



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

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. 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, although many crimes are trending down from the prior year such as property crime, 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.

At the September 28, 2021, City Council Study Session, Interim Police Chief Mike 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 Human Resources Department to reduce hiring process time among many others actions.

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 a number of co-occurring challenges and the need for transformation while executing the Department's strategic plan to address the rise in violent crime.

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 essential police services and transformation in the focus areas of violent crime reduction, recruitment and retention, and technology upgrades that we will have the opportunity to approve in the mid-biennium budget modification process in November.

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 because they are too often singled out by our laws, resulting in bad outcomes with law enforcement nationally and locally. Addressing the concerns expressed by community members, whether as organized groups or just one individual, is of utmost importance to us. We hear all perspectives. And as elected leaders, we must incorporate 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. In the original budget for the 2021-2022 biennium, this including allocating \$172 million (34% of the General Fund) City Council budgeted to the Tacoma Police Department in the 2021-22 biennium.

As a body, we guide the City Manager and Interim Police Chief in making the best decisions that reflect the will of the City Council, and ultimately the residents of Tacoma. We support these city leaders as they have been called to address a wide variety of administrative issues, including:

- Addressing the need for transformation including successfully deployed body-worn cameras to every officer on patrol and dash cameras are currently under way for implementation.
- Integrating changing state laws related to policing.
- Implementing 128 recommendations resulting from three City-commissioned reports.
- Adapting to COVID-19 protocols.
- Recruiting officers to fill roughly 40 vacant positions.
- Executing ongoing major projects vital to the City and policing.

Addressing increases in violent crime and 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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