

# Springfield Police Department Community Engagement Plan

As members of the community, the SPD believes that strong community partnerships are a must to improve understanding, build trust, and ultimately improve policing services that make Springfield safer for all. The Springfield Police Department has a well-established presence within the Springfield community; however, we do not suggest that there is no room to expand our efforts. This is the impetus for developing a strategic plan to increase communication and relationships with community members and stakeholders. This Community Engagement Plan not only identifies the work SPD is doing to create intentional space to connect, listen, learn, and grow its engagement efforts with community members but also seeks to define the areas where we need to expand our reach to those underserved by our current efforts.

We see this plan as an ever-evolving, living document that will grow and respond to the needs of the community as those needs are identified. This plan creates opportunities for collaboration, discussion, connection, transparency, participation, and improvements tailored to the unique needs of those who make this City what it is. The values at the core of our community engagement plan are:

- Respect: Treating every member of the community with dignity.
- Transparency: Open communication and data sharing with the community.
- Accountability: Holding the department responsible for its actions and services.
- Access: Ensuring all segments of the Springfield community have access to SPD resources and engagement opportunities.
- Collaboration: Working side-by-side with community members, stakeholders, and organizations.

A comprehensive, multi-prong community engagement plan for policing includes efforts ranging from information sharing to empowering residents to help determine how policing and public safety will be achieved in their community. Not all citizens will want to participate at all levels. Still, they will be empowered to partner with the police and expect to make some final decisions for themselves and their community.

## **Neighborhood Community Meetings**

To succeed as public safety officers, we must build and maintain trust and credibility with community members. Community meetings create opportunities to meaningfully engage with the Springfield community and learn about citizens' concerns. Communities themselves should drive the agendas at these meetings so that we can learn from their knowledge and experience and better understand their problems. Sworn members of the SPD who interact with the public regularly are highly encouraged to participate in neighborhood meetings, events, and community engagement opportunities.

- C3 Meetings—These weekly meetings occur in person or via Zoom, depending on community member availability. Please refer to the [community calendar](#) for updated times and locations. C3 meetings are held in the North End, Mason Square, Forest Park, and Metro neighborhoods.
- Beat Management Meetings—These monthly meetings, chaired by neighborhood volunteers, allow the community to share issues, identify problems, develop solutions, review crime reports, and develop prevention strategies. Please refer to the community calendar for updated times and locations.
- Community Calendar – The SPD has developed a community calendar accessible to all citizens. The calendar identifies all public meetings held within the city that SPD hosts or attends. It also allows community members to invite SPD to participate in events and request that events be added to the calendar.

C3 and Beat Management Team Meetings always include officers and supervisors so that community issues can be heard and appropriately acted upon. Supervisors attending strengthen the effectiveness of the meetings. Ordinance officers, specifically assigned to address quality of life issues, attend all Beat Management Team Meetings and offer guidance and support for the quality of life issues. Each police sector has an assigned dedicated Ordinance officer. They are available by cell phone and email, so access is convenient. Additionally, 311 calls are routed to appropriate sector officers. We encourage everyone to get to know the officers and supervisors participating in these meetings.

### **At-Large Quarterly Community Engagement Meetings**

The SPD has partnered with community groups to host and facilitate Quarterly Meetings. SPD believes these partnerships have strengthened the discussions and impact of these gatherings. The Quarterly meetings are unique in that they target the entire city for attendance. This is not to say that the community cannot attend all meetings throughout the city, but the invitation process differs from neighborhood-specific gatherings.

The Department's efforts to develop and sustain transparency and accountability in our processes, the development and release of new policies and training, the status of the Board of Police Commissioners, and the procedures of the Internal Investigation Unit (IIU) were and will continue to be discussed at the quarterly meetings. While community members

are not guaranteed to participate, even with access, we want to ensure we do our part to eliminate the barriers to meaningful participation. We will continue to coordinate with our community partners to provide details for the Quarterly Meetings, which are distributed through multiple outlets (e.g., email, robocall, fliers, etc.) prior to the event date.

### **Community Newsletter**

For those members of the community not interested in virtual interaction, we are bringing back an initiative previously utilized, a Community Newsletter called The Conduit. The purpose will be to provide a monthly newsletter. The Conduit will include messaging from the Superintendent to our residents, inform the public on upcoming events, and provide information on how the SPD works to provide safety and security for those events and information that is important to the community

(e.g., proactive patrols, deployment of law enforcement personnel regarding high-profile city events, parades, pancake breakfasts, Quarterly meetings, BOPC meetings, etc.).

The Conduit will also include strategies and tactics that provide season-specific reminders and safety recommendations (e.g., during the winter season, be careful not to allow your vehicle to run unattended, or during the summer months, be sure to secure air conditioners to avoid break-ins).

### **Assuring Transparency and Accountability When Filing A Complaint**

The Community's ability to challenge law enforcement shortcomings, such as failing to provide services or how services are provided, is critical to the SPD's mission to ensure accountability and transparency.

It is critical that when community members allege that their complaints have not been addressed or received, we can provide immediate and informed feedback to confirm or deny such claims, we must be accountable. While written complaints are tracked internally, we lack a simplified process for auditing and displaying such claims publicly. A new method of monitoring complaints has been purchased and is being implemented, ensuring that citizens will be updated on their progress, beginning with the SPD's receipt of a complaint. As soon as we roll out this new product, we will guide community members on using it best.

Members of the SPD are instructed to advise members of the community on how to file a written complaint when asked. It is crucial for legitimacy to ensure that all members of the SPD are receptive to a citizen's desire to critique or commend the SPD's services. We will give the community information cards and QR codes to give feedback and file compliments and complaint forms. All department members will be guided to ensure that these requirements are fulfilled.

### **The Community Portal and Data Dashboard**

The community has voiced a clear requirement for improved transparency, accountability, and comprehensive reporting. The goal is to utilize data-driven results in policing to ensure accountability and support reform efforts. Creating a public data dashboard aims to ensure transparency, build trust, and improve public safety.

The SPD has identified and purchased a software program called MY90. This program will create multiple opportunities for transparency with the community, by enhancing data collection methods to accurately document the interactions and demographics of police officers and community members.

The Community Portal includes information related, but not limited to, the following:

- Graphs showing Sworn Personnel demographics,
- Use of Force by Level(s) used,
- City Protect Portal (heat map of calls for service geographically),
- Crash Reports,
- Reference chart for available city resources (311 calls)

- Community calendar
- Community surveys

### **Youth Engagement**

We seek to become allies with Springfield's youth, join them in shaping environments that will assist them with living in a healthy and secure environment, promote education, and offer alternatives to negative behavior and attitudes. We are continuing to work towards expanding our reach within the community by leveraging existing resources.

SPD seeks to utilize existing and new relationships to increase youth engagement and provide additional pathways for city youth to engage in constructive activities, deterring them from negative behaviors. As a result, various organizations have availed themselves to the Springfield Police Department, touting their ability to address SPD's desire to engage city youth. This process will require a considerate approach on SPD's part to determine which groups can provide appropriate engagement initiatives and strategies that SPD intends to implement.

Utilizing resource providers, social media, and education outlets, we seek to engage through:

- Listening sessions to determine concerns for city youth
- Sports programs (Youth Athletic leagues)
- After School Programming
- Community Centers
- Springfield School Department
- Springfield Health and Human Services

Examples of already established SPD partners include, but are not limited to, ROCA, the Boys and Girls Club, and Community Centers, which are already established partners of the SPD through the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) and Shannon Community Safety Initiative. The desired future outcome is for SPD to provide a structure producing positive, productive outcomes for city youth and leverage these new relationships between SPD and youth served, ultimately strengthening relationships between SPD, youth, and their families.

### **Senior Engagement**

Springfield's senior population is a rapidly expanding segment of the city's demographic. This group reflects the diversity within Springfield. Seniors must establish strong relationships with the police department concerning issues that affect them. With a 13% increase in residents over 62, it is essential to ensure that these individuals can age safely in the city. Therefore, fostering a trusting relationship with the police department is crucial. Seniors bring a wealth of experience and represent various interests and issues impacting our community. The SPD needs to create opportunities for learning from their experiences, enhancing their reliability as a resource.

Some community members have raised concerns that older adults sometimes feel disconnected and welcome opportunities to connect with the SPD. Many members of Springfield have seen the community grow and change over decades. Their perspectives, rooted in wisdom and experience, are valuable and can help inform us about what has been working and what can be improved to maintain a safe and caring community.

The SPD has been collaborating with community partners who expressly represent Springfield adult populations, and we must expand this collaboration.

### **Strengthen and Expand Community Partnerships**

Leveraging established community organizations amplifies the SPD's outreach and community trust. We have seen the success of strong community partnerships improve the SPD's communications and services. The SPD is committed to continuing to build and expand our relationships with community partners. To this end, we support and encourage partnerships with community organizations that are committed to improving the lives of the Springfield community. With our community partners, we can continue to engage in community conversations, collaborate on public safety initiatives, co-create programs and initiatives that directly address community concerns, and develop approaches to better serve communities within Springfield.

### **Expanding Community Access and Participation**

Some community members face barriers to participation in the initiatives and services offered by the police department. Knowing this, the SPD has taken certain initiatives to increase participation for all community members to include, but not limited to:

- **Language Access:** The SPD currently circulates public facing fliers and policies related to community engagement initiatives in both English and Spanish. Additionally, the SPD will work to ensure other materials (e.g., complaint forms and community surveys) are available in multiple languages spoken within Springfield.
- **ADA Accessibility:** The SPD holds community engagement meetings both virtually and in person at varying locations across Springfield to accommodate different participation needs. When held in person, the SPD is committed to ensuring community meetings are held in ADA-compliant locations.
- **Use of Plain Language:** Clear and concise language in SPD materials ensures community members can understand and engage with the public facing information.

### **Restorative Justice process**

The SPD acknowledges that residents from various community segments have experienced harm during interactions with SPD officers. As a result, we are committed to addressing the trauma that police misconduct has caused by eroding trust in particular communities in Springfield. Creating formal opportunities for honest dialogue is at the heart of a restorative process. Restorative justice allows those harmed directly and indirectly to share their experiences and perspectives with those responsible.

SPD is committed to a community-wide restorative process to prioritize relationships and build trust with community members. This process will be undertaken perpetually in partnership with external, independent organizations, with expertise in restorative justice, identified and selected in collaboration with community partners. The future of effective policing in Springfield is directly related to our work to build trust across all community segments.

### **Learning as We Grow**

This Plan is designed to grow and adapt to change when needed. Again, we see this plan as a living document that we hope will grow and respond to the community's needs as those needs are identified. This plan creates opportunities for collaboration, discussion, connection, transparency, participation, and improvements.

Ongoing efforts to continue and develop sustainable relationships need to be further developed using:

- Social media campaigns, pamphlets, and community engagement to expand attendance at established meetings;
- Multifaceted community outreach through information sharing, virtual platforms, resource materials (Good Neighbor Handbook and other similar resources), and stakeholder development
- Direct positive experiences with members of the SPD and its partner agencies
- Community Portal that provides an interactive space to engage with pertinent information of possible interest to the community

The SPD will continue to expand its use of social media to proactively communicate with community members about community engagement opportunities, inform them about Police Department reforms, and publicize newly released public reports and essential information related to reform efforts as they become available.

Ideas on how to improve and expand community engagement initiatives are welcome. When community members have ideas to share on how to continue building stronger relationships and providing quality services, our website ([link here](#)) will capture their input and provide opportunities to connect by gathering:

- Contact information
- Providing meeting links
- Website link to Community Portal
- Website Link to Board of Police Commissioner
- Links to SPD social media accounts
- Link to Complaint form

The SPD will also solicit feedback from the community on its engagement efforts and overall experience with and perceptions of SPD and public safety through various means, including an annual community survey. Information about the survey's release will be disseminated, and officers are encouraged to participate in getting the survey out to as many community members as possible. After listening to feedback, we have learned that the best way to ensure wide dissemination of community surveys is to distribute them in various forms, places, and languages. We will work to create access to community surveys electronically and in hard copy and encourage participation across the entire City to ensure the input collected represents the city's vast population.

