

June 13, 2020

Dear City Council of Culver City:

Thank you for creating the space in your Monday, June 15 special meeting to address how to #DefendBlackLives in Culver City. Echoing calls from Black-led groups like the [Movement for Black Lives](#), we have two fundamental demands: #DefundPolice and assert community control. The funding issue is most urgent, given the current budget process, while the second can be set in motion now but will require, and can allow, more time. These are demands for structural change in the function and governance of policing in Culver City.

You have a crucial opportunity to listen to voices that have long been ignored by most City leaders. These are the voices of Black and other people of color who have testified, again and again, to experiences of racial profiling and police harassment, to fear of harm at the hands of police, to a continuing sense of exclusion and disrespect. Our City has never confronted, let alone overcome, the [legacy of racism](#) that stretches from a whites-only founding through official support for racially exclusive covenants to operation as a sundown town enforced by the PD to the hiring of one of Rodney King's police attackers to today's gross racial disparities in who bears the brunt of policing.

We reject the repeated pattern in which the response to such points is not just a refusal to listen and acknowledge but also a turn to unflinching, unqualified support for the CCPD exactly as it is, and to self-congratulatory exceptionalism that insists that none of the problems that pervade policing in our country apply here, despite the ample evidence to the contrary. Similarly, while we applaud diversity among CCPD personnel, the notion, repeatedly invoked, that such diversity immunizes the PD against any problems of racially biased policing, and in particular any issues of anti-Blackness, reflects a fundamental confusion about the nature of structural racism. Unfortunately, even in the midst of the current uprising, statements from the [Police Chief](#) and from several [former Mayors](#) have continued the old patterns. It is not enough to acknowledge the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and then pivot to a celebration of the status quo in Culver City. To the contrary, it is further proof of the deep need for immediate, decisive structural change.

More specifically, we call on the Council to

1) #DefundPolice: In this budget cycle, the City Council should remove at least an additional \$7.65 million from the currently [proposed \\$45 million CCPD budget](#) and reallocate these funds to meeting community needs in ways outside PD control.

Such a reallocation would do two things: First, \$5.65 million would reverse the proposed budget's current insulation of the PD from the brunt of the planned 17.4% cut in General Fund appropriations brought on by the pandemic fiscal crisis; this would bring the PD cuts into parity with the overall budget. Second, an additional \$2 million would reduce PD funding by a further

5%, modestly shrinking its overall budget share. Even so, the PD would still receive 31% of General Fund appropriations, far more than any department. This total PD budget of \$37.3 million would remain \$4 million above its \$33 million inflation-adjusted level of [ten years ago](#). In other words, our proposed minimum change would roll back some, but not all, of the growth in police spending over the last decade. Much more will be needed after this budget cycle.

These reductions should include both reallocation of some existing unsworn operations to other departments and also cutbacks in reliance on sworn officers for functions better performed outside the rubric of law enforcement. San Francisco [just decided](#) to shift its police away from front-line response to calls about mental health, unhoused people, school discipline and neighbor disputes. Culver City currently has an officer-to-population ratio more than [50% larger](#) than the national average for similarly sized cities and also than neighboring cities, except Beverly Hills.

Possible destinations for new investment with these dollars include fully funding the City's recently adopted My Brother's Keeper [action plan](#) (except those components operated through the PD), expanding the City's currently paltry \$1 million budget for [senior & other social services through PRCS](#), and assisting CCUSD in closing its projected [\\$6 million 2020-21 budget deficit](#).

2) Establish community control: We reiterate our [prior demands](#) that the City commit to reimagining its approach to public safety through the General Plan process and by establishing a robust, independent commission with jurisdiction over the CCPD and public safety more broadly. In both cases, it is essential to get away from thinking of policing problems primarily as matters of individualized discipline of "bad apples." Instead, we must think about approaches to public safety that do not rely on law enforcement and about how policing itself can endanger public safety. Good information is essential to good oversight, and so we also call for the Council to direct the PD to immediately implement the reporting standards of the [California Racial & Identity Profiling Act](#), something it thus far has been delaying as long as legally possible.

We urge you to respond boldly to this moment of crisis by enacting structural changes that break sharply from the old patterns that brought us to this point, both as a country and as a city.

Sincerely,

Culver City Action Network (CCAN)