



KCPD Chief of Police Community Feedback Report

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May 24, 2022

Section 1: Background

Crime and violence have a direct impact on the health and vitality of a community and its economy. For the past several years, Kansas City, Missouri has consistently been ranked as one of the most violent cities in the nation. According to 2020 data released by the FBI, Kansas City ranked as the country's eighth most violent city, with nearly 8,000 incidents that year. This marked a nine-percent increase from 2019 (<https://fox4kc.com/news/fbi-data-kansas-city-ranks-in-top-10-of-highest-violent-crime-rates-in-u-s/>). Kansas City continued to see a steady increase in homicides on an annual basis, with a decline in 2021. As of this report, in 2022, Kansas City is on pace to have one of its most violent years on record (<https://www.kcpd.org/media/4051/5422-daily-homicide-analysis.pdf>).

Increasing rates of crime and violence correlate with the local economy's ability to attract and retain industry and talent. In response to Kansas City's crime rates, the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City (Civic Council) and the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber) established the Joint Study Committee on Police Governance and Public Safety (JSC). The goal of the two organizations has been to study how the Kansas City Police Department's (KCPD) governance, policies, and procedures can build community trust while advancing safety, equity, and justice.

The initial work of the JSC centered around a series of 35 meetings, including 14 listening sessions with community groups, law enforcement, local prosecutors, national law enforcement and police oversight organizations, and members of the KCMO Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC), as well as extensive research into best practices and peer cities' police reform actions. The following recommendations were made informed by those meetings:

- Investigation of police department personnel should be independent of the Kansas City Police Department for all cases of excessive use of force and all complaints brought by the public.
- The City and Board of Police Commissioners should engage in dialogue – rather than litigation - to find common ground regarding the department's current budget and other contentious issues. The current back-and-forth between the two entities does nothing to reduce the city's high level of violent crime nor does it improve the relations between the community and the police department. Engaging in protracted litigation diverts funds and wastes valuable time and energy that could better be used to shore up police resources and improve processes.
- As vacancies on the Board of Police Commissioners occur, we encourage the appointment of new members who reflect the racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity of the community KCPD serves.

The initial recommendations of the JSC were a starting point for increased calls for public safety reforms in Kansas City from the business community. Combating crime and public safety is a dynamic issue that requires consistent communication and research to address an evolving landscape. The Civic Council and KC Chamber continued their work by engaging in initial dialogue with local pastors from Getting to the Heart of the Matter centered around additional recommendations and next steps. As a change in KCPD leadership was announced, the partnership evolved into a larger coalition of sixteen groups including business, ecumenical, interfaith, and anti-violence community groups. The focus: to gather public input in the search for a new Police Chief of the KCPD.

The following sixteen organizations comprised the coalition:

- 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

To create a forum for public input in the search for a new Police Chief, the coalition established a working plan to conduct a series of listening sessions to be held across the city. Sessions were designed to be as inclusive as possible, with multilingual options, hybrid meetings, and various meeting locations. In addition to the listening sessions, an eight-question survey, modeled after a similar exercise in Dallas, Texas, was developed and made available to increase public engagement in the process and provide more feedback on the desires of the community for the next Police Chief. All information gathered in the listening sessions and surveys are compiled into this report.

The group paid particular attention to success experienced in Dallas, TX as it crafted its approach to this work. Using a very similar public survey and encouraging business and community engagement in the process of hiring their new Chief of the Dallas Police Department, a collaborative and innovative leader was selected. The results to date have been encouraging in Dallas, with violent crime rates reduced by twelve percent and continued partnership between police and the business community. (<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/state-of-public-safety-event-set-for-thursday-in-dallas/2959712/> ; <https://nypost.com/2022/02/05/how-dallas-smart-police-tactics-bucked-the-national-crime-rise/>)

The selection of a new leader for the KCPD is one of the more important decisions our community faces going forward. It is imperative that the new Chief demonstrates a commitment and skill set to improve community engagement, transparency, and accountability to move towards equitable and improved public safety outcomes for the entire city. We believe that this report provides adequate and timely information to the BOPC to achieve this goal.

Section 2: Community Listening Sessions

The Coalition operated with the goal of engaging other key community partners to help promote and host the listening session series to their constituents and encourage participation. More than 58 community organizations, including civic rights groups, elected officials, and law enforcement organizations, were directly notified by the coalition of the listening sessions to promote, market, and provide input. Many of these organizations promoted these meetings to their networks and helped drive attendance at the sessions. Others provided additional input to the process.

Seven meetings were held. The sessions were held between late March and early May. Meetings were held in person, with three hybrid meetings (both virtual and in-person attendance options) to ensure equitable access to the process. Multilingual and hearing impaired options were available at the Westside and Northeast sessions.

The sessions were held in the following communities:

- Northland Listening Session
- South KC Listening Session
- Westside KC Listening Session
- Midtown/Downtown Listening Session
- Eastside KC Listening Session
- Northeast KC Listening Session
- Divine Nine & The Blue Line Listening Session

Convenings were moderated by Drs. Robert Lee Hill and Marjorie Williams and were each about two hours in length. Additional designers assisted the moderators to ensure that all sessions were consistent and focused on the future and the new Chief. Communication agreements were presented at the onset of the meetings, making clear that participants were not to engage in dialogue regarding previous experiences and interactions with KCPD but to focus on the selection of the next Chief of Police and the direction of the department for the future. Communications agreements were provided to establish parameters and session expectations. Meetings began with the entire group together, followed by breakout groups formed by table seating. Participants in the breakouts were asked a limited set of questions:

1. Describe what community engagement from the new KCPD Chief of Police looks like to you?
2. Describe what transparency from the new KCPD Chief of Police looks like to you?
3. Describe what accountability from the new KCPD Chief of Police looks like to you?

In each breakout, community members were asked to respond to the questions by writing their thoughts in a notebook. A complete set of those notes can be found in Appendix F attached to this report. Following group discussion, participants reconvened prior to the close of the meeting for final report-outs. A similar process was used in discussions with the Boards of the Northland and Greater Kansas City Chambers.

Data from across all the listening sessions were analyzed. Nine common themes from these sessions were observed. They were:

- 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.

The top comment throughout the listening sessions was the desire for a new Chief to be engaged in the community and accessible to residents. Comments included the new chief appearing at crime scenes involving shootings as well as community events and meetings not sponsored by the department. In addition to being a familiar and visible face, the Chief needs to be an effective communicator and willing to share not just the positive news about KCPD, but negative feedback as well. Session participants expressed a desire for a Chief who can accept faults within the department and works to improve upon them.

A consistent theme across all the sessions was the need for effective and transparent use of data that is part of the new Chief's overall vision, mission, and strategy for the department. While the department already engages in several data-sharing practices, most residents were unaware of their availability or where to access such data. This presents opportunities for the new leadership to promote transparency through increased effectiveness of sharing of information and data. It was a shared desire that the vision of the Chief needs to be part of the department's publicly communicated long-term plan, which should also include metrics for accountability and measures of success.

As part of the vision and strategy, training needs to be an integral part of the Chief's plan. There were several notes on the need for increased training with a focus on de-escalation, racism and implicit bias, and mental health awareness. Mental health awareness and resources for both the community and within the department were called for by participants.

Given the unique governance structure of the Kansas City, MO Police Department, many participants deemed it necessary that the new chief be politically astute without being political. This includes being able to work in tandem on combating crime with the mayor, city council, and prosecutor's offices within the city limits. This also includes accountability for officer instances of misconduct and examination of racism perceived within the department.

Public input from the listening sessions was analyzed and grouped by feedback, questions, and meetings. A breakdown of the community responses by session organized thematically with supporting references can be found in Appendix H. Appendix I organizes comments within these thematic categories, but also separates them by listening session location. Finally, a complete copy of the listening session participant notes is available in Appendix J.

Section 3: Community Surveys

A survey was developed, based on a similar document used in the search for the new Dallas, TX Chief of Police, to both increase community participation and gain additional feedback. A series of eight questions was asked to provide feedback on several characteristics respondents would like to see in a new Chief.

The community survey (which is attached to this report as Appendix B) first asked questions to understand how respondents might engage with KCPD. Specifically, the survey asked if the respondent was a resident of KCMO, worked in KCMO, and in which zip code they lived.

Next, the survey asked respondents to indicate their preference within three broad categories: (1) leadership qualities, (2) priorities, and (3) qualifications of a new Chief. Multiple responses within each of these categories were offered as choices and respondents were asked to pick the five that they believe were the most important criteria in the next Chief of Police.

Finally, community members who took the survey also had the opportunity to provide an open-ended response in the survey's final question - which asked them to articulate the vision they would like to see from the new Chief.

Surveys were provided to all participants at each listening session. The public not in attendance at one of the listening sessions also had the opportunity to complete the survey online from April 28 through May 15, 2022. In total, we collected 1,193 community surveys from the public, 953 of which were Kansas City, Missouri residents.

Our analysis of this data is most easily summarized by showing the top 5 responses to each of these three questions. The tables below show this data:

Table 1: Community Survey Highlights:

Top Leadership Qualities

Honesty and integrity	68.4%
Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	66.8%
Holds employees accountable	62.4%
Values diversity at all levels	53.1%
Values positive community relations	52.7%

Top Priorities

Building trust in our community	61.6%
Holding officers/staff accountable	58%
Reduce homicides and other violent crimes	57.4%
Strengthening police/community partnerships	47.8%
Building a department reflective of the community they serve	46%

Top Qualifications

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%
Experience recruiting and retaining quality personnel	40.5%
Promotes community-oriented policing	40.4%

At the same time the survey was circulating through the community, a similar survey (attached to this report as Appendix C) was also provided to the Kansas City Police Department personnel. That survey was slightly modified from the community survey to better streamline the questionnaire by removing questions regarding where respondents work.

In total, we collected 181 surveys from department personnel. The high-level results of that survey are shown in the tables below:

Table 2: KCPD Survey Highlights:

Top Leadership Qualities

Honesty and integrity	80.9%
Fair and equitable	66.7%
Promotes development of staff, training, and succession planning	49.4%
Values positive community relations	42.0%
Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	40.7%

Top Priorities

Increasing the retention rate of police	71.0%
Strengthening police/community partnerships	55.6%
Reduce homicides and other violent crimes	51.9%
Building trust in our community	49.4%
Innovative and progressive policing practices	40.1%

Top Qualifications

Experience recruiting and retaining quality personnel	61.5%
Practices transparency and openness	57.1%
Track record of reducing crime and promoting community safety	54.0%
Politically astute but not political	42.9%
Implements contemporary and innovative policing practices	39.1%

Responses to the open-ended question on the Community survey were put into a word cloud generator. The results of that work are shown below:



Responses to the open-ended question on the KCPD survey were put into a word cloud generator. The results of that work are shown below:



Next, we compared the results of the community and department surveys. See those comparisons in the tables below. The percentages in black indicate response rates from the public survey. The numbers next to them in red indicate the response rates from KCPD department personnel.

Table 3: Top Five Community Responses Compared to KCPD

Leadership Qualities	Community	KCPD
Honesty and integrity	68.4%	80.9%
Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	66.8%	40.7%
Holds employees accountable	62.4%	40.1%
Values diversity at all levels	53.1%	26.5%
Values positive community relations	52.7	42.0%

Priorities	Community	KCPD
Building trust in our community	61.6%	49.4%
Holding officers/staff accountable	58%	39.5%
Reduce homicides and other violent crimes	57.4%	51.9%
Strengthening police/community partnerships	47.8%	55.6%
Building a department reflective of the community they serve	46.2%	19.1%

Qualifications	Community	KCPD
Practices transparency and openness	53.7%	57.1%
Record of accomplishment of reducing crime and promoting community safety	48.6%	54%
Experience utilizing de-escalation techniques	45.3%	15.5%
Experience recruiting and retaining quality personnel	40.5%	61.5%
Promotes community-oriented policing	40.4%	29.2%

Bottom Five Community Responses Compared to KCPD

Leadership Qualities	Community	KCPD
Emergency/crisis management response	33.5%	32.7%
Embraces nationally recognized best practices in policing	33.2%	32.7%
Excellent manager of resources	23.9%	38.9%
Strategic thinker	22.0%	37.0%
Embraces external communication/social media	10.3%	4.9%

Priorities	Community	KCPD
Expanding social services programs	21.5%	13.0%
Solutions to homelessness	21%	9.3%
Traffic safety and enforcement	13.4%	21.6%
Staying within allocated budget	8%	8.6%
Other (please specify)	6.4%	15.4%

Qualifications	Community	KCPD
Experience in budgeting and financial management /	21.4%	21.7%
Experience with public relations, media, and news/social media	18.1%	28.6%
Highly educated	16.6%	13.0%
Prior Police Chief experience	13.8%	11.2%
Experience with 1st Amendment protest	12.6%	1.9%

The tables above reflect that the community and department personnel have a very shared vision for the next Chief of Police. The groups share three of the same top five responses for Leadership Qualities and Priorities, while sharing two of the same top 5 Qualification criteria.

Honesty and integrity are strongly shared values between the public and the department as are themes revolving around trustworthiness. The surveys also reveal a similar desire for a Chief who values positive community interactions and develops meaningful solutions to community problems; traits 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' focus as members of the department.

Survey Results by Geographic Region

Finally, we also broke down the results of the community survey by geographic region within KCMO. To do this, we isolated responses by zip code and categorized each of those zip codes into one of five neighborhoods: South Kansas City, East Side, Westside/Northeast, Northland, and Midtown/Downtown. The tables below show the top 5 responses for each of the “Leadership Qualities”, “Priorities”, and “Qualifications” listed in the survey, based on geographic region.

Table 4: Survey Results by Location

South Kansas City					
<i>Total Responses</i>	202				
Leadership Qualities	PCT	Priorities	PCT	Qualifications	PCT
Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	64.3%	Reduce homicides and other violent crime	57.6%	Practices transparency and openness	49.5%
Honesty and integrity	60.5%	Building trust in our community	51.9%	Track record of reducing crime and promoting community safety	43.8%
Holds employees accountable	59.5%	Holding officers/staff accountable	51.0%	Experience utilizing de-escalation techniques	43.8%
Values diversity at all levels	56.7%	Building a department reflective of the community they serve	50.0%	Understands the history of policing in the US, including racism and bias	39.5%
Values positive community relations	49.0%	Strengthening police/community partnerships	46.2%	Promotes community-oriented policing	38.6%
East Side					
<i>Total Responses</i>	238				
Leadership Qualities	PCT	Priorities	PCT	Qualifications	PCT
Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	64.7%	Holding officers/staff accountable	63.0%	Experience utilizing de-escalation techniques	45.4%
Honesty and integrity	61.8%	Building trust in our community	62.6%	Practices transparency and openness	45.0%
Holds employees accountable	59.7%	Expand training on racism and implicit bias	55.9%	Understands the history of policing in the US, including racism and bias	43.3%
Values diversity at all levels	52.5%	Reduce homicides and other violent crime	52.1%	Track record of reducing crime and promoting community safety	42.4%
Fair and equitable	48.7%	Building a department reflective of the community they serve	45.8%	Experience recruiting and retaining quality personnel	36.1%

Westside/Northeast					
<i>Total Responses</i>	54				
Leadership Qualities	PCT	Priorities	PCT	Qualifications	PCT
Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	59.3%	Reduce homicides and other violent crime	61.1%	Promotes community-oriented policing	50.0%
Holds employees accountable	57.4%	Holding officers/staff accountable	46.3%	Practices transparency and openness	44.4%
Honesty and integrity	55.6%	Building a department reflective of the community they serve	46.3%	Track record of reducing crime and promoting community safety	42.6%
Values diversity at all levels	46.3%	Staying within allocated budget	42.6%	Experience utilizing de-escalation techniques	40.7%
Values positive community relations	44.4%	Building trust in our community	42.6%	Track record of building community trust	33.3%
Northland					
<i>Total Responses</i>	216				
Leadership Qualities	PCT	Priorities	PCT	Qualifications	PCT
Honesty and integrity	63.9%	Strengthening police/community partnerships	51.4%	Practices transparency and openness	46.8%
Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	50.9%	Reduce homicides and other violent crime	50.0%	Experience recruiting and retaining quality personnel	46.3%
Holds employees accountable	46.8%	Building trust in our community	49.5%	Track record of reducing crime and promoting community safety	44.9%
Values positive community relations	47.2%	Increasing the retention rate of police	46.8%	Track record of building community trust	33.8%
Promotes development of staff, training and succession planning	44.4%	Holding officers/staff accountable	40.7%	Implements contemporary and innovative policing practices	31.5%

Downtown/Midtown					
<i>Total Responses</i>	243				
Leadership Qualities	PCT	Priorities	PCT	Qualifications	PCT
Holds employees accountable	63.8%	Building trust in our community	56.4%	Practices transparency and openness	50.6%
Develops meaningful solutions to community problems	63.0%	Holding officers/staff accountable	56.4%	Experience utilizing de-escalation techniques	48.1%
Honesty and integrity	59.3%	Expand training on racism and implicit bias	45.7%	Understands the history of policing in the US, including racism and bias	44.9%
Values diversity at all levels	56.8%	Reduce homicides and other violent crime	45.7%	Promotes community-oriented policing	43.6%
Values positive community relations	56.4%	Building a department reflective of the community they serve	45.3%	Promotes diversity and gender equity in the workplace	42.0%

Across all communities in the city, the public's most desired leadership qualities were developing meaningful solutions to community problems, holding employees accountable, and having honesty and integrity. One of the central themes emerging from the entire process was the desire for a new chief who engages effectively and consistently with the community, which is an imperative across the city, regardless of location. The community would also like the new Chief to have a strong sense of accountability for the actions of the department's officers in response to citizen complaints.

Continuing the theme of accountability and engagement, residents across all areas had some of the highest responses to the new Chief's priorities around building trust in our communities and holding officers and staff accountable. In South Kansas City and on the Westside, residents indicated their top priority as being the reduction of homicides and violent crime. The top priority on the East Side was accountability for officer misconduct and community complaints. In the Northland and Midtown/Downtown surveys the top results 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 the top response. Westside and 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.

Community engagement continues to be a consistent message delivered by the results of community input. Residents across the city express a desire for a new Chief to develop meaningful relationships with the community. Residents, regardless of zip code, also expressed a desire for a Chief who is accountable for their officers' actions and allows for transparency on issues related to the department. While differences were present in top priorities, particularly regarding the new Chief's qualifications, responses related back to a new Chief who can engage the community in a transparent way to help build trust.

Section 4: Conclusion & Next Steps

In the wake of social justice movements across the country during the summer of 2020, increased emphasis was placed on the importance of strong and effective leadership in law enforcement within communities. Search models, such as the one used in Dallas, TX, demonstrate the ability of a new Chief to deliver positive change in a short period of time. Kansas City has an opportunity to reverse increasing trends of homicide and violent crime rates over the last several years beginning with the selection of a new Chief of Police who is willing to address core community and department issues around community engagement, transparency, and accountability with the goal of increasing public trust of its law enforcement agency.

Community relationships are a key driver for both residents and law enforcement personnel in delivering change in Kansas City. Engaging the public and being clear on the department's core vision, mission, and strategy were essential components sought by the community. Transparency, particularly with data and internal investigations, was emphasized throughout the listening sessions and survey responses. From a department perspective the call for a new Chief to recognize deficiencies in officer professional development, recruiting, and retention remained a focus for sworn and non-sworn department members. While several similarities exist in the desires of law enforcement outcomes from both the department and the community, such as reducing homicide and violent crime, differences in priorities, qualifications, and leadership qualities do exist. This adds increased emphasis on the need for the new Chief to have the ability to successfully navigate the current climate in Kansas City around public safety to begin to build new relationships and work to establish strong partnerships with elected officials.

While some of the changes or improvements the community wished to see already exist in KCPD, such as Community Interaction Officers, online data, and community events and resources, there was a clear lack of awareness of such resources among the public. This represents opportunities for the new Chief to leverage existing resources and make them more accessible and visible while increasing their efficacy. This also places an increased need for a new Chief to be an effective communicator who can successfully utilize all outreach platforms to tell the story of the department and share both positive and negative news and information.

Engagement from both the community and department are essential in the search for a new Chief of Police for the Kansas City, MO Police Department. It is the hope of the coalition that the information provided within this report offers the BOPC a foundation to begin the search process for a new Chief.

The coalition members value the work of the BOPC and are committed to continuing as a partner in the Police Chief selection process. The group respectfully requests that the community feedback included in this report be reflected in the position description, interview questions, and evaluation rubric for the selection of the new Chief. We further hope that those engaged in our process will be offered the chance by the BOPC to continue their engagement in the search. Additionally, the coalition knows there are other groups that would like to be engaged in the search process and we encourage the BOPC to engage with each of those groups as the search continues.

We are hopeful for the outcome of this search and positive impact it will have on the future of our community.

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