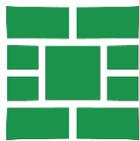


Police Chief Recruitment Community Engagement Report

Executive Summary

Presented by



SAVANNAH
savannahga.gov



**POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM**

Overview:

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), a nationally recognized recruitment firm, was commissioned by the City of Savannah to launch two surveys to attain community and internal police department feedback regarding recruiting a new police chief. The surveys' mission was to assist with gathering information from the community at large, stakeholders, and police personnel about what traits, expertise, and experiences matter most for the City's next police chief. Furthermore, the survey provided feedback about what priorities the Savannah Police Department should focus on next year.

The surveys were available from August 10 to September 23 and promoted using the City's website, social media channels, traditional news outlets, and community stakeholders. The community survey received 682 responses, and the internal SPD survey received 119. Community survey respondents indicated the top preference was for a chief with a proven track record in responding to rising crime using data, technology, and community-based solutions. Internal SPD surveys indicated the preferred top-quality of the next police chief is a demonstrated commitment to promoting a culture of equity, inclusion, and mutual respect across all levels of the department.

In order to be transparent about the process and the feedback obtained, PERF and the City of Savannah have developed this report to provide the findings to all Savannahians.

Community Survey Results Summary:

The top three qualities in a chief that garnered the highest consensus from the community survey are being willing to hold themselves and the organization accountable, a commitment to transparency for the purpose of building community trust and confidence, and a proven track record in responding to rising crime using data, technology, and community-based solutions.

Out of the three qualities, a proven track record in responding to rising crime was the top quality, with 283 respondents in agreeance. This quality will be a guiding precept in the recruitment process for Savannah's next police chief, along with the second highest community-desired quality, a police chief willing to hold themselves and the organization accountable.

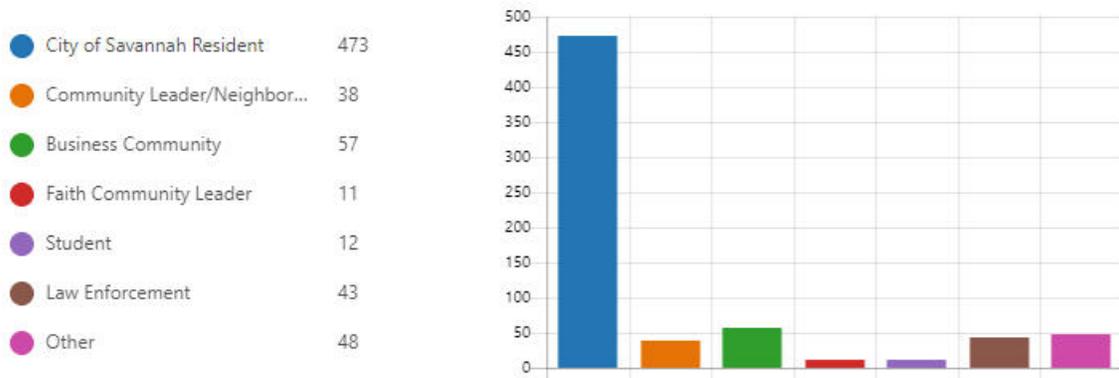
The top three priorities of focus for the police chief and the entire department were indicated as strategies to reduce violent crime, recruitment and retention of police officers to meet the authorized staffing levels, and building a greater capacity in differential response models to improve on traditional response to homelessness and mental health.

The listed priorities will also become guiding precepts as the Savannah Police Department continues to address crime, enhance its response to the community and create plans to address its internal culture and officer development.

1. As a survey participant, it is important for us to understand how your responses are drawn from your perspective and from your community experience.

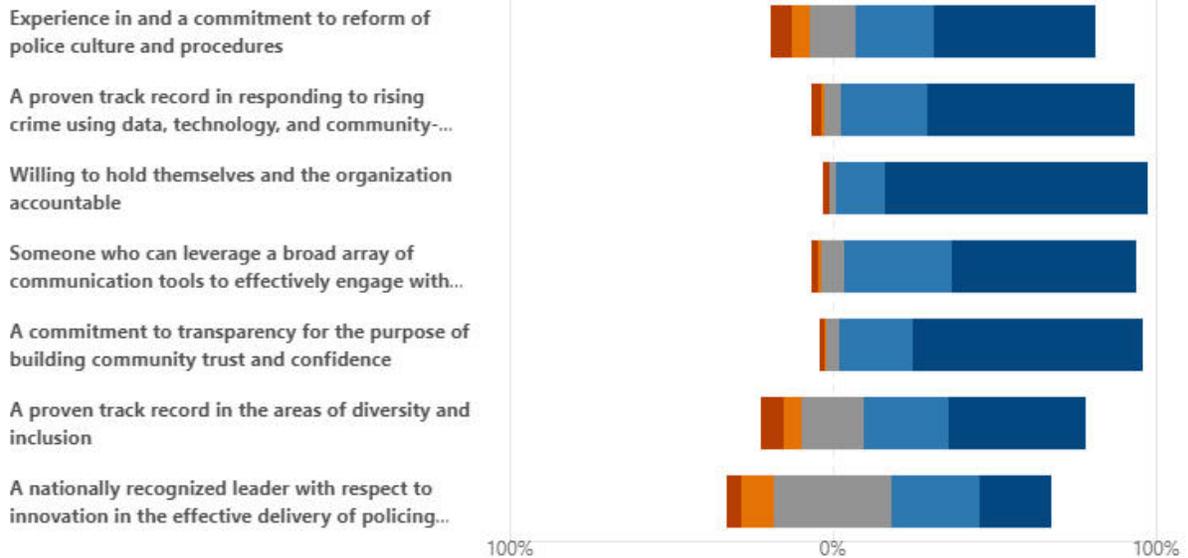
Please indicate which one of the following community categories best represents the perspective you align with as you complete this survey.

Please choose only one.



2. Your next police chief should have the following qualities:

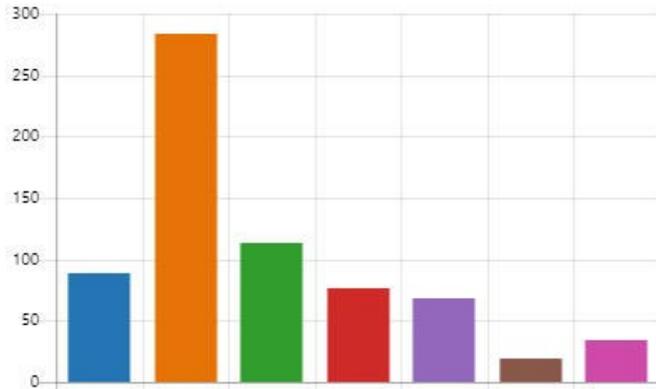
■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neither Agree or Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree



3. Of all the qualities in your new police chief, as noted above, which one of those qualities is most important to you?

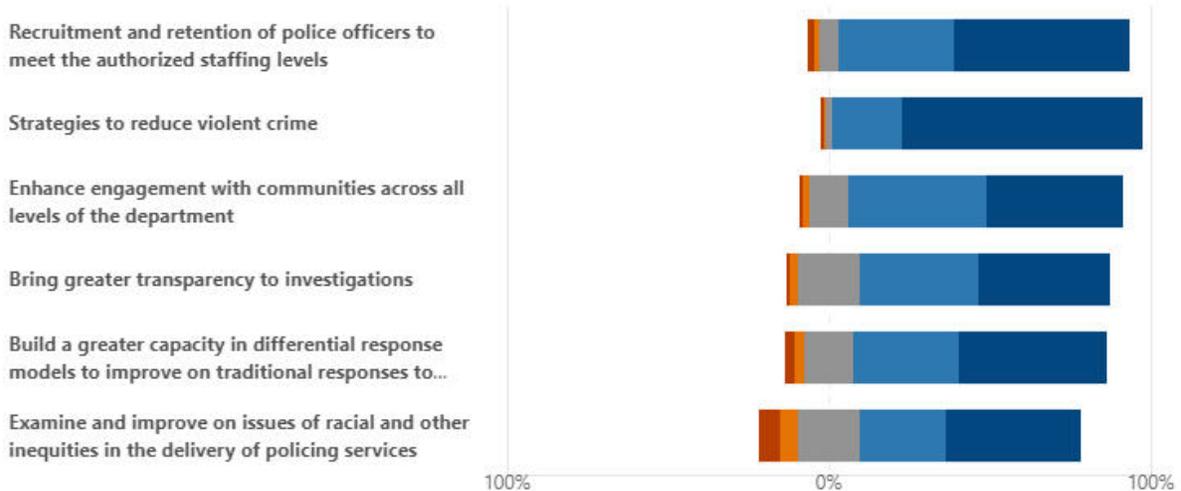
Please choose only one.

- Experience in and a commitm... 88
- A proven track record in respo... 283
- Willing to hold themselves an... 113
- Someone who can leverage a ... 77
- A commitment to transparenc... 68
- A proven track record in the ar... 19
- A nationally recognized leader... 34



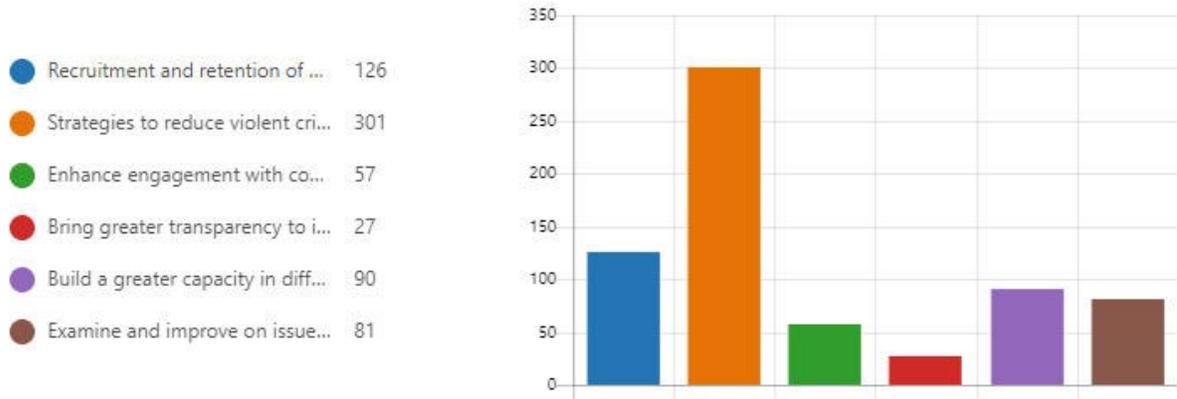
4. Your next police chief should focus on the following priorities:

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree



5. Of all the priorities for your new police chief, as noted above, which one of those priorities is most important to you?

Please choose only one.



Internal SPD Survey Results Summary:

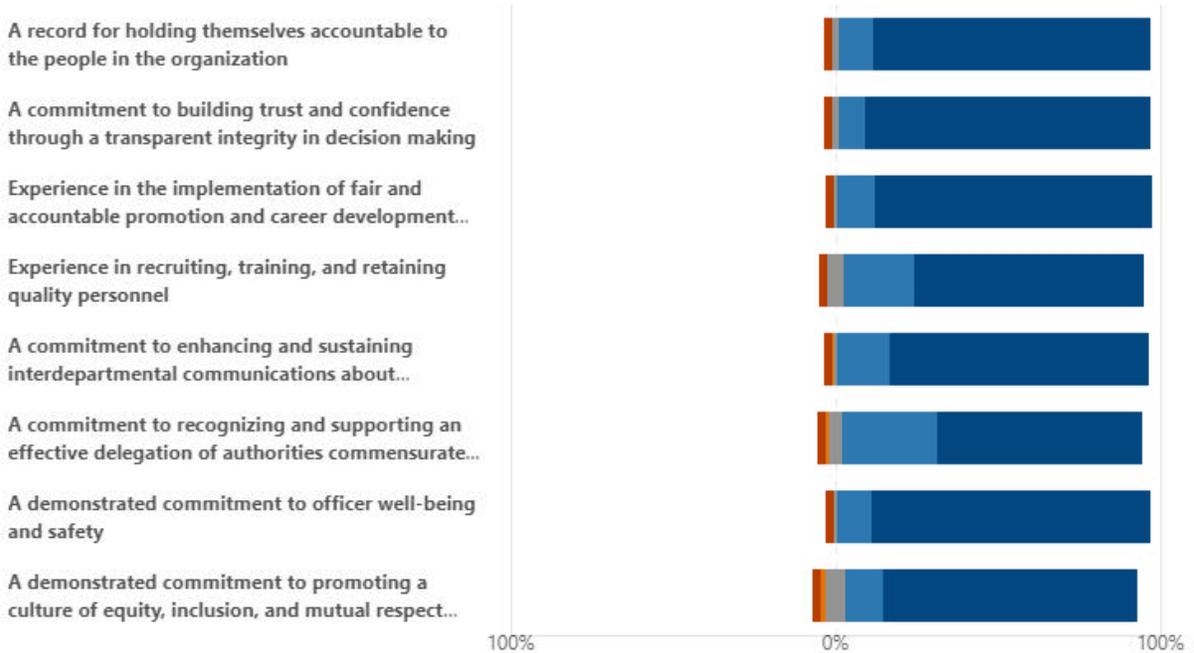
SPD officers are the boots on the ground in response to not only crime but many additional community and quality of life issues in the City. Understanding their needs and expectations for a leader who will guide the development and future of the department was important to the process.

The top three qualities SPD officers believe their new chief should embody are a demonstrated commitment to officer well-being and safety, a commitment to building trust and confidence through a transparent integrity in decision-making, and a demonstrated commitment to promoting a culture of equity, inclusion, and mutual respect across all levels of the department.

To assist with officer development and the further enhancement of police services, officers believe the next chief should focus on building and sustaining staffing levels to the authorized strength, ensuring all senior ranks are accountable to leading by example and with respect to the mission and value of the department, and improving procurement and maintenance of equipment. These qualities and priorities will be used to vet police chief candidates and hold the selectee accountable as they take the lead.

1. Your next police chief should have the following qualities:

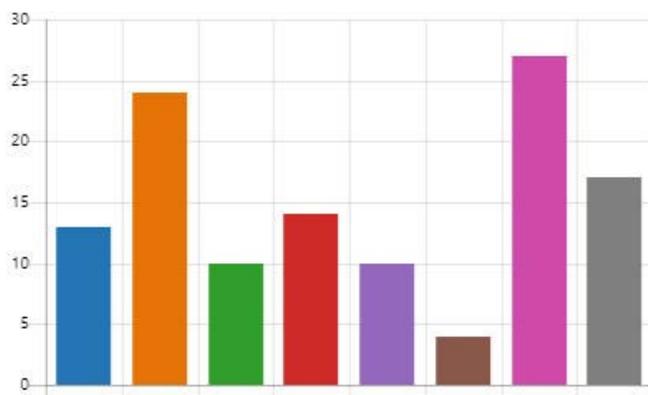
■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neither Agree or Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree



2. Of all the qualities in your new police chief, as noted above, which one of those qualities is most important to you?

Please choose only one.

- A record for holding themselv... 13
- A commitment to building tru... 24
- Experience in the implementat... 10
- Experience in recruiting, traini... 14
- A commitment to enhancing a... 10
- A commitment to recognizing... 4
- A demonstrated commitment ... 27
- A demonstrated commitment ... 17



3. Your next police chief should focus on the following priorities:

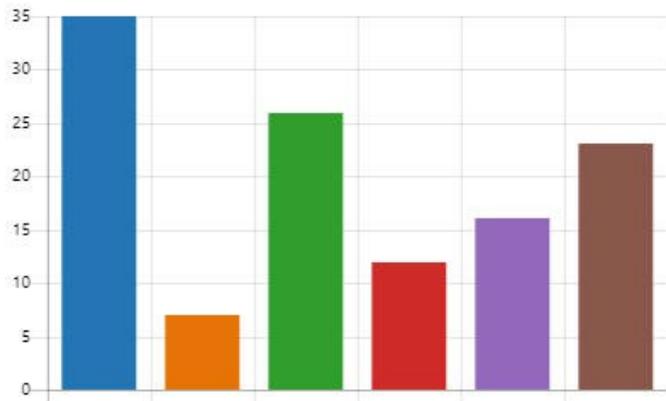
■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neither Agree or Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree



4. Of all the priorities for your new police chief, as noted above, which one of those priorities is most important to you?

Please choose only one.

- A focus on building and sustai... 35
- Establish consistency and tran... 7
- Ensure all senior ranks are acc... 26
- Ensure a culture of equity, incl... 12
- Develop, execute, sustain, and... 16
- Improve procurement and mai... 23



Focus Groups Overview:

PERF and City staff also met with members of the City Council, police department and focus groups from different subsets of the City to garner feedback about their hopes for the next police chief and what the department should prioritize. The five focus groups were the Faith-Based Community, Neighborhood Association Presidents, the Business Community, Community Leaders, and a Youth and Young Adults Panel.

Savannah Police Department Focus Group:

In conjunction with the internal survey, PERF and City staff held meetings with SPD officers from all ranks and professional staff to understand their desires for a new police chief.

Representatives from SPD indicated they would like a proven crime fighter with an inclusive leadership style and mentorship capabilities. They want a leader who will be invested in the department and community. They should be experienced, humble, collaborative, constantly learning, an effective communicator, honorable, and innovative. The chief should also have an impeccable history.

They believe the new chief and the entire department should heavily focus on reducing crime and gun violence, community policing, and organizational and staff development.

The focus group believes the top contributing factors to crime and violence are:

- Recidivism
- Poor educational outcomes
- Poverty
- Lack of family support systems
- Dramatic mental health issues
- Lack of opportunities for people who have been previously incarcerated

The focus group would like the next chief to accomplish the following in their first year:

- Establish a clear direction and focus on morale building
- Enhance training and career development
- Encourage better access to leadership
- Foster a transparent environment
- Focus on filling vacancies and the retention of officers
- Become known throughout the department and community

Faith-Based Community Focus Group:



Representatives from the faith-based community, representing multiple faiths, indicated they want a chief who is “of the people and open-minded enough to understand the complexities of the City.” They also desire a leader willing to work with the community for collaborative responses and someone with a wealth of experience in cities of varying sizes. Another point of importance is a chief with an innate ability to communicate and connect in different environments. Finally, they want a leader who will establish a movement toward true community-oriented policing that focuses on rebuilding the community’s trust.

The focus group indicated they believe the top public safety issues confronting the City are:

- Gun Violence
- The perception that certain areas in the community are safer than others
- The police response to homelessness and mental illness

The focus group believes the top contributing factors to crime and violence are:

- Abandoned houses and blight that leads to crime
- Lack of economic opportunities
- Lack of affordable healthcare
- Lack of education
- Perception of double standard of policing in the City
- A need for more community outreach programs

From a community relations standpoint, the focus group would like the next chief to accomplish the following in their first year:

- To establish a rapport of transparency in the department
- To be conscious and acknowledge a history of violence amongst target groups, especially Black men
- Building trust within the community
- To be swift in accountability measures
- Fostering a good working environment
- Increased department training, especially regarding cultural competence
- To foster innovation and collaboration
- Be aware of other religious groups in the community
- Committed to being vested in the community

Neighborhood Association Presidents Focus Group:

Representatives from the neighborhood association presidents indicated they want to see a chief dedicated to rebuilding the community's trust. They want a leader who understands diversity and respects all citizens. They potentially would like to see a chief from the local community who is a people person. A leader focused on building a friendlier perception of the department is key to this group, as well as a chief who is transparent, honest, and focused on community-oriented policing. Representatives also communicated they want a leader willing to be a part of the City for the long haul and to encourage their officers to get out of their vehicles.

The focus group indicated they believe the top public safety issues confronting the City are:

- Mental illness
- Homelessness
- Property crime
- Violent crime
- Speeding
- Lack of consistency in police staffing levels in neighborhoods

The focus group believes the top contributing factors to crime and violence are:

- Domestic violence
- A lack of interesting and exciting opportunities for the youth
- Lack of patrol potentially leading to opportunistic crimes

From a community relations standpoint, the focus group would like the next chief to accomplish the following in their first year:

- More patrol visibility in neighborhoods
- Quarterly meetings with leadership in communities
- Understand the uniqueness of neighborhoods and figure out strategic approaches for their needs
- Getting officers more engaged in their beats
- Engaging with the youth
- Being perceived as an asset and not a threat

How Today Will Unfold Questions for Discussion

1. Please discuss what you would like to see in the way of personal and professional qualities of our next Police Chief.
2. What are the top-3 public safety issues that we are confronting as a community in Savannah?
3. In your view, what are the top contributing factors to crime and violence in our community?
4. What should the next police chief accomplish from a community relations standpoint in their first year as chief?

Business Community Focus Group:

The business community panel, made up of individuals from a variety of non-profit and private sector industries, wants a proven practitioner with a track record of following best practices, who is committed to community policing and focused on a community approach to leadership. They want a chief with a clear vision that aligns with the community. In addition, they want a police chief who is a servant leader, a problem solver, and willing to examine complex, uncomfortable, and complicated issues. They wish to see a leader who can relate and communicate to each facet of the community on their level. Also, the panel wants a proactive chief to address the community's needs and not merely be reactive to the situation.

The focus group indicated they believe the top public safety issues confronting the City are:

- Lack of transparency of past law enforcement
- Property crime
- Violent crime
- Drug problems (fentanyl and the opioid epidemic)
- Gangs

The focus group believes the top contributing factors to crime and violence are:

- Mental health
- Poverty
- Lack of family support systems
- Cultural differences
- Poverty

From a community relations standpoint, the focus group would like the next chief to accomplish the following in their first year:

- The next chief should meet the entire community
- Fostering the symbiotic relationship between the police department and the community
- Meeting every department staff member and patrol officer
- Weed out bad apples in the department

Community Leaders Focus Group:

The community leaders group was made up of individuals nominated by members of City Council and represented a diverse cross-section of our community. They indicated that they want to see a humble chief who is a servant leader willing to get their hands dirty in the community. They want a police chief who can build buy-in internally and externally. They want someone who garners respect and does not demand it and believe the next leader should be diplomatic and not lead with an iron fist. The panel also wants a chief whose focus is all of Savannah and the crime that all neighborhoods face, not just downtown.

The focus group indicated they believe the top public safety issues confronting the City are:

- Lack of trust internally and externally
- Decreased patrol visibility

The focus group believes the top contributing factors to crime and violence are:

- Poverty and homelessness
- Availability of guns
- “Us versus them” mentality, between the police and those they serve.
- A fragmented criminal justice system
- Lack of police presence
- Unsupervised youth

From a community relations standpoint, the focus group would like the next chief to accomplish the following in their first year:

- Restoring the department’s morale
- A clear vision and buy in from staff
- Reacquaint the department with the community

Youth & Young Adults Panel Focus Groups:



How Today Will Unfold

- List of 4 questions circulated to each table
 - Record your group’s thoughts to each question try for 5 minutes of discussion per question
 - PERF and City Staff will circulate among the groups for questions/discussion
 - The final 25-30 minutes for groups to each report out on a selected question
 - PERF and City Staff to collect each group’s question sheet
 - Closing and Thanks
- Excerpt from the focus groups presentation.**

The youth and young adults panel focus groups, comprised of individuals engaged in youth leadership and other city and community programs, along with young adults leading in a variety of sectors, would like to see a chief who is honest in their approach. They want one who is inspirational and caring. They believe the police chief should be patient in their dealings with the community, genuine in their actions, and treat all citizens with fairness and equity. They want a leader who is heavily engaged and involved in the schools. The panel believes that a police chief should be unbiased, honest, and open-minded and someone who operates with

the highest integrity. The youth group believes that the next leader should be someone from the local community.

The focus group indicated they believe the top public safety issues confronting the City are:

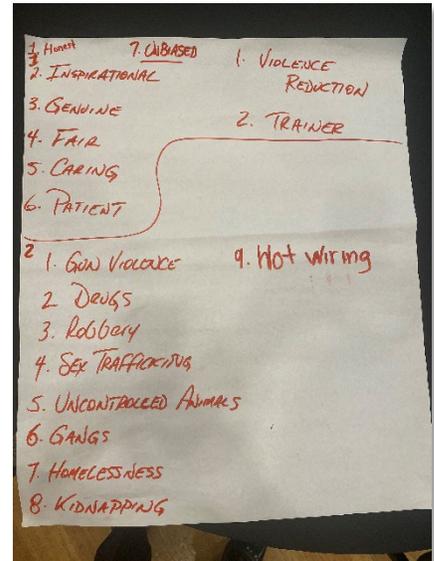
- Police brutality
- School violence (bullying)
- Gun and gang violence
- Sex trafficking, child predators and kidnapping
- Homelessness

The focus group believes the top contributing factors to crime and violence are:

- Lack of resources
- Mental health
- Lack of outreach programs
- The internet/social media
- Guns

From a community relations standpoint, the focus group would like the next chief to accomplish the following in their first year:

- Focused on improving the community
- More training and resources made available to the community
- Commitment to improving the schools
- Improvement in communication
- More officer training especially on handling rape and sexual assaults
- Committed to building morale
- Volunteering with programs in the community



Next Steps

Input garnered through the surveys and focus groups is being used by PERF and the City Manager to recruit and assess top candidates. Below is a timeline for the police chief search and selection process, for full survey results please visit the links at the bottom of this page.

Police Chief Search Process



Link to view full community survey results: [Community Survey Results](#)

Link to view full internal SPD survey results: [SPD survey results](#)