



For Immediate Release

March 25, 2021

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**Why Safety in NYC Means Moving Beyond Policing:
New Report from Square One Project**

Former de Blasio criminal justice advisor and nation's leading expert on violence recommend NYC restructure the city budget, appoint a Deputy Mayor of Public Safety and invest in community-led safety

New York, NY— After a summer of extraordinary unrest, an uptick in violence, and a pandemic, it's time for New York City to consider a different way to secure safety, according to a [new report](#) released by the Square One Project. For the past forty years, NYC and other localities across the country have relied upon the police and criminal justice system as the primary response to crime. That approach is fragile and limited, as evidenced by the increased violence, and has come with harms that undermine the trust that should be the very foundation of any system of justice, particularly within communities of color.

As NYC plans its future budget and begins the mayoral contest, the new report authored by Elizabeth Glazer, former Director of the NYC Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice, and Patrick Sharkey, Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, argues that there is rigorous evidence showing the effectiveness of a fuller spectrum of safety creating strategies than localities currently use, from jobs to well-maintained public safety. Instead of defaulting to police and the criminal justice system as the primary institution to create safety, cities should develop a disciplined, goal-oriented way to mobilize all civic resources, as nimbly as police are deployed now. A long history of theory and practice shows a more durable model for creating safety: tight-knit communities, where residents are brought together through local institutions and have access to basic civic resources.

In [Social Fabric: A New Model for Public Safety and Vital Neighborhoods](#), Glazer and Sharkey propose that the Mayor and City Council restructure the budget, rigorously assessing how much safety each dollar buys, whether police or summer youth employment; establish a Deputy Mayor

to mobilize the city's civic and public safety resources towards a common and measurable goal of increasing well-being; and work in partnership with a well-funded community-led safety effort.

“As a nation, we have gotten used to defaulting to police and the justice system to respond to crime. As last summer's protests crystallized, however, it has come at a high human and fiscal cost. A long history of theory and practice shows another model for durable safety, starting with access to civic resources and opportunity: leafy streets, well-maintained parks, decent housing and jobs, superior education and health care,” said **Elizabeth Glazer**. The “social fabric” model's goal is a thriving city that bends all civic resources towards attaining it, led by community expertise and aspirations. In this model, police and the justice system play a role, as another civic service in a heterogenous strategy, but an ever-decreasing role, as the lives of residents improve. The pieces are in place. All we need is the will to execute.”

“The pandemic and recent civil unrest transformed and destabilized New York City. It also created the opportunity to reset the city's approach to challenges like violence and neighborhood stability,” said **Pat Sharkey**. “We have only ever tried one response to stopping crime and violence - and that's through law enforcement and the criminal justice system. We need to move away from responding with punishment and instead respond with investments, and there couldn't be a better time to do that than right now.”

The report outlines how NYC can start to shift beyond policing and the justice system and re-orient our approach to achieving safety by strengthening the social fabric:

1. **Restructure how safety is delivered in the city.** As arrests and incarceration dropped by half over the past seven years and crime continued to decline, the budgets for criminal justice agencies increased by over 17 percent in real dollars, with New Yorkers paying 161 percent more per person arrested and 118 percent more per person incarcerated. A city's budget should produce the most safety for every dollar invested. With the city's massive reduction in the use of its criminal justice system and in the face of a serious fiscal crisis, it would make more sense and be more cost-effective to first invest in proven and effective approaches to stop people from engaging in criminal activity in the first place -- youth employment programs, education and vibrant public spaces, among other programs.
2. **Appoint a Deputy Mayor for Justice Policy and Operations.** Municipal governments should task a high-ranking civilian official, such as a deputy mayor, with mobilizing the city's civic and public safety resources—including law enforcement as one part—and working side by side with communities in shaping and implementing a different model of safety.
3. **Fund a local demonstration project.** As shootings soared last summer, the “solve” rate, perhaps better viewed as a “cooperation” rate, sank from an already low 50% to just 23% this year, one of many demonstrations that the use of police and the justice system as the primary way to secure safety is fragile. We need to shift from the

“police-first” model to one where community groups, together with service-providing city agencies, become responsible for community well-being and safety with resources sufficient to accomplish this end. New York City should fund a new coalition, composed of residents and local organizations, supported by government services, that becomes the primary institution responsible for public safety and community wellbeing.

This report is released through Square One’s Executive Session on the Future of Justice Policy, which seeks to generate and cultivate new ideas around the work to reimagine justice. Read the full report [HERE](#).

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About the Square One Project

The Square One Project at the Columbia Justice Lab aims to reimagine justice and create a pathway for reckoning in our country. Square One incubates new thinking on responses to racism, poverty and violence; promotes equitable safety and community thriving; and advances narrative and cultural change. Learn more about the Square One Project at squareonejustice.org.