


Minneapolis City Council Members Announce Intent To Disband The Police Department, Invest In Proven Community-Led Public Safety

 theappeal.org/minneapolis-city-council-members-announce-intent-to-disband-the-police-department-invest-in-proven-community-led-public-safety

The move follows the police killing of George Floyd and more than a week of uprisings, where hundreds of thousands of people around the world have protested against police violence, and abusive police responses to the protests.

On Sunday afternoon, a veto-proof majority of Minneapolis City Council members will announce their commitment to disbanding the city's embattled police department, which has endured relentless criticism in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, on May 25.

“We’re here because we hear you. We are here today because George Floyd was killed by the Minneapolis Police. We are here because here in Minneapolis and in cities across the United States it is clear that our existing system of policing and public safety is not keeping our communities safe,” Minneapolis City Council President Lisa Bender said Sunday. “Our efforts at incremental reform have failed. Period.”

The City Council's decision follows those of several other high-profile partners, including [Minneapolis Public Schools](#), and the [University of Minnesota](#), and [Minneapolis Parks and Recreation](#), to sever longstanding ties with the MPD.

The announcement today also arrives after several members of the Council have expressed a complete loss of confidence in the Minneapolis Police Department.

“We are going to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department,” [tweeted](#) Council Member Jeremiah Ellison on June 4, pledging to “dramatically rethink” the city's approach to emergency response. In a TIME op-ed published the next day, Council Member Steve Fletcher cited the MPD's lengthy track record of misconduct and “decades-long history of violence and discrimination”—all of which are [subjects](#) of an ongoing Minnesota Department of Human Rights investigation—as compelling justifications for the department's disbandment. “We can resolve confusion over a \$20 grocery transaction without drawing a weapon or pulling out handcuffs,” Fletcher [wrote](#).

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said last night that he opposed disbanding the police department at a protest organized and led by Black Visions Collective against police violence in the city. That answer earned him a thundering chorus of boos and chants of “Shame!” and “Go home, Jacob, go home!” The New York Times [called](#) the scene a “humiliation on a scale almost unimaginable outside of cinema or nightmare.”

“The last Democratic mayor, Betsy Hodges, handled the murder of Jamar [Clark] poorly. We told her she was going to lose her job. And she did,” Miski Noor, a Black Visions Collective organizer, said on Frey’s refusal to disband the Minneapolis Police Department.

Since taking office in January 2018, Frey has overseen reforms to the MPD’s body camera policy that impose harsher discipline on officers who fail to comply, and barred officers from participating in so-called “Bulletproof Warrior” training, which encourages law enforcement to use deadly force if they feel their lives are in jeopardy. The officer who shot and killed Philando Castile during a 2016 traffic stop had attended a seminar two years earlier.

More recently, however, Frey has faced criticism from community groups for supporting increases to the MPD’s budget, and for the city’s failure to invest significantly in community-based public safety programs during his tenure.

For years, activists have argued that MPD has failed to actually keep the city safe, and City Councilmembers echoed that sentiment today during their announcement. MPD’s record for solving serious crimes in the city is consistently low. For example, in 2019, Minneapolis police only cleared 56 percent of cases in which a person was killed. For rapes, the police department’s solve rate is abysmally low. In 2018, their clearance rate for rape was just 22 percent. In other words, four out of every five rapes go unsolved in Minneapolis. Further casting doubt on the department’s commitment to solving sexual assaults, MPD announced last year the discovery of 1,700 untested rape kits spanning 30 years, which officials said had been misplaced.

The Council’s move is consistent with rapidly-shifting public opinion regarding the urgency of overhauling the American model of law enforcement. Since Floyd’s killing and the protests that ensued, officials in Los Angeles and New York City have called for making deep cuts to swollen police budgets and reallocating those funds for education, affordable housing, and other social services. Law enforcement officers are not equipped to be experts in responding to mental health crises, often leading to tragic results—nationally, about half of police killings involve someone living with mental illness or disability. As a result, public health experts have long advocated for dispatching medical professionals and/or social workers, not armed police, to respond to calls related to substance use and mental health. Polling from Data for Progress indicates that more than two-thirds of voters—68 percent—support the creation of such programs, versions of which are already in place in other cities such as, Eugene, Oregon; Austin, Texas; and Denver, Colorado.

“Our commitment is to do what is necessary to keep every single member of our community safe and to tell the truth that the Minneapolis Police are not doing that,” Bender said Sunday. “Our commitment is to end our city’s toxic relationship with the Minneapolis Police Department, to end policing as we know it, and to recreate systems of public safety that actually keep us safe.”

