Advancing Community-Engaged Policing and Alternate Response Strategies in Chicago:

A Summary of Themes from the Community Engagement Initiative Focused on the Public Safety and Wellbeing of all Chicagoans

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- Civic Consulting Alliance
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in November 2024 through early February 2025, eight community-based nonprofit organizations in Chicago were selected to co-create and advance a strategy for engaging Chicago residents and community members to inform the operationalization of the Chicago Police Department's community policing strategy and the Mayor's Office of Chicago expansion of alternate response strategies.

The themes emerging from feedback from residents and community members, which are presented in this report, are critical inputs in plans to advance community-engaged policing[1] and alternate response strategies in Chicago. This report is one of several inputs into the overarching strategic and implementation plans that the Mayor's Office of Chicago, and the Chicago Police Department are developing.

Based on residents' feedback, Chicagoans feel strongly that the city should be a place where people feel safe, welcomed, and their wellbeing is addressed in holistic, tailored, and consistent ways. Many residents across the community engagement initiative reiterated that they appreciated being engaged in this effort and they are eager to see how their feedback will be used to advance concrete policy and practice changes.

Through this initiative Chicago residents said they want to see policing practices that include:

- Proactive, visible, timely, and efficient engagement by law enforcement in communities including a commitment to foot and bike patrols, community, organization, and business engagement.
- A commitment to building trusting relationships with community members that are free from bias and stereotyping.
- Being engaged with care, empathy, and the appropriate mix of service professionals when there are calls for help.

Residents raised a set of actions that the Chicago Police Department can take to advance community engaged policing practices:

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[1] Through the community engagement process, residents and community-based organizations engaged in this process recommended using the phrase "community engaged policing" instead of "community policing." Throughout the report we have adopted this language.

- Commitment by leadership and individuals at all ranks of the Chicago Police Department to advance a vision, policies, and practices consistent with community engaged policing.
- Consistent community engagement that is codified as part of the Chicago Police Department's overall vision and operating structure.
- Continuous training opportunities particularly around issues of de-escalation and use of force, cultural and community competency, responsiveness to mental or behavioral health calls for service, and trauma-informed training.
- Greater and more transparent police accountability through multiple channels and mechanisms.

Residents have mixed feelings about police and non-police interventions when asked about who should respond to a range of different calls for service. Residents recognize the value in triaging calls for service, reducing silos across law enforcement and other trained professionals, and adapting response teams to meet the needs of Chicago residents.

Taken together, Chicago residents and organizations are eager to see the Chicago Police Department and Mayor's Office of Chicago advance community-engaged policing practices and alternate response strategies as critical elements to ensure that all Chicagoans feel safe, welcomed, and have their needs met.

BACKGROUND

In 2024, the Mayor's Office of Chicago and the Chicago Police Department (CPD) continued to advance efforts to operationalize and expand two critical public safety initiatives to ensure that all Chicagoans felt safe, welcomed, and have their needs met.

First, as articulated by the Mayor's Office of Chicago, Chicago aims to have a responsive and seamless emergency service response system that provides all residents with relevant and effective assistance, regardless of who they ask for help from. Specifically, the system intends to: (1) Provide residents the right response at the right time; and (2) Ensure that there is no wrong door when a resident asks for help.

Second, as a mandate of the City of Chicago Consent Decree, "CPD will ensure that its community policing philosophy is a core component of its provision of police services, crime reduction strategies and tactics, training, management, resource deployment, and accountability systems. All CPD members will be responsible for furthering this philosophy and employing the principles of community policing, which include trust and legitimacy; community engagement; community partnerships; problem solving..."[2] This mandate was further codified with Superintendent Snelling's 2024 Community Commission for Public Safety & Accountability (CCPSA) Goals articulating that "every Chicago Police Officer is a community policing officer."[3]

In order to support an understanding and operationalization of community engaged policing and alternate response strategies, eight community-based organizations were selected through a public request for proposals process. The public request for proposals opened on July 8, 2024 and closed July 28, 2024. Organizations were selected and notified in August 2024. The selection team included individuals from the following organizations:

- Community Policing Advisory Panel
- CPD - Office of Community Policing
- Impact for Equity
- Metropolitan Peace Initiative
- Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities
- Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation
- The Joyce Foundation

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[2] Chicago Police Department Consent Decree: https://www.chicagopoliceconsentdecree.org/Page-Attachments/CPCD/Resources/CONSENT/FINAL-CONSENT-DECREE-SIGNED-BY-JUDGE-DOW.pdf
[3] 2024 Community Commission for Public Safety & Accountability (CCPSA) Goals: https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/ccpsa/GOALS/2024%20CPD%20Goals%20-%20FINAL.pdf

Community-based organizations were selected to co-create and advance a strategy for engaging Chicago residents and community members to inform the Chicago Police Department's operationalization of community policing and the Mayor's Office of Chicago expansion of alternate response strategies.

The organizations that were selected demonstrated capabilities and capacity across five selection criteria domains:

- Inclusivity and collaboration
- Geographic/Stakeholder coverage
- Community engagement experience
- Programmatic experience
- Capacity

The organizations selected were:

- Brave Space Alliance
- Bright Star Community Outreach
- BUILD, Inc
- Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community
- El Valor
- Target Area Development Coalition
- The Resurrection Project
- YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago

Through a public request for proposals process, in September 2024, United Way of Metropolitan Chicago on behalf of the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities engaged with The Intersect. The Intersect has served as the facilitator of the community engagement initiative working to support and execute on a unified vision for community engagement. This has included coordinating across the community-based organizations as well as the Mayor's Office of Chicago, Chicago Police Department, and the Civic Consulting Alliance (CCA) to advance this vision. We co-created a cohesive community engagement and data collection process. Leveraging the findings from the community engagement initiative we developed this report that summarizes the findings and themes from the community engagement initiative.

The themes presented in this report represent critical inputs in an overall strategic plan to advance communities' understanding of community policing and alternate response strategies in Chicago.

REPORT PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This report presents findings and themes from respondents' feedback from the community engagement initiative. The themes have been generated after cleaning and coding the qualitative responses provided by respondents who were engaged for this process. We present themes across community policing and alternate response strategies separately.

When relevant, the report elevates geographic or population-specific findings or differentiators.

All person and organization-level identifying information is omitted from the report to protect the anonymity of respondents as well as the community-based organizations that participated and led the community engagement initiative.

DESIGN PROCESS

In October 2024, The Intersect supported the planning, development, and execution of three co-design sessions alongside the eight community-based organizations selected for this initiative, the Mayor's Office of Chicago, Chicago Police Department, and Civic Consulting Alliance (CCA).

The co-design sessions were structured to support the co-creation of community engagement feedback questions used for the community engagement initiative, establish shared norms and values to guide community engagement, ground community-based organizations in current Mayor's Office of Chicago and Chicago Police Department efforts, establish shared talking points and process steps for planning and executing community engagement sessions, and offer role-playing and other activities to support session facilitators and note takers. Additionally, The Intersect led training sessions with community-based organizations to facilitate a shared understanding of how to record qualitative responses arising from the community engagement sessions and upload information into the data portal established for this project. The Intersect built and managed the infrastructure to support community-based organizations in executing the community engagement initiative. As needed, The Intersect offered one-on-one training, strategy, or problem-solving opportunities alongside community-based organizations.

Beginning in November 2024 through early February 2025, the eight community-based organizations selected for this initiative planned, coordinated, and implemented community engagement sessions in their communities. Community-based organizations had access to a suite of background and planning materials to support the execution of their community engagement sessions. An online portal was established to allow for community-based organizations to securely report and upload respondents' feedback.

Community-based organizations recruited community residents as well as program participants to participate in the community engagement sessions. Community-based organizations structured their sessions to support generative conversation around the questions that were established for the community engagement sessions. Sessions were structured around the group type or population engaged, number of people who were engaged for the session, and other factors. Typically, sessions were structured as round-table facilitated discussions, world cafe style dialogue sessions, or gallery walk sessions. Community based organizations had latitude to determine if their sessions were open to the public, but they were encouraged to hold at least one public session. Public sessions were listed on the Chicago Police Department website.

Community-based organizations determined the incentive structure for their engagement sessions. Some community-based organizations provided child care, food, transportation vouchers, gift cards, or cash incentives as part of their incentive structure for engaging community residents.

To support engagement across Chicagoland, two zoom-based community engagement sessions were implemented at the end of January 2025 facilitated by the Center for Conflict Resolution. A Chicago Northside community engagement session, facilitated by the Center for Conflict Resolution, was also planned and implemented. Finally, The Intersect built a corresponding citywide electronic survey leveraging the Chicago Police Department's existing ZenCity platform to enable greater participation of city residents in the community engagement process. The survey questions were identical to the questions asked during the community engagement sessions.

Community-based organizations also reviewed and edited this report for accuracy, clarity, and readability.

CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT | BY THE NUMBERS

Across all of the engagement mechanisms implemented for the community engagement initiative a total of 777 people across Chicago were engaged in the process of collecting feedback on community policing and alternate response strategies.[4]

Through the community engagement sessions hosted by the community-based organizations, CCR, and through the virtual zoom-based engagements a total of 531 people were engaged. There were a total of 246 completed electronic surveys. In total, the community engagement initiative hosted 29 sessions. 16 sessions were open to the public.

This chart reflects the distribution of community engagement sessions by region. More detail is provided

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[4] Community based organizations reported seeing a decrease in engagement at their sessions in January 2025.

in the appendix.

Regions	Number of Sessions	Number of Sessions Open to the Public
North	1	1
Northwest[5]	0	0
Central	1	0
West	9	3
South	7	2
Southwest	5	4
Far South	4	4
Citywide (zoom) - CPD with CCR	2	2
Total	29	16

Organizations participating in the community-based, organization-led community engagement sessions reported on the demographics of people attending their sessions. Individuals may have been identified as part of multiple demographic categories. **In the case of ten sessions, people who identified as youth and emerging adults attended sessions.** At least five sessions had members of the community who identified as non-English or low-English Proficient speakers. Five sessions were attended by community members who may have included people who identified as part of the immigrant community, youth and emerging adults, and others residing in the community in which the session was taking place. In four sessions, individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ attended the session.

Individuals who identified as community violence workers were in attendance in two sessions as were people who identified as being part of a religious community.

Persons with disabilities were reported to have attended one of the sessions as did individuals who identified as experiencing homelessness, public housing residents, and individuals who identified as victims of violence.

Organizations participating in the community-based, organization-led community engagement sessions

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[5] Scheduled Albany Park session was cancelled.

also reported on if attendees in their sessions regularly engaged with local police districts through CAPS, beat meetings or other methods of community engagement. **In the case of ten sessions, at least some of the residents who participated were thought to have regular engagement with their local police district.** In eight sessions, community-based organizations indicated that they were not sure if attendees had regular engagement with their local police districts. In seven sessions, community-based organizations reported that they believed that residents who attended their sessions did not have regular engagement with their local police districts.

A total of 246 electronic surveys were completed. Among people who completed the electronic survey, **45 percent of the completed responses came from people who did not** identify as being a youth or an emerging adult, LGBTQIA+, victim of crime and violence, person with a disability, non-English speaker, individual experiencing homelessness, or part of a religious community.[6] Among people who responded to the survey, 6.1 percent indicated that they identified as a youth or emerging adult, 12.2 percent indicated that they identified as LGBTQIA+. Nearly 20 percent of people who completed the electronic survey identified as being a victim of crime and violence.

Do you identify as being part of one or more of these groups? Select all that apply. If none, please mark none.
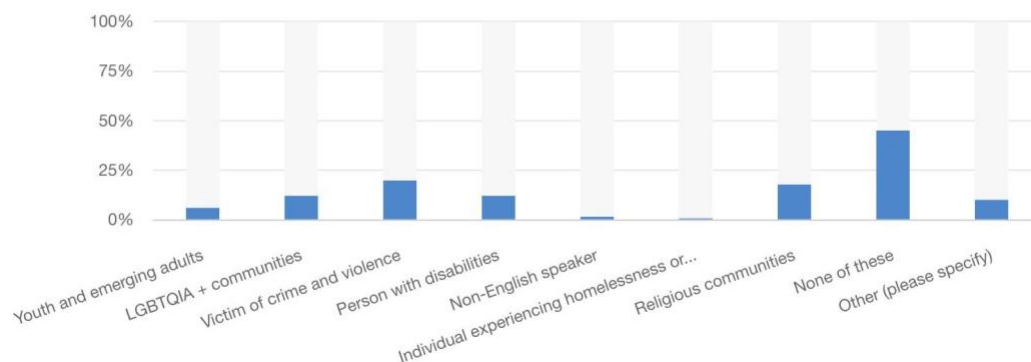
Among people who completed the survey, **38 percent indicated that they regularly engaged with their local police district through CAPS, beat meetings or other methods of community engagemen**t.

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[6] Persons completing the survey self-reported how they identified according to the categories available. Individuals had the option of identifying as belonging to multiple categories.

PERCEIVED SENSE OF SAFETY AMONG RESPONDENTS

Our findings from this community engagement initiative sourced mixed beliefs and perceptions relative to Chicagoans' sense of overall safety and the role of police in contributing to residents' sense of safety.

Some respondents expressed feeling safe in their neighborhood, some attributing these feelings to police presence, but more often attributing these feelings to an intrinsic sense of community cohesion and trust in neighbors, businesses, and community organizations. These community members pointed to their intentionality in engaging with other community members and institutions, and the availability of neighborhood resources or mutual aid as elements that contributed to community cohesion and feelings of safety.

Many respondents elevated connections between community cohesion and feelings of safety. For example, respondents cited a block club as key to fostering a sense of security - highlighting the importance of community engagement and mutual support in enhancing safety. Respondents who reported feeling safe often mentioned positive interactions and trust between neighbors, businesses, community institutions or organizations. Individuals who expressed feeling safe often indicated that they could "rely on their neighbor" for support and that formal or informal "neighborhood watches" contributed to a sense of safety. While outside of the scope of this report, there was an underlying suggestion by respondents throughout the community engagement initiative that addressing underlying social and economic issues within the community is vital to improving safety.

A significant swath of respondents expressed fear and a lack of overall safety in their community, citing gun violence, drug activity, carjackings, and a lack of police response as contributing factors to their feelings of lack of safety. The perceived level of safety varied greatly depending on individual experiences. Those who reported feeling unsafe often also described a lack of trust in the police and a disconnect between the police and the community. For some respondents, they perceived a lack of visible police presence in their communities as directly connected to issues of increased crime and a decreased sense of safety.

The role of the police in creating a sense of safety for some responders was not always straightforward. Some respondents reported that they believed that a greater police presence improved safety, acting as a deterrent to crime. Others reflected that the police are ineffective, unresponsive, or even contribute to community issues through aggressive tactics or racial profiling. Some respondents reported viewing police as not being there to make people feel safe, but rather to simply respond to incidents after the fact. Many participants described feeling unsafe due to a lack of visible patrols or slow response times when emergencies happen. Later in this report we will elevate these themes again within the context and desire by community respondents for actions and behaviors by police that they believe will prevent

crime, increase public safety, and align with a community policing mindset.

Young people, emerging adults, individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+, and non-English speakers most commonly expressed fear, lack of safety in their community or on public transportation, and concern relative to retaliation or hostility from peers or police. Several specific types of crime are mentioned repeatedly as sources of fear and concern for these population groups. These include gun violence, drug activity, burglaries, and incidents of harassment or assault. The frequency and nature of these concerns varied across individuals' experiences. Immigrant communities also expressed fear and concern for their safety which may be heightened due to increased negative attention on immigrant populations.

FINDINGS AND THEMES | COMMUNITY ENGAGED POLICING

In this section, we present findings and themes that emerged from the community engagement initiative relative to community-engaged policing. These findings are organized under these categories:

- Community Engaged Policing | Building Trust Through Service and Collaboration

- Fostering Trust, Respect, and Accountability: Values Shaping Community Engaged Policing Practices

- Putting Community First | Bringing Community Engaged Policing Strategies to Life

Community Engaged Policing | Building Trust Through Service and Collaboration

While some respondents discuss wanting more police in general in their communities, the vast majority of respondents emphasized the need for *better* policing consistent with the themes we elevate in this section. Feedback from community-based organizations and residents that participated in this initiative indicated that the term "community policing" may be off-putting. Instead, community-based organizations encouraged the use of the term "community-engaged policing" which we incorporate throughout this report.

Respondents equated better policing strategies to:

- increased officer visibility and approachability in communities;
- proactive police and community engagement and communication;
- greater situational awareness and emotional intelligence;
- reduction in implicit bias and stereotyping; and
- more efficient, effective, and consistent police responsiveness.

We describe these themes in greater detail in this section.

- ➢ A recurring theme throughout the community engagement initiative was respondents' desire for more *visible police presence*, not just reactive responses or visible police presence when emergencies occur.

  This theme emphasized the desire for police to be seen as approachable and helpful members of the community rather than an "outside force". Participants suggest increased foot patrols, bike patrols, and a greater presence of police on public transportation. Respondents also said that more officers interacting with community members and businesses could increase police visibility in communities. This also included suggestions for officers to make themselves appear more approachable in the community, perhaps, by not always dressing in full uniform. Repeatedly, respondents shared that officers who simply drive by neighborhoods or rarely get out of their patrol cars reduced officer visibility and trust that the police were available and visible to help.

- ➢ The desire for *proactive engagement* by police in communities and with community residents was a recurring theme. Many people shared that the goals of proactive police engagement should be centered around improving officer-community relations, increasing communication, and building trust between community members and the police.

  Many older adults who participated in the community engagement initiative reported that they felt like there has been an erosion of positive police presence and proactive engagement in communities. Respondents shared that in their youth "they knew officers by name" and could trust them to be present in the community.

  There was a general sense that proactive engagement of police in the community might include behaviors and actions such as relationship building with community residents and businesses; being friendlier with community members, engagement with youth in after-school activities, in-school activities dedicated to increasing youth engagement, or at the park; participation in community events like block club parties or non-profit engagements; increased cultural understanding; language accessibility; and general interaction and understanding community assets, available resources, needs, and concerns.

  Residents elevated value in engaging youth through community programs and initiatives to build positive relationships with law enforcement from a young age and address issues that disproportionately affect young people.

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Community members reported that outside of this engagement process, they often feel unheard. Residents desire more robust and varied community-to-police communication channels. Respondents emphasized the need for a clear feedback loop to ensure that community input informs and influences police strategies over time. Respondents emphasized the need for consistent efforts by police in active listening, learning, and becoming embedded with the communities being served as necessary to advance community engaged policing objectives. In the words of one respondent "this can't be 'us vs them' we have to engage together to address needs in our communities." There was a sense that current CAPS meetings, aldermanic meetings, and announcements or engagements through religious communities are insufficient means of supporting community engagement feedback loops.

➢ Many respondents described police officers as unfriendly, unapproachable, and unwilling to engage in meaningful communication with community residents. Respondents reflected that bolstering police *situational awareness and emotional intelligenc*e would go a long way toward advancing community-engaged policing strategies. Many respondents pointed to the need for officers to take more time to understand and assess situations before acting, being present and mindful of people and surroundings, responsive, and empathetic - with a goal of "talking with us and not at us" when interacting with residents. Respondents shared that overly aggressive or authoritarian mindsets, language, behaviors, and actions erode community-police trust and demonstrated a lack of emotional intelligence by police.

➢ A consistent theme elevated by community respondents throughout the community engagement initiative was anxiety, frustration, and anger relative to patterns of policing behavior that they associated with *systemic inequity, implicit bias, and stereotyping*. Several respondents raised concerns about the perception of police authority and bias in policing, in the words of one person " Stop judging a book by its cover – specifically related to race." Youth and young adults engaged in the community engagement initiative raised these concerns frequently and used phrases like "the police are racist" or elevated that they feel like the police "target them." Youth and emerging adults frequently stated that they wanted to see law enforcement use "less prejudice and racist language or using stereotypical comments or assumptions." This was also true in the case of people who identified as LGBTQIA+. One person reflected that the "police are softer in other neighborhoods than in Black ones. Some police are just getting hired for a paycheck and benefits [rather] than caring for communities. Police need to be moved around to get to know the people. Everything is not on the police, but they need to know how to respect people."

Individuals who identified as homeless or unhoused pointed to instances where they had been stereotyped and profiled by the police depending upon the neighborhood in which they resided in. In

the words of one individual who identified as homeless "police have different attitudes in different neighborhoods. My attitude toward police now is different because I have been searched by police or been pulled over when I was living in the South Side. Up North it doesn't happen." In some instances, people experiencing homelessness feel that they had been treated poorly by the police when they were trying to get assistance. Respondents also elevated concerns and responses by police to individuals with mental health issues.

Among people who identify as immigrants, they also reflected patterns of racial or ethnic profiling. In the words of one individual "When it comes to being in my community, a heavily Latino/immigrant community, when you see police, you want to walk the other way. My dad has gotten profiled by the police multiple times. I don't feel safe around police, I don't think they make my community safer. They're responding to a situation, you don't know what's going on, there's a ton of fear."

➢ Many respondents raised concerns about and a need to address *slow response times, ineffective interventions, and a general lack of responsiveness* to calls for service in their community. Many residents felt that the police did not take their concerns or calls seriously. For many community residents, this has eroded their trust in the police over time. Respondents elevated the need to triage emergencies when possible, directing attention and resources to emergencies that may involve violence or physical harm to people first. Many respondents said that more proactive engagement by officers in communities may help prevent or deter crime as well as support the most appropriate intervention by police when they may be called to a situation. Alternatively, some respondents talked about the ineffective nature of "swarming" an emergency - showing up with multiple squad cars. For some respondents, these response patterns were interpreted as "a theater of intimidation," rather than a necessary or proportionate response to the situation.

Fostering Trust, Respect, and Accountability: Values Shaping Community Engaged Policing Practices

Across the community engagement initiative, respondents consistently elevated a set of values and principles that they associated with community-engaged policing strategies. These values included:

Accountability: Respondents universally wanted to see a range of actions and measures taken to increase police accountability to the communities that they serve which included information sharing and feedback loops.

Communication: There is a desire by many community members engaged for this project to increase the

frequency and refine or bolster the channels leveraged to communicate on a range of Chicago Police Department efforts.

Empathy: Respondents want the Chicago Police Department to see community members as human beings and to be committed to responding in ways that foster mutual understanding, support to address needs, and responsiveness to emergencies.

Respect: Respondents repeatedly elevate the need for greater respect from law enforcement in communities and a need to advance efforts to promote shared respect.

Responsiveness: A recurring theme throughout the community engagement process was the lack of responsiveness by the Chicago Police Department. Respondents want to see their calls for support answered in a timely manner and with the right level of support.

Transparency: Community members want to see an open and honest brokerage of content and decision-making by CPD. There is also a desire by community members for disclosures of information, policies, data, and procedures to help community members make more informed decisions.

Trust: There is a desire across community members to build open community-to-police relationships and to foster a sense of shared goodwill, confidence, reliability, and sense of hope.

Putting Community First | Bringing Community-Engaged Policing Strategies to Life

Feedback through our community engagement initiative indicated that advancing community-engaged policing at all levels of the Chicago Police Department could be furthered through the actions we describe in this section.

First, respondents' feedback indicated that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to community-engaged policing may not be feasible or effective - particularly given the variability of Chicago neighborhoods, needs, and people. Based on feedback from respondents, successful policing strategies need to adapt to the specific contexts and needs of each community relative to community composition, culture and languages spoken, concentration of schools, religious communities, public transportation, community needs, and other factors. This was particularly true for respondents who identified as young adults or emerging adults. Feedback from the community engagement initiative indicated that these groups seek tailored approaches and ongoing engagement. Given the relatively low engagement with individuals who identified as homeless, unhoused, or individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ in this initiative, there also may be value in tailored community approaches to community-engaged policing strategies relative

to these residents.

Community feedback also emphasized the value of a holistic approach to improving police-to-community relations. According to respondents, advancing community-engaged policing is not merely about changing individual officer behavior, which is critically important, but also addressing systemic issues impacting police culture, leadership, governance, and the longstanding relationship between law enforcement and the community.

Finally, respondents stated that consistency is also critical relative to some aspects of how to operationalize community engaged policing practices. For example, respondents want to see consistent and similar structures for community engagement, transparency and accountability relative to information, education, and feedback loops, similar or aligned programming, and language accessibility.

Redefine the Role of the Chicago Police Department and Officers' Activities

Consistent with the values and ideas elevated by respondents in this report, there are specific calls by community members for the Chicago Police Department to redefine its role and goals writ large. Respondents frequently stated that they would like to see the Chicago Police Department advance goals aligned with the Department operating as a co-leader with communities in advancing the safety and wellbeing of Chicago residents. This may be embodied in the call for every officer to be a "community policing" officer and the feedback from the community engagement initiative suggests that respondents want to see this vision applied to the whole of CPD.

Consistent with a redefinition of CPD's goals, respondents elevated specific types of activities that they would like to see from officers in communities that align with a redefinition of CPD goals. Broadly, respondents want to see CPD officers engaging with residents in non-emergency settings. Activities like participation in school, social, nonprofit, and religious events, participation in farmers' markets or in community-wide events, greater visibility of officers on foot and on bike patrols, and officer awareness of businesses and business needs were all elevated. Some respondents stated that they want to see more education by law enforcement on how to work with police to build trust over time. A few respondents said that maintaining consistency in officer assignments within a patrol area ("beat integrity") was important and they had seen this practice be successful in their community. The suggestion was made to expand this approach, ensuring that the same officer and supervisor are assigned to the same area for at least 50% of the time.

Leadership

Respondents expressed concerns regarding their perception of the negative impact of police leadership on community relations and the desire to advance a community-and-police-co-designed leadership model for CPD in the future.

Specifically, some respondents voiced criticism about the leadership of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). Some respondents perceived that FOP leadership prioritized its own interests above the needs of the community. Some respondents also raised frustrations with the current collective bargaining contract, which was perceived as prioritizing police protection over community needs. The suggestion was to re-evaluate the contract regularly to ensure it aligns with CPD's stated goals and interests to advance community-engaged policing strategies.

Finally, there is a sense among some respondents that engaging in a community co-design process to explore leadership models anchored in the community could be fruitful. Respondents suggested that there may be a range of ways to design CPD leadership and accountability structures that would be co-led by CPD and community members or community hubs.

Policies and Procedures

A recurring theme from the community engagement initiative involved re-evaluating operational procedures to reduce excessive shows of force and improve efficiency across the Chicago Police Department. Respondents suggested that a greater emphasis on community engagement and proactive problem-solving was needed and respondents reflected that problem-solving directives need to be codified into policies and procedures. Moreover, respondents elevated the need to codify policies and procedures across several domains including how to respond to domestic violence, mental or behavioral health crises, and the need to weave trauma-informed and human-centered design elements into policy and procedure.

Training

Many respondents in our community engagement initiative elevated the need for and value of training for officers across the Chicago Police Department. There was a sense among many respondents that they understand that officers are overworked and likely need opportunities in group settings among peers and individually to reflect, decompress, learn, build skills sets, and have space to address or reflect on challenging situations. Respondents elevated that training should not be "one and done" but rather occur at consistent and frequent intervals. Respondents said that these specific training and learning

opportunities could be beneficial:

- **_De-escalation techniques and use of force_**: Throughout the community engagement initiative, respondents share many incidents where officers escalated situations rather than de-escalated them. Respondents elevated that de-escalation techniques consistent with supporting situational awareness, compassion, and emotional intelligence of officers would be valuable. Additionally, there was a consistent call by residents for officers to have training on use of force and alternate strategies for responding to calls for help.

- **_Cultural, community, and language sensitivity:_** Residents frequently highlighted the need for officers to be more culturally sensitive and understanding of diverse community needs, assets, and challenges. For many respondents, understanding diverse cultural norms and perspectives was deemed essential for building trust, supporting authentic community engagement, and avoiding misunderstandings in communities. Many respondents also pointed to the need to increase and improve the availability of multilingual officers.

- **_Mental and behavioral health awareness and appropriate responses:_** Many respondents elevate a lack of training in engaging, empathizing, and addressing the needs or concerns of individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health issues. Respondents reflected that sometimes police officers may not be the most appropriate people to support in a mental or behavioral health crisis, however, additional training in responding to immediate needs and understanding the available resources in communities when officers encounter an individual experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis would be beneficial.

- **_Trauma-informed training:_** Respondents repeatedly elevated the importance of police officers having access to and participating in trauma-informed training. This came up in the context of domestic violence situations, responding to gun violence, and addressing mental or behavioral health calls. There was also an awareness that officers may also experience and carry trauma as a result of the situations or calls that they have responded to. Respondents cited the need for frequent opportunities for officers to receive peer and individual support to address vicarious trauma and mental health challenges.

Accountability and Transparency

A consistent thread in our community engagement initiative was the need for greater and more consistent accountability and transparency in community-to-police interactions and Chicago Police Department decisions and actions. Residents elevated that current engagement and information sharing channels are insufficient. In particular, residents emphasized that accountability and transparency included the need for:

- Consistent feedback loops to ensure that community input informs and influences police strategies on an ongoing basis. Residents want to see community engagement and feedback loops established as a core element of how the Chicago Police Department functions and is governed. Residents elevated the need for feedback loops to be established at the District level with liaisons and access to all ranks and levels of the Chicago Police Department. This would include adequate staffing, support from leadership, resources, and accountability.
- Greater transparency regarding officer violations. This included the desire for publicly available information on officer disciplinary actions and misconduct.
- Consistently updated and reported statistics on how crimes were resolved. This included a desire for information on types of crimes, arrest rates, court outcomes, and case closures. Residents elevated that this provides a more comprehensive view of police effectiveness.
- Greater transparency in the decision-making processes and procedures of the Chicago Police Department.

Respondents had a lot of ideas about the strategies and tactics that could support these themes:

- ***Improved and consistent community engagement and information sharing through multiple channels:*** Respondents elevated interest in a dedicated segment on a local TV station, social media, text updates or alerts, updated and accessible website content in a variety of languages, newsletters in multiple languages, in-person and virtual briefings, and community engagement to address specific topics, gather feedback, or report out on progress. Respondents also elevated the need to leverage and work alongside community groups, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations to disseminate information. Respondents elevated a need to reach out beyond individuals who regularly participate in CAPS meetings or have frequent interactions with officers to support stronger and more comprehensive community engagement. Residents elevated the importance of consistent community engagement and community problem-solving.

- ***Website redesign, improved data presentation, and resources:*** The existing Chicago Police Department website was criticized by respondents for its poor user-friendliness and lack of visual appeal. The suggestion by respondents was to redesign it, incorporating more graphic elements to, for example, make crime data more accessible and understandable. According to respondents, the current website format is seen as a "data dump" – overwhelming and difficult to navigate. The idea of community-calculated crime information presented visually was also suggested. Additionally, respondents felt like the website could be made more user-friendly by engaging community members to help identify and shape the type of content, user interfaces, data visuals, processes and procedures, announcements, and other elements. Respondents also elevated the value in the Chicago Police Department's website by linking to or hosting district-level fact sheets with community resources and linking to other resources across Chicago. A readily accessible resource list, particularly focusing on mental health services, was elevated several times by respondents.

- ***Regular "State of the City" or District Reports:*** Respondents recommended the implementation of quarterly "State of the City" reports or district reports. These reports might offer more qualitative information about events in the community, complementing the quantitative crime data presented on the website, and could be a way to codify and institutionalize ongoing community engagement efforts. According to respondents, distribution methods should include digital and print media as well as opportunities for face-to-face presentations.

FINDINGS AND THEMES | ALTERNATE RESPONSE

In this section, we present findings and themes emerging from the community engagement initiative relative to alternate response strategies. For this part of the community engagement initiative, community-based organizations and the electronic survey gathered perspectives and insight from residents relative to who they would want to respond or manage a situation - based on a few examples of community calls and wellness needs.

Taken together, it is clear that residents have mixed feelings relative to police and non-police involvement in the scenarios that were presented to them. Many of the responses from residents in this section rely on or are contingent upon efforts by the Chicago Police Department to operationalize elements of community-engaged policing as described in this report. Particularly when there is a threat

of violence or when there is concern that a situation may turn violent, respondents often elevated the need for a combination of police and non-police responders.

Respondents consistently raise the value in triaging calls, leveraging a combination of trained professionals to respond to community needs, and resourcing and deploying automated or app-based tools to efficiently resolve issues.

Underlying these recommendations, respondents suggest the need for additional community education relative to 911, 311, and 211 systems. Additionally, more resources, triaging guides and protocols, solution decision trees, and procedures for deploying the right mix of police and non-police responders is needed. Finally, respondents suggested the value of aligning these systems more seamlessly for the user over time. Respondents suggested that they believe all dispatchers should be responsible for determining the appropriate response based on the nature of the call, being equipped to respond to calls in multiple languages, and having access to and understanding available community support and resources.

Wellbeing checks and missing persons

Community feedback as it relates to calls for wellbeing checks and missing persons, underscored that wellbeing checks and missing persons calls often involve individuals facing mental health crises. Responding solely with police officers isn't always the best or safest approach according to many respondents. While most respondents favored a combined or non-police-first response, some participants believed that the police should always respond to missing persons calls due to their investigative role and knowledge of how to gather information and resolve crisis situations.

While a mental health professional is generally preferred by many respondents when it comes to well-being checks and missing persons, respondents acknowledged that the ideal response depends on the specific situation. Safety considerations may require police to be present even when a mental health professional is also involved.

Respondents said that an effective and humane response would involve collaboration between police and mental health professionals, with a system in place to determine the optimal response based on each situation's unique needs. A matrixed system for determining the best response based on the specifics of each situation was suggested which may require continuing to resource and support call triaging, training of 911, 311 and 211 responders and dispatchers, and ongoing close coordination with the Chicago Police Department and other citywide resources.

A central theme from community members was the need for mental health expertise in responding to wellbeing checks and missing persons calls - with a recognition that police responders often do not have this level or type of training. It's argued by some responders that the presence of police can escalate

situations, particularly when dealing with individuals experiencing mental health crises. Training in de-escalation and mental health awareness is crucial for all responders and was elevated throughout the community engagement initiative.

Traffic hazard/assistance/property damage (not injury related)

Respondents stated that for calls related to traffic hazard/assistance/property damage (not injury-related), it would be ideal for a combination of police and non-police professionals to be on the scene. Specifically, some feedback from respondents indicates that there may be inefficiencies in using sworn police officers for non-injury traffic-related issues.

Feedback from community members suggested that utilizing specialized traffic management teams, app-based reporting, or community-based solutions could free up police resources for higher-priority incidents and resolve the call for service. Some respondents offered comparisons with international policing models in which trained and sworn police officers are not the first to respond to a traffic hazard or a traffic assistance matter. Respondents elevated that if there are disputes during a traffic hazard, it would be helpful to have a trained officer respond.

As it relates to property damage, there was also a sense that a combination of police and non-police personnel would be valuable. Specifically, respondents noted that if an act of property damage is going on at the time that a professional arrives on the scene it would be valuable for social workers, and mental, or behavioral health professionals to be present to de-escalate a situation. If the property damage has already occurred and the perpetrator is no longer present, trained professionals who can assess the damage, issue a police report for insurance purposes, and file other paperwork would be valuable. In these instances, these professionals may not need to be sworn police officers but rather other professionals who can manage administrative procedures and police filing.

Noise violations, loitering, disputes without the threat of violence, or trespassing

Based on feedback from the community engagement initiative, not everyone agrees on the ideal mixture of police and non-police involvement to address calls that include noise violations, loitering, and disputes without the threat of violence or trespassing. While some respondents believed police should only be involved when there's a serious threat, others prefer a combination of police and other responders to de-escalate situations and prevent violence in the first place when these calls for service are initiated.

Many respondents elevated that for noise violations, loitering, disputes without the threat of violence, or trespassing it would be good for a combination of police and non-police professionals to be on the scene in case it is an individual has a mental or behavioral health issue, or the person is someone to is unhoused. Respondents stated that non-police professionals may be better able to empathize and

provide resources and support to individuals in these cases.

Many people had mixed feelings about the right combination of police and non-police present - particularly if calls turn violent or if arguments escalate after professionals are deployed or on the scene.

From a broad standpoint, respondents advocated for a more nuanced approach to deploying community support that considers the specific nature of each call and employs appropriate responders, potentially including trained mediators, social workers, or other professionals, rather than relying solely on police intervention in every instance. The goals of a more unified alternate response system that has more nuance and triaging support would be to improve efficiency, de-escalate conflicts, and address underlying issues more effectively.

NEXT STEPS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The themes from the community engagement feedback presented in this report represent critical inputs in plans to advance community-engaged policing and alternate response strategies in Chicago. This report is one of several inputs into the overarching strategic and implementation plans that the Mayor's Office of Chicago and Chicago Police Departments are developing to advance critical public safety initiatives.

Chicago residents feel strongly that the city should be a place where people feel safe, welcomed, and their wellbeing is addressed in holistic, tailored, and consistent ways. The Chicago Police Department and the Mayor's Office of Chicago have important roles to play in advancing these goals. Many residents across the community engagement initiative reiterated that they appreciated being engaged in this effort and are eager to see how their feedback will be used to advance concrete policy and practice changes.

Through this initiative we heard first-hand that residents want to see policing practices that include proactive, visible, and timely engagement by law enforcement in their communities. Residents want to build trusting relationships with law enforcement that are free from bias and stereotyping. Residents hope to be engaged with care and empathy when there are calls for help. We also heard first-hand that there are a range of actions that the Chicago Police Department can take to advance toward these goals including ongoing community engagement, continuous officer training, and greater and more transparent accountability.

Residents have mixed feelings about police and non-police interventions when asked about a range of different calls for service. Residents recognize value in triaging calls for service, reducing silos across law enforcement and other trained professionals, and adapting response teams to meet the needs of

Chicago residents. More engagement with community members based on the ideas and responses we gleaned from this effort may be beneficial to supporting ongoing education about current efforts underway, planning for future alternate response strategies, and operationalization.

This initiative created an opportunity to pilot a community engagement initiative that leveraged Chicago's robust non-profit community-based organizations in the pursuit of informing public safety approaches and services supporting the wellbeing of all Chicagoans. Through the community engagement process, we learned a great deal about the importance of engaging Chicago nonprofit organizations and residents in a collaborative feedback process.

The development of this community engagement initiative highlighted the value of Chicago's varied nonprofit sector in supporting community engagement as part of a virtuous feedback process. The process of cultivating and supporting a cohort of community-based organizations to support a community engagement feedback process also created a unique opportunity to test a model for potential expansion and replication across the city. Moreover, we saw first-hand the value of community-based organizations working together to collect community resident feedback. We also witnessed these organizations' ongoing enthusiasm and willingness to cultivate a shared sense of accountability for results and support the implementation of policies and practices to advance public safety and the well-being of all Chicagoans.

Resident engagement and feedback remain vital to continue to shape and support the implementation of Chicago's public services. Based on this pilot effort, ongoing efforts to institutionalize community feedback processes should consider:

- Ensuring that there are sufficient resources, staffing, and infrastructure to support the development and deployment of community engagement initiatives including but not limited to supporting an ecosystem of community-based institutions;
- Establishing clear objectives and expectations for engaging with residents through community engagement initiatives on behalf of or alongside the Mayor's Office of Chicago and Chicago Police Department;
- Establishing clear expectations relative to geographic distribution and population considerations, scope, and scale of community engagement initiatives;
- Engagement with and expanding the number, scope, and geographic distribution of "trusted or credible messengers" such as nonprofit organizations and other community-based institutions to support community engagement and feedback processes over time; and
- Institutionalizing community engagement processes in policies and procedures, workflows, and workforce allocation considerations.

Particularly through the community-based organization-led sessions, a slight majority of respondents were thought to be people who had some involvement with the Chicago Police Department through CAPS meetings or other district level engagements or relationships. A future focus of community engagement efforts should be to continue to engage a broader swath of individuals who do not have as much interaction with CPD. Additionally, the majority of engagements for this initiative happened on the west and south sides of the city. Efforts should be made to engage more north, northwest, and far south side residents in the future.

The community engagement initiative was able to engage a fair number of youth or emerging adults in the process. Fewer people who identified as homeless or unhoused, people with disabilities, non-English speakers, and people who identify as LGBTQIA+ were engaged. A potential future focus for community engagement efforts may be to focus engagement with those communities or individuals who identify in these demographic groups.

As the Chicago Police Department and the Mayor's Office of Chicago leverage the findings from this community engagement initiative to build, refine, and implement policies and practices, we believe ongoing community engagement and the establishment of feedback loops is valuable to build community trust, refine strategic priorities and implementation plans over time, and support shared accountability.

APPENDIX | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE | QUESTIONS

During the co-design sessions that took place on October 1-2, 2024 community-based organizations identified and refined a set of questions for their community engagement sessions. Every community engagement session gathered feedback on these questions. Community-based organizations had the latitude to ask additional questions

Policing | Priority Questions

Background: Superintendent Snelling's vision is that "every officer is a community policing officer." This goal also advances a requirement of the 2019 Consent Decree as well as 2024 goals shared with CCPSA for CPD to adopt a comprehensive approach to policing with the community, so that developing relationships and problem-solving with residents and local businesses is core to the operations of the entire Department and to the expectations for every officer. These questions are focused on getting your feedback on current interactions with the police and what actions or behaviors that you want to see more or less of from police in your community.

General Perceptions
1. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood/community, why or why not? What role does the police play in your sense of safety or not?

Policing Practices | Priority Questions
1. How would you describe **police presence and interaction** with residents in your community? Is there too much, too little, not enough? Why?
2. What behaviors and actions **do you want to see more of out of police** in your neighborhood? Is this different if police are responding to a call or other enforcement activity? How so?
3. What behaviors or actions **do you want to see less of out of police** in your neighborhood? Is this different if police are responding to a call or other enforcement activity? How so?
4. What **other ideas would you like to see implemented** in your community to ensure that police are approachable, easy to communicate with, and interactions between police and community residents are positive?

Alternate Response | Priority Questions

Background: The City is exploring opportunities for non-police professionals to respond to some specific types of non-violent 911 calls in the future, in order to ensure access to a responsible and seamless emergency service system that provides all with relevant and effective assistance. Non-police professionals include mental health professionals, trained mediators, or trained social services professionals like case managers / social workers. These non-police response options do not exist now in Chicago, and would need to be developed to exist in the future (2026 and beyond). The types of calls for which the City is interested in hearing your perspectives are:

- *wellbeing checks*
- *missing person*
- *traffic hazard/assistance/property damage*
- *noise violations*
- *loitering*
- *trespassing*
- *disputes without the threat of violence*

1. When you call 911 for **wellbeing checks and missing persons** - who do you think is best to respond? And why?
   a. Only police officers? or
   b. Only non-police professionals (like mental health professionals, trained mediators, or trained social services professionals like case managers / social workers)? Or
   c. A combination of police and non-police professionals

2. When you call 911 for **traffic hazard/assistance/property damage (not injury related)** - who do you think is best to respond? And why?
   a. Only police officers? or
   b. Non-police professionals (like mental health professionals, trained mediators, or trained social services professionals like case managers / social workers)? Or
   c. A combination of police and non-police professionals

3. When you call 911 for **noise violations, loitering, disputes without the threat of violence, or trespassing** - who do you think is best to respond? And why?
   a. Only police officers? or
   b. Non-police professionals (like mental health professionals, trained mediators, or trained social services professionals like case managers / social workers)? Or
   c. A combination of police and non-police professionals

Closing Questions

Background: These questions are intended to help gather more information about police accountability, transparency, community involvement, and ongoing efforts to build trust in the community.

1. What **types of information** would you like to see the police share with residents to improve transparency? How would you like them to share this information?
2. What **ideas do you have to foster better relationships and trust** between law enforcement and the community?
3. What would help you get or stay more involved?

APPENDIX | DETAIL ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

November-December 2024

Date	Time	CBO	Location	Address	Open to public	CPD District	Community area
Nov. 2	9:00-12:00	El Valor	El Valor's Main Office	1850 W 21st St	No	012	Lower West Side
Nov. 2	10:00-11:30	Bright Star	TURN Center	4444 S Evans Ave	No	002	Grand Boulevard
Nov. 6	1:00-3:00	Brave Space Alliance	Brave Space Alliance Office	1515 E 52nd Pl 3FL	Yes	002	Hyde Park
Nov. 6	3:30-5:30	BUILD Inc.	BUILD	5100 W Harrison St	No	015	Austin
Nov. 6	5:30-7:30	Target Area	Target Area Main Office	1542 W 79th St	Yes	006	Auburn Gresham
Nov. 12	6:00-8:00	Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community	Pui Tak Center	2216 S. Wentworth Ave	No	009	Chinatown
Nov. 13	12:00-1:30	YWCA	StreetWise	2009 S State St	No	001	Near South Side
Nov. 15	12:00-2:00	El Valor	El Valor's Main Office	1850 W 21st St	No	012	Lower West Side
Nov. 15	2:30-4:00	YWCA	Williams Park Fieldhouse	2850 S State St	No	001	Douglas
Nov. 18	6:00-7:30	The Resurrection Project	San Oscar Romero	4551 S Wood St	Yes	009	New City
Nov. 22	10:30-12:00	YWCA	UCAN	3605 W. Fillmore	No	011	North Lawndale
Dec. 3	6:00-7:30	The Resurrection Project	Bishop Shepard Little Memorial Center	5230 S Halsted St	Yes	009	New City
Dec. 3	5:30-7:00	Target Area	Target Area Main Office	1542 W 79th St	Yes	006	Auburn Gresham
Dec. 6	8:00-3:00	El Valor	El Valors Reyes Center	1951 W 19th St	No	012	Lower West Side
Dec. 9	6:00-8:30	Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community	Mid-America Restaurant Assoc.	3500 S Morgan St	Yes	009	Bridgeport
Dec. 10	6:00-7:30	BUILD	BUILD	5100 W Harrison St	Yes	015	Austin
Dec. 11	1:00-3:00	Brave Space Alliance	Brave Space Alliance Office	1515 E 52nd PL	No	002	Hyde Park
Dec. 17	10:00-11:30	Bright Star	Bright Star Church	735 E 44th St.	Yes	002	Grand Boulevard

January-February 2025

• Date	Time	CBO	Location	Address	Open to public	District	Community area
Jan. 11	9:00-12:00	El Valor	El Valor Admin. Building	1924 W 21st St	No	012	Lower West Side
Jan. 13	6:00-7:30	Bright Star	Zoom	Zoom	No	-	-
Jan. 15	1:00-3:00	Brave Space Alliance	Brave Space Alliance Office	1515 E 52nd Pl 3FL	No	002	Hyde Park
Jan. 22	6:00-8:00	BUILD	Humboldt Park Field House	1440 N. Humboldt Blvd	Yes	014	Humboldt Park
Jan. 23	6:00-7:30	The Resurrection Project	Instituto De Progreso Latino	2520 S Western Ave	Yes	010	Lower West Side
Jan. 23	5:30-7:30	Target Area	Target Area Main Office	1542 W 79th St	Yes	006	Auburn Gresham
Jan. 28	5:30-7:30	Target Area	Olive Harvey College	10001 S Woodlawn Ave	Yes	005	Pullman
Jan. 25	1:00-3:30	Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community	Pui Tak Center	2216 S Wentworth Ave	Yes	009	Chinatown