

PUBLIC SAFETY FIRST COALITION

May 31, 2017

Hon. Steve Adler and the Austin City Council
City Hall
Austin, Texas 78767-1088

Dear Mayor Adler and Council Members:

As neighborhood leaders representing each council district, we are writing to urge you to make our community's public safety a priority.

According to numerous taxpayer-funded studies, the Austin Police Department is significantly understaffed and unable to effectively patrol our neighborhoods.

The latest study, conducted by the Matrix Consulting Group (Matrix), includes several troubling conclusions. When looking at community policing time, the Austin Police Department's percentage of time spent engaging the community is about 22–23 percent. That is well below San Antonio's 36 percent and Fort Worth's 30 percent. The national average ranges between 35–50 percent for officers to be involved in community policing – actually patrolling their communities.

In testimony before the city council last year, Dr. Richard Brady of Matrix said that the Austin Police Department had the lowest percentage of community engagement time he had ever seen and that many officers have essentially no time for community policing. Dr. Brady recommended that Austin add more than a hundred civilian and sworn positions. Additional patrol officers will help us reach the 35 percent community engagement goal. The Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities also recommended the 35 percent community engagement goal to create stronger relationships between the police and the neighborhoods they serve.

Last year the city took a small step by approving 12 new police patrol positions. **However, according to the city manager's FY 2018 financial forecast presented last month, these positions are not funded.**

Priorities must change at City Hall. Austin has fallen behind on both transportation and affordable housing. We can't let public safety turn into another issue where our elected leaders wake up and realizes that we should have acted sooner.

Please follow the advice of the experts you have hired and immediately direct the city manager to develop a plan to implement the Matrix recommendations over the next three years. We urge you to do the right thing and make public safety a priority – put safety first -- and allocate adequate funding for the needed officers.

We are counting on you to make the right decision and fund public safety first.

Respectfully,

District 1

- Clifton Van Dyke, Kealing Neighborhood Association
- Cathy DeYoung, University Hills Neighborhood

District 2

- Delwin Goss, Montopolis Community Alliance, Citizen Led Austin Safety Partnership (CLASP)

District 3

- Linda Yeats, East Riverside/Oltorf Neighborhood Planning Area

District 4

- Rachel Pry, Heritage Hills - Woodbridge Neighborhood Association, Restore Austin
- Molly Matthews, Heritage Hills - Woodbridge Neighborhood Association, D4 Homeless Initiative

District 5

- Joan Owens, Southwood Neighborhood Association
- Travis Wesley, Bauerle Ranch, Citizen Led Austin Safety Partnership (CLASP)

District 6

- Lauren Churchin, River Place Neighborhood

District 7

- Laura DiCarlo, Allandale Neighborhood Association, Citizen Led Austin Safety Partnership (CLASP)

District 8

- Pam Rogers, Maple Run Neighborhood Association
- Karen Hibpshman, Circle C Homeowners Association

District 9

- Denis Foley, Travis Heights Neighborhood

District 10

- Dr. Parker Blevins, Northwest Austin Civic Association, Shadyrock Drive Crimewatch Captain
- Cuatro Groos, Northwest Hills Neighborhood Association
- Hon. Ray Marshall, Great Hills Neighborhood