet Explorer program (see below under "Improve the Pipeline into the Police Academy") could potentially provide more civilian personnel to fill important office jobs. **Another example is City Council's plan, spearheaded by Council President Darrell Clarke, to hire civilian Public Safety Enforcement Officers,** who will focus on directing and managing traffic, spotting illegal or unpermitted activity, and enforcing parking and traffic regulations. These positions remain unfilled, and they must be filled as expeditiously as possible.

USE THE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT WAIVER AS NEEDED

In 2020, City Council passed legislation to restore the requirement that no person shall be appointed as an employee in the civil service unless he or she has been a bona fide resident of the City for at least one year prior to appointment. The bill restored the residency requirement that was the law for all civil service employees for 55 years and had remained the law for civil service laborers represented by District Council 33. While there have clearly been larger societal forces at play that may have contributed to the challenges of hiring and retaining police officers, some individuals are solely blaming the residency requirement for the Police Department's hiring issues. As was repeatedly stated during the hearing for the bill, the Home Rule Charter allows the Civil Service Commission to waive the residency requirement at the request of the Personnel Director when there aren't qualified Philadelphia residents available to fill vacant positions. It should be noted that there were not similar hiring challenges during the 55 years when the residency requirement was previously in effect.

The Civil Service Commission, along with the Police Department, must do everything in their power to hire Philadelphians. But if they truly cannot find qualified Philadelphia residents, then they should use the waiver process that is at their disposal.

IMPROVE THE PIPELINE INTO THE POLICE ACADEMY

In this City, we have the Philadelphia Police Explorer Cadet Program, designed to introduce young adult men and women 14 to 20 years of age to careers in public safety. **Other cities have slightly different models that we should emulate, particularly in terms of expanding the maximum age.**

Chicago's Police Cadet Program is aimed at a slightly older demographic, individuals ages 18 to 21, who are enrolled in an accredited college or university that grants Associate's and Bachelor's degrees. This is a paid position. Cadets are given rotating assignments with flexible hours so they can attend college classes while working within the Chicago Police Department. It is a very effective way to attract local residents into the police department, while also helping to fill vacant administrative positions within the force.

Boston has a similar program, aimed at young adults ages 18 to 25 who must have a high school diploma or GED. Boston gives their cadets temporary assignments in their districts and headquarters. Cadets take part in community policing and interact with citizens and visitors to Boston. They aim to develop and refine important qualities, including maturity, responsibility, teamwork, and leadership. Again, this is a paid position plus benefits.

In addition to the Cadet Program, we should also explore creating a “deferred acceptance” program for applicants who get stuck at some point in the recruitment process. For example, **the Police Department could partner with a local college or university, such as the Community College of Philadelphia, to create a program that would allow potential recruits to take classes to improve their reading skills and/or physical fitness levels.**

ADDRESS POTENTIAL BARRIERS IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Other cities are exploring innovative ways to speed up the amount of time it takes to become a police officer. Atlantic City, for example, has waived civil service exam requirements for some entry-level police officers. This waiver impacts Class II or special law enforcement officers. These are officers who are appointed to the position for a year and perform similar duties as police officers, though they may not carry service weapons when off duty, per state law. While officers in Philadelphia do not take a civil service exam per se, concerns have been raised that the Nelson-Denny reading test may not accurately assess the capabilities of some students. **Since the Nelson-Denny reading test is required by the state, the Police Department should work with the state to see if another reading test could be used in its place.**

Cities such as Chicago, Boston, Atlantic City, and others are trying different policies, all with a goal of encouraging more men and women to become police officers in their communities. Given our current public safety and gun violence crisis, we must think and act just as creatively and proactively to draw more community-focused men and women into the ranks of the Philadelphia Police Department.

INVEST IN THE OFFICE OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

Finally, sometimes the physical conditions of a workspace can inhibit the ability of the workforce to achieve its full potential. A good example of this is the Police Department’s forensic science crime lab. The City allocated an additional \$5 million in FY22 to the Office of Forensic Science, and while that is a good start, those funds were for operating costs. **The City should complete an analysis to determine the capital budget needs for the City’s forensic lab, and how those needs can best be addressed.** If the Police Department had a better, upgraded facility, then it could further expand its operational capabilities, which could be greatly beneficial in our efforts to tackle violent crime.

QUALITY-OF-LIFE ISSUES

Unfortunately, our City is currently struggling to address many basic quality-of-life issues - blight, graffiti, trash dumping, abandoned cars, potholes, tractor trailers parked in residential neighborhoods, etc. Regardless of where one lives or how much crime occurs, people are equally concerned about quality-of-life issues impacting their neighborhoods. Attend any community meeting, and it will quickly become clear that these issues dominate the conversation. To effectively address these issues, there must be Citywide coordination between the Police Department, L&I, the Streets Department, the Commerce Department, 311, and more. Many of these quality-of-life issues should be viewed as “low-hanging fruit,” in the sense that addressing them goes a long way in affirming citizens’ faith in government. But they also minimize criminal activity in the affected areas. By not effectively addressing these quality-of-life issues, people are increasingly perceiving their community as less safe. This perception compounds upon itself, and for many, perception has become reality. If we are going to improve these quality-of-life issues, we need to significantly increase our spending and focus on various existing initiatives.

CAMERAS

We must increase funding to the Police Department for their security camera program, to the Commerce Department for their Business Camera Program, and to the Streets Department for their cameras to catch and penalize trash dumpers. All of these programs should be funded to at least their pre-pandemic levels, plus adjusted for inflation. Additionally, an analysis must be performed to quantify how much it would cost to ensure that people are actively monitoring the cameras, or at least able to review the footage in a timely manner.

ABANDONED CARS

Mayor John F. Street famously gave himself 40 days to clear 40,000 abandoned vehicles from the streets of Philadelphia. The City currently has 11 contractors who tow abandoned cars, and these contracts actually cost the City \$0. In fact, the Police Department receives \$15 for each recovered stolen vehicle (revenue from this was \$47,790 in FY21 and \$64,963 for FY22 through January 2022). However, there seems to be a bottleneck or backlog with removing abandoned cars right now, with many residents reporting wait times of 6 to

8 months. This may be because individuals who work in the Neighborhood Services Unit (NSU) of the Police Department have been redeployed due to staffing shortages. **We need to ensure that the NSU is fully staffed, and that our contractors are removing abandoned cars in a timely manner.** We must attack this neighborhood blight problem with renewed vigor again, and commit to removing as many abandoned cars as humanly possible over a period of designated days.

L&I ENFORCEMENT

Over the years, L&I has been given more and more responsibility while facing flat funding. L&I's mission statement is to "enforce the City's codes for the safe and lawful construction and use of buildings." But L&I's enforcement efforts have been expanded greatly beyond its mission statement. **L&I needs additional funding so that it can achieve its core mission, but also so that it can address quality-of-life issues such as securing abandoned buildings, stopping unsafe and unlawful construction, and addressing nuisance businesses.**

STREET LIGHTING

The City's Streets Department is responsible for maintaining more than 148,000 streetlamps. Unfortunately, 311 light outage complaints soared in 2021. Due to contracting issues, we now have a significant backlog of streetlights that need to be fixed. Near the end of 2021, there were more than 12,700 open service requests for outages, the most in the City's history since it began tracking the issue. **The Streets Department, which says it can fix about 2,000 lights per month with an active contractor, must provide us with an updated timeline of when and how we can expect to see the backlog resolved, and a plan for how all future light outages will be addressed in a timely manner.** Furthermore, it must provide us with an update on its plan to install 100,000 LED lights. Street lights are not only a quality-of-life issue, but a matter of public safety too. After all, many criminal acts flourish in darkness.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR AND NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANING

We need ongoing, and in some cases increased, funding for initiatives such as PHL Taking Care of Business (PHL TCB), mechanical street cleaning, removing graffiti, cleaning and securing vacant lots and abandoned buildings, and resolving ongoing trash issues, such as delays in trash pickup. Simply cleaning up a commercial area makes it feel safer and better

managed, and helps retain both customers and businesses. Research has shown that commercial corridor cleaning, as well as other neighborhood improvements such as cleaning and securing vacant lots and abandoned buildings, makes neighborhoods safer. Additionally, some of our existing programs are more than just cleaning programs; many of them are workforce development programs as well. Programs such as PHL TCB have been proven to provide more jobs in the community, and offering reliable employment opportunities to individuals, especially those who may struggle to find family-sustaining employment, can have a positive impact on public safety.

IMPROVED ROAD AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The use of ATVs, dirt bikes, and other illegal street vehicles on public roadways and parks creates a dangerous environment for legal vehicles, bikers, and pedestrians. **Similar to abandoned cars, we need to commit to creatively addressing this problem on as wide of a scale as possible, and as quickly as possible.** Additionally, we need a greater reduction of traffic speeds, through traffic calming efforts and enforcement of speed limits.

VICTIM AND WITNESS SERVICES

Many witnesses and victims of crime, whether they are a bystander calling 911 or a victim of a serious crime who is now in fear for their life, do not feel supported by the systems that are supposed to support them. **While notable steps have been taken in the name of victims – such as City Council’s efforts to create an Office of the Victim Advocate and the Citizen Police Oversight Commission – more can be done to support victims.**

911 DISPATCHERS AND HOTLINES

For many victims and witnesses of crime, their first interaction with the Police Department is when they call 911. After years of advocacy, the 911 Unified Call Center was allocated additional funding to hire more 911 dispatchers.

This was good first step, but to ensure we have a sufficient number of 911 dispatchers, we must fill all of the remaining vacant positions as quickly as possible.

Philadelphia residents are rightly complaining that they cannot quickly get through to 911, or sometimes they cannot get through at all, and wait times for officers to arrive has increased. These issues can be addressed by hiring more dispatchers and police officers. Additionally, to relieve some of the pressure on 911 dispatchers, we need continued education of our residents on the difference between 911 and 311. Finally, we must promote the use of hotlines or tiplines as another tool to report information. Hotlines protect a caller's anonymity. The caller leaves a message, gives information, and states the reason for their call. **City Council is working currently with the Kenney administration to establish one such hotline.**

911 TEXTING INFRASTRUCTURE

We are more than 20 years into the 21st century, and texting technology has been around even longer than that. Other cities, such as New York City, have implemented 911 texting, but Philadelphia has not made significant headway in making this a reality. **The Police Department must do a cost-benefit analysis as to what it would take to implement 911 texting in our City.**

USER-FRIENDLY, ONE-STOP-SHOP WEBSITE

To build trust with the community, we must also have 100% transparency regarding crimes, arrests, and prosecutions. While there are some websites that share some or all of this information and update it in a timely manner, **the Police Department - with support from the administration - must create a user-friendly website where individuals cannot only get the latest crime data for their neighborhood, but also be directed to on-the-ground supports in their community.** For example, if there was a shooting at a recreation center, a child's caregiver could easily find information about that shooting and other crime in the area. At the same time, they could also find a list of organizations, and their contact information, that are working to prevent crime in the neighborhood.

WITNESS RELOCATION

Witness relocation is also a growing need in the City. Witnesses to crime must feel safe to report what they know, or they won't report anything at all. In FY18, FY19, and FY20, the City budgeted about \$170,000 for witness relocation. In FY21, that amount increased to \$260,000. For FY22, \$260,000 was again allocated, but then an additional \$500,000 was approved due

to increased need, for a total of \$760,000. **For FY23, we must allocate an additional \$240,000 more than FY22 - for a total of \$1 million - for witness relocations.**

REWARD MONEY

Rewards can also be an incentive for people to report crimes, and at the very least, they can raise public awareness of crimes, which potentially makes it more likely that the perpetrator will be caught. Over the past five Fiscal Years, the total average reward amount spent in each Fiscal Year was \$136,000. However, only \$20,000 was actually spent on rewards in FY21.

We need to increase the total amount for all rewards to \$250,000 in FY23, while simultaneously increasing the starting individual reward amount.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In order to support law enforcement and crime prevention strategies, community engagement is a key component of the solution. We must introduce and expand efforts to engage with members of the community through:

Allowing neighbors to have their concerns heard immediately in order to create a greater system of accountability and providing them with the ability to evaluate public safety investments in their neighborhoods

Providing more trainings for community safety organizations

Investing in trusted messengers who can aid in the resolution of neighborhood conflict

Establishing a standing dedicated working group between the Police Department, the Commerce Department, and commercial corridor management organizations to work on public safety issues

Increasing funding for programs that serve as an alternative to incarceration for non-violent offenders, such as mentoring and restorative justice programs

Enforcing youth curfews in coordination with block captains, neighborhood groups, and schools. City Council's investments in innovative, new curfew centers should be continued.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Along with community engagement, we must focus on community investment, which will enable the long-term prosperity of our neighborhoods and commercial corridors. These goals include investments in terms of:

Workforce development initiatives to support longer term investments in jobs, education, skills training, paid internships, and entrepreneurship

Providing quality and affordable necessities including housing, education, childcare, healthcare, and access to healthy foods

Developing public-private partnerships focused on community investment

Continued and increased funding allocations through:

Local funding such as the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative (NPI), a City Council-led \$400 million investment in affordable housing, renter protections, homeowner assistance, and neighborhood revitalization

Local funding of the Targeted Community Investment Grants and Community Expansion Grants. At the same time, the City should partner with a local college or university, or some other research entity, to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs.

State funding, such as the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency’s Violence Intervention & Prevention Grants and Gun Violence Reduction Grant Program, and the Attorney General’s Witness Relocation Program

Federal funding, such as The Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs grant awards to support a wide range of violence reduction efforts, including community-based violence intervention and prevention strategies, youth and school violence prevention programs, and evidence-based police and prosecution practices

CONCLUSION

To reduce and deter violent crime, we need widespread systemic changes such as a return to community policing and greater investments in our neighborhoods, but also increased consequences for criminal violations. **We can balance supporting those who are most in need while arresting and prosecuting those who are perpetuating violence.** These strategies include:

Providing resources for people experiencing homelessness, mental health issues, and/or substance abuse issues

Establishing well-crafted alternatives to incarceration, particularly for younger individuals

Increasing consequences for violent behavior and supporting the stronger prosecution of cases

Our current situation is not sustainable. Once vibrant neighborhoods and commercial corridors are at risk of becoming severely distressed, people are feeling helpless and abandoned by a system that is supposed to keep them safe, and there is a real and quantifiable economic impact that is decimating businesses already on their knees because of the pandemic.

But there are rays of hope. Camden and Chester, cities on either side of Philadelphia, have seen dramatic drops in violence through community policing initiatives and stronger, collaborative law enforcement. In 2018, Camden started their community policing department, and their Chief of Police described changing the mentality of the police force, pointing out that their communities “need guardians, not warriors.” In Chester, after a murder, cops walk the streets talking to people and handing out flyers asking for help. They also work closely with community leaders and county prosecutors to identify the individuals most responsible for gun violence, and then hold them accountable. In places like Camden, Chester, and elsewhere, law enforcement and the community work together to reduce violence and make their cities safer. Philadelphia must do the same.

We must be proactive in our efforts to strengthen community policing in Philadelphia, and not always be reactively responding to crises. This reimagining of policing in our City is the best way to ensure public safety. **It will require more City funding and significant political will to carry out, but the costs are worth it to save lives, prevent violence, and preserve our economy, not just in neighborhoods that are suffering the most, but in all neighborhoods across the City.**



