



CITY COUNCIL

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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Akron City Council Announces Next Steps Around Reimagining Public Safety Initiative in Partnership with The University of Akron

(Akron, Ohio, March 12, 2021) - Akron City Council announces the next step in its Reimagining Public Safety initiative in partnership with The University of Akron (UA) – a series of Reimagining Public Safety focus groups which will allow community members to share their perspectives and experiences about policing and public safety.

Throughout this spring, a team of UA faculty and students will hold small Zoom focus groups of 6-8 residents at a time. Privacy will be protected by only requiring participants to share their first name or a pseudonym during the focus group as well as having the option to turn off their cameras. The focus groups will result in a report that will help inform City Council’s work going forward. Anyone interested in participating can call 330-972-4900 or email publicsafetyproject@uakron.edu to save a virtual seat. Please see the attached flyer for more information.

City Council is also encouraging all residents and community stakeholders to complete this survey – <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/APDCommunity> – as part of Mayor Horrigan’s national search for a new Chief of Police. The survey was prepared by Ralph Andersen & Associates, the search firm coordinating the process, and will help guide the selection a new Police Chief for the Akron Police Department.

“These next steps in our Reimagining Public Safety initiative will ensure that our residents have an opportunity to make their voices heard, through the police chief search survey and our virtual focus groups,” said Margo Sommerville, President of Council. “We encourage every Akron resident to participate in these collective efforts to address concerns about inequities in policing and help create safer neighborhoods for all who live here.”

“We are excited to be part of this collaborative research effort between the Akron City Council and The University of Akron,” adds Dr. Rebecca J. Erickson, a professor of sociology and the principal investigator of the public safety project. “Undergraduate and graduate students in anthropology, communications and sociology are excited to apply their research skills to moderating focus groups in the coming weeks. With its goal of helping to create a safer and more equitable community, this initiative demonstrates how today’s students are contributing to the University of Akron’s legacy as an urban research university, as well as one that seeks to serve the needs of our city and to provide unique skill-enhancing and experiential learning opportunities for our students.”

Today’s public engagement announcements are the latest step in Council’s Reimagining Public Safety initiative, which seeks to directly address residents’ calls for more equitable systems of policing, strengthen bonds of trust between community and law enforcement, and ultimately help create safer neighborhoods and a safer Akron. In January, Council released a Report of Recommendations ([link](#)), which tackled issues of police accountability and transparency, crime prevention, personnel and culture, and technology and equipment.

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