



Restoring community safety is fundamental to realizing the Promise of Denver – and it is closely tied to our education, economic development, housing, and health care strategies because safety is integrally linked to opportunity, stability and health. Creating a safer Denver will require thoughtful, nuanced policies and comprehensive approaches. But more importantly, it will **require the leadership, commitment, and persistence to build trust.**

The stability and safety of our neighborhoods have been pushed to their limits in recent years by historic challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation and economic uncertainty, massive influx of highly addictive and deadly drugs - particularly fentanyl - and unprecedented tensions between law enforcement and community, fueled by racial disparities and social unrest. As a result, violent and property crimes have increased significantly in Denver and across the nation. Emotions are running high, and rightly so, as Denverites of all backgrounds, approaching this issue from many different perspectives, are wrestling with how to restore a shared sense of community safety that will enable all parts of Denver to thrive.

I believe that the public has been given a false choice on police-community relations. We have been told we can only have fair policing by having no policing. I don't buy that. We need to reframe the community safety conversation to **focus on how we can be smart on crime.** As I meet with people from neighborhoods across Denver, I hear that some neighborhoods feel under-policed, while others feel over-policed. Having worked closely with Denver's public safety leaders for years, I am confident that we are equipped to implement a sophisticated and adaptive approach that will meet individual community needs, while ensuring overall community safety. Community and public safety leaders share responsibility and must work together to get this right.

In the end, City leaders must embrace their responsibility to enforce the laws designed to protect individuals and community. We must hold people accountable for unlawful activity. And since we know that economic, physical, and behavioral health challenges are contributing to unlawful activity, we also must pursue economic development and public health strategies that will help to alleviate desperation that drives criminal activity in the first place.

MY EXPERIENCE

- As Chief of Staff to Mayor Hickenlooper, I **took middle-of-the-night phone calls** about officer-involved shootings and helped devise the multi-pronged response required.
- Partnered with the Manager of Safety to develop **written guidelines which raised the standards of discipline and accountability** for our police and fire departments.
- Served on Denver's **Civil Service Commission** responsible for the hiring and discipline of Denver Police Officers and Fire Fighters.
- Successfully **negotiated contracts with all 3 of Denver's public safety unions** under multiple administrations and helped draft language giving Denver Sheriff and Police collective bargaining rights.
- I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice and **worked in a residential treatment facility** for young women involved in the criminal justice system.

Transparency, honesty, and accountability are critical to rebuilding trust and will be central to my community safety strategy.



FRAMING FACTS



Violent crime has **increased almost 40%** since 2019 from 5,118 to 7,070 incidents in 2022.¹



Evaluation of the STAR program found that in the neighborhoods that STAR was piloted, **lower-level crimes fell by 34%**, fewer citations were issued and people were less likely to reoffend with an estimated 1,400 fewer criminal offenses in Denver because of the program.⁵



The number of homicides **increased 55%** from 60 in 2019 to 93 in 2021. There were 86 homicides in 2022.²



Gun violence has decreased in some hot spots in Denver, but it is still far too high with **at least 239 individuals** injured by guns in 2022.⁶



Property crime has also catapulted (over a **60% increase**) since 2019 with 16,388 additional reports of property crimes in 2022. (27,206 property crimes in 2019; 43,594 property crimes in 2022).³



Denver's 2023 budget added **43 uniform officer positions** to the 1,464 uniform positions appropriated in 2022, authorizing the hiring of 188 recruits.⁷



Colorado has the **highest rate** of stolen cars in the nation today. Denver's annual rate of stolen cars has increased over 80% in the last few years. (5,335 in 2019 to 14,741 in 2022).⁴



Deaths in Denver related to opioids – including fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times more potent than heroin – **increased by 308%** between 2019 and 2021.⁸



COURAGE

We cannot and will not criminalize poverty or addiction. At the same time, we cannot and will not allow anyone to break the laws designed to protect individual and community safety. As the City's chief executive, **the Mayor must embrace the responsibility of wrestling with complexity and making tough calls. I have the courage to make hard choices.** I have the experience and humility to recognize that I won't always get those choices right, but I am committed to being honest, transparent, accountable and adaptive to change course as needed to fulfill the promise of Denver.

MY GUIDING VALUES



CREATIVITY & INNOVATION

We need **new approaches and new thinking to solve complex and persistent community safety challenges and to establish and restore trust between law enforcement and community.** Denver has shown the power of innovation through the success of the co-responder and Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) programs, which are helping the Public Safety Department respond as aptly as possible to community safety incidents. That same mentality can and should be applied more broadly to ensure a more productive and effective community safety plan.



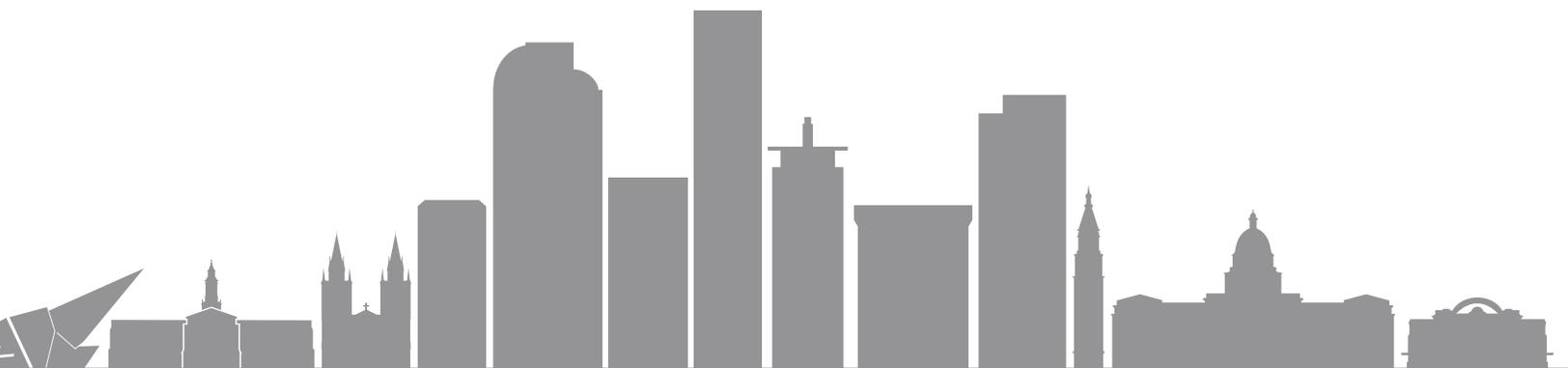
IDEAS FOR ACTION: Deploying the Right Responder for Each Situation



Denver is a large and growing city with tremendous demands for public safety resources. While our **sworn officers have a critically important role to play in resolving serious and violent crime**, it is neither efficient nor effective to rely only on police response for the myriad of community safety issues. We need a broad array of police and non-police personnel and approaches.

- Ensure there is a sufficient and appropriate number of highly trained, sworn police officers to respond to homicides, robberies, assaults and violent crimes. DPD's 188 vacancies for uniformed officers provides ample opportunity for strategically allocating policing staff in 2023. In order to successfully fill those vacancies, we must take a comprehensive look at compensation, culture and working conditions within our Police Department and aggressively recruit, particularly from communities of color, so that our officers better reflect the communities they serve.
- Expanding co-responder models that pair police officers with civilian trained responders, which helps ensure most appropriate responses, even in uncertain situations. I believe that utilizing co-responders also helps create and reinforce a healthier culture within policing.
- Expanding Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) programs for calls involving a community member experiencing a non-criminal public safety event, such as a mental health or substance misuse crisis.
- Exploring additional scenarios where community safety response is needed, but armed officer involvement is not. For example, handling reports of certain property crimes and some traffic violations. This could free up officers and resources to focus on public safety matters involving serious or violent crimes in progress and improving police response times.
- Fully staffing or expanding the Emergency Communications Technicians and Dispatchers units in 911 to triage calls and dispatch the most appropriate responder type quickly and appropriately, to reduce wait and response times.

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IDEAS FOR ACTION: **Building Police Culture around National Best Practices, Transparency and Accountability**



We must appreciate the inherent danger, tension, and extreme unpredictability involved in police work. **Keeping everyone safe at the scene of a police call tops all priorities.** We must strengthen and support a healthy culture within the Denver Police Department to ensure success for officers and community.

- Work with the Civil Service Commission to ensure we're hiring and promoting the right individuals, equipped with the right skills and training, to handle the variety of policing roles, such as patrol, investigations, command staff, and special units like SWAT and hostage negotiators.
- Provide thorough and on-going training, and increase regular quality assurance reviews by internal, independent monitor and external, national organizations. Training should prioritize situational assessment and communications skills so that officers are prepared to utilize the most appropriate tactics for any given situation, including de-escalation tactics.
- Invest resources to support the physical and mental health of our emergency responders and public safety officials to ensure they're prepared to safely perform the difficult tasks of responding to community emergencies. Healthy officers benefit everyone.
- Hold the police department accountable when we have not effectively trained and prepared our officers in proper policing standards. Hold our officers accountable when they commit crimes or recklessly handle public safety situations contrary to law and/or the department's standards, particularly when reckless conduct results in serious injury or violations of constitutional rights. Accountability and transparency are essential to building trust with the community.
- Revisit the role of the Manager of Safety, particularly their role in internal investigations, to help build trust through greater transparency and accountability.
- Make public safety data regularly available and easily digestible to the community and release information in a responsible and timely manner when high profile public safety incidents occur in order to build trust with community.
- Embrace a culture of continuous improvement and peer learning within our public safety agencies. Require officers to hold each other accountable to high standards for professional conduct which reflect the values of the Department and recognize those who support the professional development of their peers.

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While these priorities are specific to the Denver Police Department, the goals of promoting national best practice, transparency and accountability are applicable to all our public safety agencies. As Mayor, I will work closely with the Manager of Safety to ensure a healthy, strong culture across our police, fire, and sheriff departments.

**IDEAS FOR ACTION: Investing in Community, Crime Prevention & Restorative Practices**

Recognizing that crime is closely linked to economic and health conditions, **a central part of our community safety strategy must relate to our public health priorities – particularly our response to the substance misuse crisis, including fentanyl – and our economic development strategy.** Further, we must embrace innovative restorative practices and transformative justice approaches to reduce recidivism.

- Recognizing the uniquely addictive and deadly nature of fentanyl, we must be prepared to both offer treatment – including substance misuse treatment for people within our jails – to reduce demand, and, at the same time, be diligent about enforcement of laws, particularly related to the illegal sale of fentanyl. We have more work to do with state and local government partners to get this policy right.
- Better utilizing data to manage “hot spots” for crime within the City and doing the work to individually analyze and understand what is driving crime in specific neighborhoods and at specific locations. Then, we must devise interventions that meaningfully address the underlying driver of the criminal activity. For example, if there is a bar that is repeatedly the site of violence and criminal activity, engage liquor license enforcement.
- Ensuring access to safe public spaces, such as recreation centers and libraries, particularly at night and on weekends. Providing programming to engage and support people who might be vulnerable to the influence of criminal activity, particularly youth and young adults.
- Investing in drug use prevention, intervention, and treatment to reduce demand for the deadly substances that are destroying lives and families and contributing to criminal behavior.
- Expanding jail alternative programs such as Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), community courts, Denver CARES, “drug court,” and juvenile diversion programs.

Access to a good education, economic opportunity, housing and health care are all critical to community safety. My focus will be as much on these drivers of safety as on emergency response.

**Join me to create a safer community and restore the Promise of Denver.
Visit [KellyBrough.com](https://www.kellybrough.com) to get involved >**

SOURCES

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2. [City of Denver, Overall Crime Dashboard, data retrieved on January 2, 2023](#)
3. [City of Denver, Overall Crime Dashboard, data retrieved on January 2, 2023](#)
4. [“On the road to \\$1 billion in vehicles stolen: The data trends behind Colorado’s motor vehicle theft crisis,” Common Sense Institute, September 8, 2022, retrieved January 2, 2023; And City of Denver, Overall Crime Dashboard, data retrieved on January 2, 2023](#)
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7. [“Fentanyl once again fuels “exponential” spike in overdose deaths,” Axios Denver, September 1, 2022, retrieved January 2, 2023](#)
8. [Mayor’s approved 2023 Budget, pp. 716-717, retrieved January 2, 2023](#)

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