



**ST. LOUIS AREA VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMISSION  
ST. LOUIS METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT  
PUBLIC INPUT REPORT  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

After 18 months of community engagement in which the opinions of nearly 1800 residents of the region were gathered, the St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission issues the following recommendations for the “Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of St. Louis and the St. Louis Police Officers’ Association for Police Division PO, PPO & POT Bargaining Unit” (CBA):

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the City, Police Department, and Police Union develop a formal process for infusing community voice that must include:

- A public education component to help residents understand the role of the CBA and its impact on the relationship between community and police
- A discussion/discussion series with residents facilitated by a third-party group which is not a bargaining party convened in partnership with the Police Department, St. Louis City, and the Union
- An online survey for residents who cannot or do not feel comfortable attending a discussion session

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the CBA continue to include the recruitment incentive of \$500.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that the CBA include specific metrics for recruiting diverse officers who represent the communities in which they serve and are under-represented on the Department.

Recommendation 4: We recommend that the City hire a civilian consultant to create a new performance evaluation process that includes community policing metrics as outlined in the full report.

Recommendation 5: We recommend that the CBA use a 360-degree performance evaluation as defined in this report as the basis for retention and promotion decisions instead of seniority.

Recommendation 6: We recommend that the CBA be amended to include mandatory preventative mental health evaluation by a clinician with specialty recognizing trauma symptoms at a minimum yearly, but more often if the officer has experienced a traumatic event including death of a partner or unit member, use of their gun on duty, or others to be defined by the department.

Recommendation 7: We recommend that the CBA be amended to allow for the release of information on the officer and victim (excluding victim’s name) as well as what led to the shooting to increase transparency on use of force cases as soon as the internal investigation is completed.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the CBA include allowance for release of aggregate statistics on use of force (not just officer-involved shootings) at least twice a year, if not more often.

Recommendation 9: We recommend that the Department work with community groups to establish a way for residents to report officer misconduct to a neutral third party in addition to the Internal Affairs Division and Civilian Oversight Board.

Recommendation 10: We recommend that the CBA be amended to include allowance for the creation of a publicly available database of officers who have been fired for misconduct or wrongfully killing or injuring someone.

Recommendation 11: We recommend that the Department creating a policy to mandate that police officers perform in community engagement as defined in the full report as part of their regular duties.

Recommendation 12: We recommend the Department create a comprehensive demonstration policy banning the use of teargas and rubber bullets except in cases of extreme risk of bodily harm and create a clear use of force policy around use of “less than lethal” weapons for demonstrations including sanctions for violations.

Recommendation 13: We recommend that the CBA include definitions of the types of cases to which the police will respond as well as a mandate to coordinate with local service providers to create a co-responder program and a diversion program that connects callers to highly trained social service providers for calls that do not fit those definitions.

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One of the St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission’s objectives is to activate communities to strengthen police legitimacy. This objective began with the Department of Justice’s Diagnostic Analysis for the City of St. Louis from 2017.<sup>1</sup> This report identified a lack of community trust in law enforcement as a factor in the low clearance/arrest rate for cases involving nonfatal gun violence. The DOJ recommended that “SLMPD should improve relationships with youth and strengthen community policing goals and practices to increase community cooperation and trust in the police” (p. 60). VPC’s goal is to center conversations on community policing on community voice. Too often, these conversations take place without public input. Our recommendations are the culmination of more than a year of public input about police legitimacy and community policing. We convened 4 listening sessions with community members, interviewed law enforcement stakeholders, conducted an online police legitimacy survey, convened a virtual collective bargaining agreement (CBA) town hall, and conducted an online CBA survey. Together, these engagement opportunities collected the voice of more than 1,500 St. Louis region residents.

The listening sessions involved asking community members:

- What is working in policing?
- What is not working in policing?
- What parts of community policing would you like to see more of?

The participants were also able to fill out a paper version of the Police Legitimacy Survey.

**“We have a huge problem here in St. Louis and there needs to be major police reform to address this issue.”**

**-Response to the VPC Police Legitimacy Survey**

In 4 interviews with stakeholders from the SLMPD, those same questions were posed to 8 officers. The stakeholder interviews also asked what support VPC could offer to help them make the case for more community policing in their department.

Finally, the Police Legitimacy Survey was available online and received 1,269 responses with a 72% completion rate. Participants in the online survey were asked to rate statements on a scale of 1-Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly agree, the lowest rated statements by St. Louis City residents were:

- Police admit when they make a mistake or get things wrong. (2.08 average rating)
- Police enforce the laws the same way across all people. (2.05 average rating)

The highest rated statements in the survey were:

- I would call the police to report a crime. (3.84 average)
- I would call the police if I saw someone I thought was acting suspicious. (3.35 average)
- I would provide tips to the police to help them find a criminal. (3.86 average)

*VPC takes these results to indicate that the public is willing to work with the police even though they have concerns about equity. This, we think, means that residents would be willing to engage in a discussion about collective bargaining and be appreciative of the increased transparency.*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/initiatives/public-safety/diagnostic-analysis-for-the-city-of-st-louis-march-2017-full-report.cfm>

**Overall, the police stakeholder interviews, community policing events, and police legitimacy survey feedback can be grouped into 4 themes.**

- 1. Human Resources- Recruitment, Retention, & Promotion**
- 2. Transparency- Information & Accountability**
- 3. Community Engagement Practices**
- 4. Alternatives to Police Contact**

1. Under Recruitment & Retention, City officers pointed to difficulty recruiting diverse forces that represent the communities they police and also trying to police their jurisdiction with a deficit of officers. Community members also requested more diverse police departments that better represent the communities they police. Additionally, members from both the police departments and the public said that they believed meaningful community engagement should be incentivized.

2. Officers from the City Police Departments pointed to a lack of transparency as a factor that strains relationships with the community. Officers expressed the opinion that the media only pays attention to negative stories. One City officer also said that providing explanation at the time of an arrest would increase transparency. Finally, the biggest transparency leaps could be made when officers make a mistake. Participants from the community pointed to the strides made after the creation of Civilian Oversight Boards but questioned whether implementation challenges have handcuffed the groups. They asked for the further step of including community input on hiring, promotion, and firing decision-making boards. Community residents asked for a way to report positive and negative interactions with law enforcement outside of traditional police channels. Respondents for the Police Legitimacy Survey also ranked transparency and whether police admit when they get things wrong as one of the biggest factors that undermine police legitimacy.

3. City Police Officers also expressed strong opinions about current community engagement practices. They voiced concern that many events such as Coffee with a Cop or BBQs seem hollow and overly scripted and often only allow access to community members who already have a positive attitude toward the police. A City officer said that SLMPD staff should be encouraged to be creative with how they interact with community and that many recruits who are fresh out of the academy fear that community engagement is not part of their duties and they will get in trouble for getting out of their cars to play with neighborhood kids. Community members suggested engagement strategies include more beat cops walking or biking in neighborhoods, more visibility in neighborhoods before crime happens, attending meetings or events in plainclothes, and working and playing with youth.

4. City Police Officers expressed frustration with being called to cases that are not part of their traditional role, taking time away from other calls. They suggested training for community on procedural justice that help residents to understand what police can and cannot do. This request was echoed by participants in the community policing events. Furthermore, police stakeholders requested more information on resources available for mental health needs as well as other common needs, to divert people from going to emergency departments or jails. Also, community members requested more training for police on community trauma as well as selfcare.

We asked people who attended our town hall how they would know when a police department is effective. They responded with some traditional metrics like when violent crime is reduced, and that reduction is sustained over time and when crimes are solved more quickly. Additional metrics included:

- When residents, especially women and people of color feel safe in presence of police
- When there are few or no misconduct allegations
- When officers are supported in their jobs
- When the Department makes regular public reports
- When police work together with community
- When those in power are held accountable

All of these overlap and are addressed by our priority areas.

## Community Voice into the Collective Bargaining Agreement

### **Recommendation 1:**

**We recommend that the City, Police Department, and Police Union develop a formal process for infusing community voice that must include:**

- **A public education component to help residents understand the role of the CBA and its impact on the relationship between community and police**
- **A discussion/discussion series with residents facilitated by a third-party group which is not a bargaining party convened in partnership with the Police Department, St. Louis City, and the Union**
- **An online survey for residents who cannot or do not feel comfortable attending a discussion session**

In our Statement on Policing & Violence Prevention, VPC recommended that the City, Police Department, and Union develop a process for public input into the CBA. This remained our primary recommendation with additional details provided. It does not require the public to have a seat at the bargaining table, but instead calls for a meaningful process for soliciting community voice and conveying it to all bargaining members.

We believe that infusing community voice into the CBA has the most transformative potential and could influence all four of our priority areas. When we asked what having their voice included in the CBA would mean, one respondent to our survey said, “A huge source of mistrust of police officers is a lack of transparency of the processes that give police the power and legal protection they have. Residents need more, if not the most, say in how their neighborhoods are kept safe.” One resident also identified having their voice heard as a way to engage community saying, “I think that it shows community involvement and care for the surrounding community. This makes me feel more understood by my local officers.” Overall, residents said infusing community voice into the CBA process is an important step to making them feel heard and feel safer in their community. In the absence of an official process, VPC undertook collecting public input around our 4 priority areas, the results of which are presented in the following sections. The community engagement VPC did included an online survey with nearly 250 responses and a virtual town hall.<sup>2</sup>

We asked town hall attendees how much they knew about the CBA prior to attending, and 18% said they knew nothing about it while 36% said they knew a little, 18% said they knew some, and 27% said they knew a lot. VPC also created a short CBA 101 video<sup>3</sup> to help residents understand what the CBA is and why it is important and 55% of town hall attendees watched that video prior to attending.

We asked residents on which parts of the CBA they would like to have input. The highest rated parts were:

- All of it (19.18%, a write-in choice)
- Info sharing with community (17.35%)
- Use of force investigation procedures (11.87%)
- Officer training standards (10.50%)

**The police dept can't solve the violence problems in St Louis without information and trust from the residents. I can be more support for them if I understand the system they work in and the problems they face while at their job.”**

**-Response from the VPC City CBA Survey**

The respondents were evenly split on how they would like to give input between public meetings (68.49%), online surveys (66.21%), and notice and comment (65.75%) where residents could view a draft of sections of the CBA and provide written comment.

At the town hall, the majority of attendees said they would participate in an official process for infusing community voice into the CBA process (6% not likely to participate, 31% likely, 38% very likely). Also, importantly, 25% said their participation would depend on who was facilitating the process. Regarding the process facilitator, 69% said it should be a neutral third party, while 13% said it should be the Police Department and 19% said it should be the City of St. Louis.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pt9VOs\\_TEks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pt9VOs_TEks)

<sup>3</sup> [bit.ly/stlcbasurvey](http://bit.ly/stlcbasurvey)

## Human Resources

### **Recommendation 2:**

**We recommend that the CBA continue to include the recruitment incentive of \$500.**

### **Recommendation 3:**

**We recommend that the CBA include specific metrics for recruiting diverse officers who represent the communities in which they serve and are under-represented on the Department.**

### **Recommendation 4:**

**We recommend that the City hire a civilian consultant to create a new performance evaluation process that includes community policing metrics as outlined in this report.**

### **Recommendation 5:**

**We recommend that the CBA use a 360-degree performance evaluation as defined in this report as the basis for retention and promotion decisions instead of seniority.**

### **Recommendation 6:**

**We recommend that the CBA be amended to include mandatory preventative mental health evaluation by a clinician with specialty recognizing trauma symptoms at a minimum yearly, but more often if the officer has experienced a traumatic event including death of a partner or unit member, use of their gun on duty, or others to be defined by the department.**

*Recruitment & Hiring.* This is the first step to individuals becoming police officers and is the first opportunity to infuse racial equity into the police department. The CBA includes a recruitment incentive of \$500 for new officers who are hired and complete the police academy. According to our survey, 64% of respondents believe this practice should continue.

We further asked how the police department can recruit more diverse officers who represent the communities they serve. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in their report on “Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement, “Increased diversity within law enforcement agencies - defined not only in terms of race and gender, but also other characteristics including religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, language ability, background, and experience - serves as a critically important tool to build trust with communities.”<sup>4</sup> Their strategies for recruitment include:

- “Proactive and targeted community outreach efforts can help encourage people from diverse populations and walks of life to consider careers in law enforcement.
  - Building partnerships with educational institutions and providing young people with internship programs creates a robust pipeline of potential applicants while also helping to address historically-negative perceptions or experiences diverse communities have had with law enforcement.”
- We asked people taking our survey who they believe should be targeted for outreach efforts and receive preference within legal limits to increase diversity in the Department. The top choices were people who live in the City (49%) in light of the removal of the residency rule, officers from groups who are under-represented in the department (44%) including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, black and Latinx individuals, and people whose first language is not English, and individuals with a college education or higher (43%).

Further, we asked our survey participants what strategies the Department could use to recruit more diverse officers and their recommendations closely mirrored those of the EEOC. Our respondents suggested more recruiting at high schools and colleges with less military recruiting, a greater focus on attending events focused on diverse audiences when they are invited (e.g. Hispanic Festival, Pride Festival, Annie Malone Parade), increased pay and benefits, longer training requirements in the Police Academy, providing ways for youth to become involved and learn more about policing like a Junior Police Academy or more robust Explorers Program, and creating mentoring programs for officers to get involved with youth in a positive way outside of enforcement.

*Performance Evaluation.* Officers and community residents stated that they thought the best way to increase community policing is to incentivize it. One way to incentivize effective community policing is to use it as part of performance evaluation. An objection that was raised in our interviews is the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.eeoc.gov/advancing-diversity-law-enforcement>  
Violence Prevention Commission SLMPD CBA Report

I think it will require them to (1) change their perceived and real culture to one of tolerance & respect for diversity (2) demonstrate & promote this change to the communities they serve in real life & in places that the community can access.

-Response from VPC City CBA Survey

fact that much of evaluation is based on metrics that can be quantified. Incorporating qualitative community policing metrics would require a new approach to evaluation. More than 92% of our participants said they would support the Department hiring a consultant to help design this new evaluation method. Based on a list of community policing activities from the Community Oriented Policing Services Office from the Department of Justice, our survey respondents wanted to see the following incorporated into officer performance evaluation:

- Citizen complaints & compliments (88%)
- Working with neighborhood residents to solve problems proactively (87%)
- Demonstrating positive contact with neighborhood residents (87%)
- How satisfied officers who report to them are (59%)
- Attending community meetings (59%)
- Whether neighborhood residents in their patrol area feel safe (58%)

*Promotion, Transfer, and Retention.* Both the Ethical Society of Police (ESOP) and the Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression (CAPCR) identified seniority as a concern for achieving racial equity in the police department. According to the Report on the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department by the Ethical Society of Police,<sup>5</sup> “The CBA has significantly impacted African American officers who leave SLMPD at an alarming rate. One significant reason why coveted positions are assigned to Caucasian officers is due to seniority. As a result of African American officers leaving SLMPD in staggering numbers, they are no longer positioned for coveted assignments. Hence the importance of more aggressive retention of African American officers, to accurately reflect the population they serve” (p. 18). They recommend that “The Director of Personnel must remove Article 7 - Internal Transfers Section CBA “seniority” language, and other language in the CBA that hinder diversity” (p. 59) and that “The Department of Personnel must establish a standardized matrix for hiring, discipline, a clear path for promotion, a clear path for jobs in coveted specialized assignments, and a detailed explanation of rejected applicants” (p. 59).

Put a focus on providing advancement opportunities for female officers and officers of color. If officers from under-represented demographics feel like they have a real career path, that word will spread and attract new recruits from those same under-represented demographics.

-Response from the VPC City CBA Survey

While the CBA states that seniority is only the deciding factor when all other factors are “relatively equal,” it doesn’t define that term. According to CAPCR, “This leaves too much room for bias. CAPCR recommends a skills and experience matrix, filled out by several supervisors, to better quantify this evaluation.”<sup>6</sup> Incorporating supervisors’ assessments as well as subordinates’ in a 360-degree evaluation process would give an even more complete picture of the officer’s performance. According to our survey, 59% of respondents thought that the satisfaction of subordinate officers should be included in supervisors’ performance evaluation. The CBA currently allows for 360 degree evaluation as a part of increasing job satisfaction (“The Employer agrees that all bargaining unit members shall be provided the opportunity to prepare an evaluation of their immediate supervisor. The Employer agrees to analyze the results of the

evaluations. The Employer shall provide feedback to the evaluated supervisor designed to protect the anonymity of the evaluating employee.” p. 6) but does not mandate those evaluations be used in retention decisions. The majority of survey respondents (57%) believe that the officers who have the lowest performance evaluation should be let go first when the department needs to reduce numbers, rather than following the last-on, first-off seniority method.

<sup>5</sup> <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/64ce42b7-f768-43ed-9590-dbd611afb7b6/Report%20on%20the%20St%20Louis%20City%20Police%20Depart-0001.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ItuXIPD3rHbJlQnp3bWDB-ePITAmyp/view?fbclid=IwAR1sdf6v-t2v5dbuQbm10fyNZA53S5Vlgg46Y8tNJydpAZBo1tWwOY8wr8M>

*Mental Health of Officers.* We heard from both officers and the general public that they are concerned about the health and wellness of police officers. Police officers routinely encounter traumatic situations. This exposure puts them at risk for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of PTSD<sup>7</sup> include:

- Reliving the traumatic event as if it were happening again (flashbacks)
- Avoiding places, activities or people that remind you of the traumatic event
- Hopelessness about the future
- Memory problems, including not remembering important aspects of the traumatic event
- Being easily startled or frightened
- Always being on guard for danger
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much or driving too fast
- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble concentrating
- Irritability, angry outbursts or aggressive behavior

All of these together have the potential to compromise an officer's ability to safely perform their job and to have positive interactions with community residents. They may not, however, be readily recognized in all situations.

**If we truly value the mental health of our officers (and the potential negative effects of poor mental health in the community) then we need to comprehensively re-evaluate how we look at mental health of our officers.**

**-Response from the VPC City CBA Survey**

The CBA states that "An employee may only be required to submit to psychological testing when there is just cause to believe that an officer suffers from a psychological condition that interferes with the proper performance of the essential functions of his official duties" (p. 46). However, 67% of people who responded to our survey believe that police officers should be getting preventative mental health evaluation, on a yearly cycle if not more often. Additionally, 40% believe there should be a mandatory psychological evaluation after a traumatic event like the death of a partner or unit member or being involved in an officer-involved shooting. When asked about who should conduct the evaluations, most participants stated it should be someone external to the Department (82%) who has a high level of skill recognizing symptoms of trauma (92%).

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967>  
Violence Prevention Commission SLMPD CBA Report



## Transparency & Accountability

### **Recommendation 7:**

**We recommend that the CBA be amended to allow for the release of information on the officer and victim (excluding victim's name) as well as what led to the shooting to increase transparency on use of force cases as soon as the internal investigation is completed.**

### **Recommendation 8:**

**We recommend that the CBA include allowance for release of aggregate statistics on use of force (not just officer-involved shootings) at least twice a year, if not more often.**

### **Recommendation 9:**

**We recommend that the Department work with community groups to establish a way for residents to report officer misconduct to a neutral third party in addition to the Internal Affairs Division and Civilian Oversight Board.**

### **Recommendation 10:**

**We recommend that the CBA be amended to include allowance for the creation of a publicly available database of officers who have been fired for misconduct or wrongfully killing or injuring someone.**

would include pension database records... Accordingly, information in the records consisting of the names and payments to public employees must be disclosed, but the rest may remain closed.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, closure is permitted, but not absolutely required. Further analysis of the impact of the Missouri Sunshine Law should be explored through a lens of transparency.

The theme that stood out most from our year of community engagement around police legitimacy was the desire by both police and community residents for increased transparency, especially around use of force and officer misconduct.

*Information Sharing after Officer-Involved Shootings.* According to ESOP, “There should be no ambiguity or subjectivity when any citizen is killed by law enforcement. The notification process should include written and verbal summary of what occurred within twenty-four hours, notifying the victim families of the medical examiner’s ruling in laymen’s terms in writing and verbally, and notifying the families of their rights” (p. 25). They further recommended that “A Trauma Informed Form will be created that will let families know what their rights are when their loved one is killed by law enforcement. The form should include summary of the incident, the medical examiner’s findings, police report” (p. 59). Our participants, both residents and police officers, shared that desire for transparency after a use of force incident by law enforcement. Police officers said they would feel safer if the public was made aware of the consequences of officer misconduct were made public rather than assuming officers can mistreat residents without consequences.

When asked specifically what information they would like to have after an officer-involved shooting, our survey participants responded they would like to know:

- Name, age, race, gender, rank, time on force of officer (58%)
- Age, race, and gender of the person who was shot (51%)
- A description of the shooting (75%)

Additionally, 49% of respondents said they would like this information after each officer-involved while 27% said they would only want that information if an officer was charged criminally and 7% said they would not like to know anything. While the Missouri Sunshine Law allows for personnel records to be closed to public scrutiny, OPINION NO. 93-2012 states “A public governmental body is authorized to close personally identifiable personnel records and records pertaining to employees, which

<sup>8</sup> <https://ago.mo.gov/missouri-law/sunshine-law/court-decisions-and-ag-opinions/closure-permitted>  
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Transparency means releasing the information as soon as feasible. Waiting for some arbitrary recurring date on the calendar only breeds contempt. The only delay I could understand is a short one (say, a few days to a week) in the interest of allowing emotions to settle.

-Response from the VPC City CBA Survey

*Aggregated information on Use of Force.* In addition to information on each officer-involved shooting, our participants would like to see aggregated information released on officer use of force. More than 45% of respondents to our survey wanted to have the aggregate information on use of force (including where it happened, type of force used, demographics of the officer and civilian involved, and type of call the officer was responding to) released more often than once a year with many requesting the information monthly. Use of force would not just include officer-involved shootings, but also use of a taser, drawing a weapon, and physical altercations). Similarly, Forward through Ferguson has advocated that the state of Missouri “establish a statewide database on critical use of force statistics in order to improve department operations, state policy, and the public at large.”<sup>9</sup> This could require an amendment to the current CBA or adding language specifically authorizing its creation and inclusion of the Department’s data.

*Reporting Officer Misconduct.* When a resident has experienced officer misconduct, there are several ways that they can report that. Importantly, our survey respondents did not feel safe and comfortable reporting to the police and do not know how to make a report. In our survey, 46% said they felt safe/comfortable reporting to the Department’s Internal Affairs Division while 36% said they did not. For the Civilian Oversight Board, 67% felt safe/comfortable reporting to them while 15% did not. Finally, 70% of participants said they would feel safe/comfortable reporting to a neutral third party where they could maintain anonymity while 18% said they would not. The greatest concerns with reporting to the Internal Affairs Division or the Civilian Oversight Board are potential retaliation, not being taken seriously or being accused of lying, or that nothing will happen with the report. When we asked people who attended our town hall whether they knew how to report to Internal Affairs, only 45% said they did while 55% did not. It was even lower for the Civilian Oversight Board with just 25% saying they knew how to make a report of officer misconduct to them and 75% saying they did not. Education about options for reporting misconduct is vital regardless of the adoption of these recommendations.

*Tracking Officers Fired for Misconduct.* The majority of our survey participants (65%) said the Department should release the names of police officers who are fired for misconduct or wrongfully injuring or killing someone. This is reinforced by the ESOP recommendation that “all SLMPD officer discipline should be public record” (p. 59). This transparency is made more difficult by the fragmentation where officers can move from one department to another in the region, commonly referred to as the muni-hop. In part to address this, ESOP recommended that “The Department of Personnel must report all officers fired/resigned under charges to the Peace Officers Standards of Training (POST) for decertification” (p. 60).

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<sup>9</sup> <https://forwardthroughferguson.org/calls-to-action/use-of-force-database/>  
Violence Prevention Commission SLMPD CBA Report

## Community Engagement Practices

### **Recommendation 11:**

**We recommend that the Department creating a policy to mandate that police officers perform in community engagement as defined in this report as part of their regular duties.**

### **Recommendation 12:**

**We recommend the Department create a comprehensive demonstration policy banning the use of teargas and rubber bullets except in cases of extreme risk of bodily harm and create a clear use of force policy around use of “less than lethal” weapons for demonstrations including sanctions for violations.**

“I think they (police) need to focus on building relationships and trust in a community where there is virtually none. The fact that a child quickly goes from wanting to be a police officer when they grow up to being afraid of the police is a big problem, and I believe much of that lies on the severed relationship between the police and the community they serve.”

-Response to VPC Police Legitimacy Survey

*Effective Practices to Build Relationships.* One thing we heard from both police officers and community residents is that the Department often relies on overly scripted community engagement events that cater primarily to residents who already have a positive view of the police. These events are not the most effective to build positive relationships with groups and are not the most meaningful practices to community residents.

We asked our survey participants what practices would be most helpful to build positive relationships with community residents, they answered:

- Meeting with neighborhood residents to create solutions for problems that residents need help with (32%)
- Create a process for informing the victim and/or public when an officer makes a mistake that injures someone (17%)
- Dedicated officers who work in neighborhoods for at least a year (17%)
- Get out of police cars and walk through neighborhoods (16%).

Town hall participants said they would like to have police help in proactively solving neighborhood problems like youth who are starting to get in trouble, people afraid to come forward after witnessing crime, and people walking around with guns. Residents also expressed a desire to see more police officers walking and biking in their neighborhood while getting to know residents, especially youth.

When we asked specifically about how police can build more positive relationships with youth, the most popular answers were:

- Mentoring (38%)
- Discussion groups about topics important to youth (25%)
- Sports or video game leagues (19%).

Additionally, one town hall attendee said police being mindful of language they use and modeling positive engagement with adults in youth’s lives is vital because “trust can’t be gained if they have negative interactions with adults of youth.” Survey participants focused on the need for youth to see police officers as positive members of community who are engaged with residents outside of traditional enforcement roles, whether that is in schools, neighborhoods, or at community events. As one respondent put it, “be visible when there is no trouble.”

*Protest Policy.* One of the ways that residents who are not victims or perpetrators of violence encounter law enforcement is in the emotionally fraught context of protests and demonstrations. The Ferguson Commission report contained a call to action that “St. Louis law enforcement agencies should aim to have a more human, non-militarized, proportional response to future protest or demonstration activity in the region. Thus, it is imperative that the entire region’s law enforcement and partner units prepare for such activity by developing a comprehensive Demonstration Response Plan, constructed with community input.”<sup>10</sup>

The response to protests and demonstrations many involve the use of less than lethal weapons like impact munitions including bean bag rounds and rubber bullets and chemical agents like pepper spray and tear gas. During the summer

<sup>10</sup> <https://forwardthroughferguson.org/report/signature-priorities/justice-for-all/>  
Violence Prevention Commission SLMPD CBA Report

protests following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, there were reports of serious injuries inflicted by these less lethal alternatives. Many of the injuries to protesters and media caused by less lethal weapons were attributed to officers not following training or guidelines for their use, such as aiming at individuals rather than at the ground, firing indiscriminately, or targeting the head or neck of a person.<sup>11</sup> These violations can make less lethal weapons more likely to inflict serious injury or death.

When we asked our survey participants about what they would like to see in such a demonstration plan, 43% said they think the policy should ban the use of teargas and rubber bullets on civilians, one of the flashpoints from this summer's protests following the death of George Floyd, while 13% said they did not believe the Department needs a new demonstration policy. Cities including Philadelphia, Detroit, and Portland have banned or limited the use of these less lethal weapons in the context of protests, but courts in places like Richmond, Virginia have refused to limit their use.<sup>12</sup> With the legality of a ban on these weapons still undecided, the demonstration policy should at a minimum include guidelines for the use of less lethal weapons in demonstrations and sanctions for intentional or repeated misuse of the less lethal weapons such as firing at someone's head of neck.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://khn.org/news/rubber-bullets-protesters-police-often-violate-own-policies-crowd-control-less-lethal-weapons/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://dcist.com/story/20/06/30/richmond-court-refuses-to-ban-tear-gas-at-protests/>

## Alternatives to Police Contact

### **Recommendation 13:**

**We recommend that the CBA include definitions of the types of cases to which the police will respond as well as a mandate to coordinate with local service providers to create a co-responder program and a diversion program that connects callers to highly trained social service providers for calls that do not fit those definitions.**

Divest some of the police duties to other professional city services, like, social services, mental health services. That way police's duties could be narrower, could focus on violent crime. My reasoning is that if policing is given much greater definition and more limited boundaries it will be less stressful to police; if it is less stressful to officers there will be less of a circle-the-wagons mentality, as there is currently in the police force, and therefore, the force would be more welcoming and open to other races, cultures, etc.

-Response from the VPC City CBA Survey

We heard from both officers and community residents during our year of community engagement that they believe police officers are being called on to respond to too many types of calls that aren't traditional crime calls. These include responding to unhoused individuals, drug and alcohol intoxication or misuse, and mental health calls. More than 80% of our survey respondents agreed that police resources are being used to respond to too many types of calls that are not traditional policing roles.

When we asked respondents about services they would like to be able to access when they call 911, the traditional services of police (90%), fire (90%), and ambulance (90%) were all identified, but 74% also wanted a way to connect to social service providers like mental health crisis support. When asked about a co-responder model that would have trained professionals respond with police officers, 91% would like to see that for mental health calls, 81% for drug overdoses, 80% for calls about unhoused individuals, and 81% for children on the scene of gun violence calls. ESOP has recommended in their report that "The Department of Personnel must mandate the hiring of social workers to assist divisions with Juvenile Disturbances, Domestic Violence calls, Unhoused/Homeless Services, and Mental Health calls" and "SLMPD must assign all nonpolice calls to the appropriate division in the City of St. Louis" (p. 60).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while we have presented these recommendations within the scope of the CBA, we realize not all of them are currently addressed in the CBA. If the bargaining members decide not to expand the scope of the CBA to include all of these recommendations, we recommend amended policy and practice documents to include them. This will require open communication and community engagement to advise the public of the amendments. VPC formally offers to help facilitate this process and the CBA public input process for future negotiations.

Specifically, we offer the following support to St. Louis City to incorporate public comment into the collective bargaining process and policy processes:

1. Conduct public education sessions on the current police agreement so that citizens understand the benefits and areas of opportunity for improvement in the police contract. We are willing to co-facilitate these sessions with a St. Louis County Police Department community liaison officer.
2. Facilitate focus groups, one-one interviews, and/or anonymous surveys with law-enforcement about areas of improvement that they would like to see and safeguards that they believe are important to keep.
3. Conduct public meetings to examine agreements of similar police departments to allow citizens to understand what is possible
4. Conduct a strategy session to gather input from citizens on specific actions that they would like to see taken to improve transparency and accountability in policing
5. Develop an action plan for ongoing community input, feedback, and participation in public safety decisions

For more information on the St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Commission, visit our website at [stlareavpc.org](http://stlareavpc.org).