

KCPD Chief of Police Community Feedback Report

Executive Summary

May 24, 2022

The selection of the next Chief of Police for the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) will have important ramifications on equitable public safety outcomes for all residents and areas of the city. Given this, and with a focus on the business case for reducing crime and violence, a coalition of the following agencies met to gather public input into the search for the next Chief of Police:

- Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Kansas City
- Black Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City
- Civic Council of Greater Kansas City
- Downtown Council
- Getting to the Heart of the Matter
- Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
- Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City
- Hispanic Economic Development Corporation
- KC Common Good
- Mid-America LGBT Chamber of Commerce
- Northeast Chamber of Commerce
- Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Prospect Business Association
- South Kansas City Alliance
- South Kansas City Chamber of Commerce

The coalition organized a series of seven listening sessions held throughout the city. These sessions were intentionally located in different neighborhoods to elicit distinct voices from our community and offer a platform for residents to voice their aspirations for the next KCPD Chief of Police.

In addition to feedback from public listening sessions, a survey, modeled after a similar project in Dallas, Texas, was developed to provide additional input on qualifications, priorities, and qualities residents would like to see in the next Chief. The full survey is attached as Appendix B to the report. This survey sought to understand the community's most desired leadership qualities, priorities, and qualifications for the next Chief of Police.

Our coalition's hope is to relay the will of the community, as articulated in these listening sessions and survey responses, free from any subjective interpretation. To ease review of this extensive material, though, we offer some analysis and conclusions we've drawn from the data and listening session feedback. However, we encourage the Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC), its search consultants, KCPD, the Kansas City, Missouri City Council, and all other interested parties to review the data and responses included in this report and reach their own conclusions. We acknowledge that different readers may interpret these findings differently.

Our analysis of the notes from the listening sessions, which are attached to the report, identified nine consistent themes:

- The new Chief needs to be front facing and engaged in the community.
- The new Chief needs to be an effective communicator.
- Data and best practices must be transparent and a key component of the new Chief's strategy and vision.
- The new Chief must develop and communicate a clear vision and strategy for the department.

- The new Chief needs to address perceived issues of underlying racism within the department.
- The new Chief needs to have a priority focus on training, with a particular emphasis on de-escalation and racial bias training.
- The new Chief needs to prioritize mental health within both the community and the department.
- The new Chief needs to re-examine and improve the internal investigation process.
- The new Chief must have the ability to navigate the political landscape.

A more detailed breakdown of the themes can be found in *Section 4* of the report.

Our analysis of the community surveys indicates that residents’ strongest desires for a Police Chief center around community engagement and trustworthiness, perhaps even more than his or her ability to reduce rates of crime, though that is clearly still critically important to residents.

The top responses for priorities and qualifications were building trust in our community and transparency and openness, respectively. As was demonstrated in the listening sessions, these two indicators correlate with each other to enhance community relationships. Officer accountability was a top three response in both leadership qualities and priorities. Community complaints of officers and instances of misconduct, as well as the internal investigation process were central themes in both the surveys and listening sessions. One of the top qualifications in a new Chief around experience utilizing de-escalation techniques directly relates to holding officers accountable and reducing opportunities for misconduct to occur.

The table below offers a quick snapshot of the community surveys:

Top 3 Leadership Qualities	Leadership Qualities	Community Response Rate
	Honesty and integrity	68.4%
	Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	66.8%
	Holds employees accountable	62.4%
Top 3 Priorities	Priorities	Community Response Rate
	Building trust in our community	61.6%
	Holding officers/staff accountable	58.0%
	Reduce homicides and other violent crimes	57.4%
Top 3 Qualifications	Qualifications	Community Response Rate
	Practices transparency and openness	53.7%
	Record of accomplishment of reducing crime and promoting community safety	48.6%
	Experience utilizing de-escalation techniques	45.3%

In addition to surveying the community, the coalition also provided a similar survey to personnel from the KCPD. As is explained in more detail in the report, the community and department personnel have a very shared vision for the next Chief of Police. For example, both the community and department see honesty and integrity as the most sought-after leadership qualities in the new Chief. The surveys also reveal a similar desire for a Chief who values positive community interactions and develops meaningful

solutions to community problems; traits which were also evident in the community listening sessions. Building trust and reducing homicides and violent crime were also high-level priorities for both the public and officers.

Survey responses also demonstrated a desire both within and outside of KCPD for the Chief to practice transparency and openness and have a record of accomplishment reducing crime and promoting public safety.

However, while there are many common points of alignment, there were also differences in perspective. Specifically, the community placed greater emphasis on department diversity, equity, and inclusion, while department personnel indicated a greater desire for a fair and equitable Chief who promotes staff development, training, and succession planning. Officer retention was also a greater priority according to the survey responses from within the department. These differences are not surprising, given the officers' role as members of the department.

Further examination of the survey results by zip code found that regardless of neighborhood, most residents indicated the desire for a chief who exhibits honesty and integrity, holds employees accountable, and develops meaningful solutions to community problems. Most of the neighborhoods surveyed said the top priority for a new Chief should focus on building trust in the community. Variations did present itself in priorities by zip code as residents in South Kansas City and on the Westside/ Northeast indicated reduction in violent crime as their top priority. The top priority on the East Side was accountability for officer misconduct and community complaints. In the Northland and Midtown/ Downtown surveys, the most common responses centered around strengthening community and police relations and increasing trust with the community.

The most varied responses from across the city were about the qualifications for a new Chief. In the South, Midtown/Downtown, and Northland responses, a Chief who practices transparency and openness was preeminent. Westside/Northeast residents expressed a desire for promoting community-oriented policing. Residents on the East Side most wanted experience using de-escalation techniques. In the South, Northland, Midtown/Downtown and Westside/Northeast, a higher priority was placed on the new Chief having a track record of reducing crime and promoting community safety. Understanding policing history in the U.S. and racism and bias was a top three response in both the East Side and Midtown/Downtown. The Northland included officer recruitment and retention as one of their top three responses, which was only otherwise mentioned on the East Side as their fifth ranked qualification for a new Chief.

In summary, the new Chief should be fair and open with their vision for making Kansas City safer and utilize data and national best practices to develop an effective strategy to carry out the goals of the department. Information on the work and policies of the department should be highly visible and accessible to the community and clearly stated to officers within the department. Relationships not just with the community they serve, but with local and state government and other law enforcement agencies are essential. Officer recruitment and training are important, but emphasis should be placed on diversifying the department to make it more reflective of the community it represents. Priority focus should be on community building to reduce homicides and violent crime. The new Chief should employ effective practices to drive at change including increasing officer training on de-escalation tactics and bias and mental health support resources. Overall, the new Chief needs to exhibit honesty, integrity, and transparency to help strengthen police and community relationships to effectively build trust and deliver successful and equitable public safety outcomes in the city.

Your selection decision is a critical one and these community voices are essential to your work. The similarities and differences between the community and department feedback to the online survey are meaningful. Harnessing the alignment between the community and department should be a skill that is evaluated in the search process as candidates are interviewed. Similarly, the ability to bridge the divide between the community and the department on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, among others, must be a consideration for all candidates.

As the process continues its progression, the coalition is ready to assist the BOPC in next steps. Meetings between the convening organizations will continue in an effort to advance the search for a new Chief and otherwise improve public safety. We encourage the BOPC to reach out to other interested groups and stakeholders interested in this issue and engage them throughout the process. It is through this report and our findings that we hope the BOPC builds on the community’s feedback on qualities and priorities into your position description, interview questions, and evaluation process for the new Chief.

We look forward to partnering with the BOPC in this critical effort and, together, advancing public safety in our community.

