



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Tacoma City Council's Joint Statement on Actions Underway to Address Community Safety

We acknowledge this has been an extraordinary and difficult time for our community in many respects regarding public safety. The City Council is unified in our desire for Tacoma to be a city where everyone feels safe to live, work, and play, and to be responsive to those constituents who have raised concerns with levels of service when reporting a crime. For some in our community those concerns have been coupled with a call to increase the size of our police force. At the same time, we know that community safety needs vary in our community. We hear the fear our Black and Brown communities feel around issues of policing and bad outcomes with law enforcement nationally and locally. Addressing the concerns expressed by community members, whether as organized groups or as individuals, is of utmost importance to us. We hear all perspectives.

As elected leaders, we are responsible for incorporating these perspectives as we establish the vision for the City and articulate, through policy direction and our budget, where we want to end up as a community.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the death of Manuel Ellis, this has been an unprecedented era in defining policing and public safety. As a body, we guide the City Manager and Interim Police Chief in making high-quality decisions that reflect the will of the City Council, and ultimately the residents of Tacoma. We support these city leaders as they strive to address

community safety and increases in violent crime while also being called to implement transformation and address a wide variety of complex administrative issues, including:

- Successfully deploying body-worn cameras to every officer on patrol and now implementing dash cameras.
- Integrating changing state laws related to policing.
- Implementing 128 recommendations resulting from three City-commissioned reports.
- Recruiting officers to fill roughly 40 fully-funded vacant positions during a time when jurisdictions across the country are struggling to recruit police officers.
- Executing ongoing major projects vital to the City and policing.
- Adapting to COVID-19 protocols.

Nationally, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the impact of the gun violence crisis, resulting in 3,906 additional firearm deaths and 9,278 additional firearm injuries in 2020, compared to 2019. Locally, some reported crimes are trending down from the prior year, and while the Tacoma Police Department has a reputation for successfully resolving homicide cases, there have been notable and disturbing increases in serious crimes such as assault, homicide, burglary, robbery, vandalism, and arson.

We, the Tacoma Mayor and City Council, fully support Interim Chief Mike Ake as the administrative director of the Tacoma Police Department, and we applaud his efforts to address co-occurring challenges and the need for transformation while executing the Department's strategic plan to address the rise in violent crime. Specifically, at the [City Council Study Session on September 28, 2021](#), Interim Police Chief Ake provided an overview of calls for service and violent crime analysis and presented a holistic violent crime reduction strategy with short-, medium-, and long-term action items. Short-term strategies to be deployed in the next six months include:

- Carrying out special emphasis missions.
- Increasing patrol visibility in identified "hot spot" areas.
- Re-assigning five detectives and a sergeant to be fully trained and dedicated to the apprehension of persons responsible for violent crime, separate from and in addition to the current homicide unit.
- Partnering with community groups to reduce youth violence.
- Partnering with the Human Resources Department to reduce hiring process time and recruiting women of color officers using targeted outreach.

In our role as policymakers, we approved a budget for the 2021-2022 biennium which allocated \$172 million (34% of the General Fund) to the Tacoma Police Department. Our approved budget also includes funding that would allow the City Manager to establish an Office of Community Safety.

On [October 12, 2021, the City Council Study Session](#) included a presentation with proposals for an additional \$5.6 in funding for 12 initiatives related to violent crime reduction, adding hiring

incentives and staff focused on recruitment and retention efforts, and technology upgrades. As part of the mid-biennium budget modification process, we will have the opportunity to approve these additional resources in November. Previously, we funded a [divertible calls study](#) that was completed in May of this year and the City Manager has been working hard to implement the recommendations, including actions around increasing capacity for the homeless outreach team.

In addition to the focus on policing and calls for service, we as your Mayor and Council understand that a sense of safety can be influenced by our environment as well. We remain unified in our desire to have clean public spaces, and this is why we directed \$500,000 of the American Rescue Plan Act funding support the Tidy-Up Tacoma initiative and have expressed our desire for ongoing funding to address litter, right-of-way maintenance, and graffiti. We expect to see budget proposals for continuing these efforts during our budget modification process in November.

Addressing crime, increasing the sense of community safety, and engaging in transformation are areas where progress will rely on sustained effort and attention. As your elected leaders, we remain committed to this vital and important work, and we will continue to prioritize a Tacoma that feels safer for all.

More information about the City's transformation efforts is available at cityoftacoma.org/transform.

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