



Indian Mound Neighborhood Association

Indian Mound is the largest neighborhood in one of the most diverse parts of the city, the Historic Northeast. With well over 10,000 residents, the Indian Mound Neighborhood Association is one of the largest associations in the city. Our association embraces the principles of diversity and equity, as nearly 65% of our residents identify racially as Black, Asian, Hispanic or Latino and 40% of our residents are foreign-born. Almost 50% of our residents speak a language other than English in their homes. The make-up of our beloved community drives our Board's unanimous decision to support the changes listed within this letter.

We can no longer stand by, complicit in the systematic problems that neighborhood associations typically allow – and in some cases participate in. As the national Black Lives Matter movement drives changes in the way our community interacts with police, our association must make necessary changes and hold our neighbors accountable for their individual actions that may, intentionally or unintentionally, put others in danger. Whether simply walking with a backpack, or in a hoodie, or running in the street, or playing with a toy gun in the park, there have been too many instances of the persecution and execution of unarmed Black men and boys at the sake of “neighborhood watch.” Neighbors send out an alert message, a seemingly unassuming engagement, that can quickly and easily escalate to a point of no return once vigilantes or police get involved. We as a neighborhood association aim to prevent these actions in a meaningful, neighborly, and productive way.

Let us be clear: Crime is a problem within our great city, and crime is not unique to our neighborhood. However, we will no longer take part in the “blaming” and “shaming” mentality of individual circumstances. Instead, we will evaluate and address the root causes and systematic barriers perpetuating a skewed participation that our community is a “bad neighborhood” or “high crime area.” Changing these causes and barriers must begin by re-examining our police force. Within the last year alone, our Board has been made aware of a multitude of issues. A few examples: Middle-of-the-night wrong house, no knock, warrantless invasions by KCPD; a veteran officer shooting at an “intruder” in his home that proved to be a falsity, yet he was allowed to voluntarily resign versus further investigation; an undocumented man being pulled from his car by ICE agents, who collaborated with KCPD officers. These issues sent shivers down the backs of many within our community. Our organization is made up of volunteers. We have realized that our limited time is better invested, and yields more positive results, with other community partners rather than engaging and relying on KCPD to participate in a meaningful and thorough way. Mind you, KCPD has been presented with many opportunities and efforts to collaborate, protect neighbors, and even restore trust. Unfortunately, these efforts have been met with barriers, roadblocks, and the return on investment is not where it should be for a community of some 10,000 taxpayers. From data discrepancies and requiring Sunshine requests, to half-truths and over-promises, there are better places for us to place our trust and efforts.

It is time for a change in the way that we view and support crime solutions. For far too long have we entrusted enforcement to an unjust system. Even with the deployment of a few social workers and as data-driven programs infiltrated our streets, violence hasn't subsided. As neighborhood leaders, we are tired of just hearing crime statistics in our meetings without any solutions.

With that said, we stand ready to again work with KCPD but only after dramatic and far-reaching new efforts that include, but are not limited to:

- The Kansas City Police Department reversing its policy on sending probable cause statements to the relevant County Prosecutor's Office in officer-involved shootings;
- KCPD embracing and advocating for local control of its department to align with local accountability to the constituents of only Kansas City;

- Immediately establishing a civilian oversight board that is completely detached from law enforcement and the protectionist, gubernatorial-appointed police board;
- All officer-involved shootings and all major use of force complaints must be sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the civilian oversight board for independent review;
- KCPD making misconduct of officers available to a clearing house or publicly operated state police misconduct registry, eliminating the ability for “bad apples” to move from station-to-station;
- KCPD establishing an automatic external review process involving the civilian oversight board for officers accused of two or more excessive force or community complaints within the same year;
- KCPD establishing a mechanism to allow officers to anonymously “speak up” for issues that may arise within the ranks, without retaliation;
- KCPD changing its rally, protest, and public gathering policies and procedures to foster a truly safe space to peacefully assemble and gather without an overbearing and exaggerated police presence that creates an intimidating environment. This includes banning the use of tear gas and delineating different engagement and protectionist tactics, as well as protection for members of the press, street medics helping injured and wounded protestors, and the prohibition on police destroying medical supplies;
- KCPD utilizing the community interaction officers to do more than simply collect information from the streets, but instead empower them to set priorities and fund community partnerships
- Requiring annual implicit bias and cultural competency training for all KCPD officers and staff;

KCPD recognizes the need for leadership from the top down – valuing accountability, prioritizing needed expanded trainings, and including a diverse perspective of the community. Sadly, we have lost faith in Chief Richard Smith after repeated failures over the past two and a half years, and thus request his immediate resignation so we can continue to work to address crime in our community.

We believe these changes will best protect our neighbors and community at large, but we know there are many more needs that will come as the process progresses. The bottom line is that, as neighborhood leaders, we realized our contribution in propping up a culture of “criminality” that pits neighbors against neighbors based on biases and assumptions. This letter will mark the end of the Indian Mound Neighborhood Association “Crime Watch” groups. We commit to building a stronger neighbor-to-neighbor program that fosters direct relationships, rooted in respect, trust, and support. We will call out and eliminate assumption-based posts that plague social media. We will design and monitor these pages around a culture that welcomes and engages neighbors and guests, while still solving challenges and complex issues. We will strengthen our partnership with the Center for Conflict Resolution to foster conversation as opposed to punishment. We will embed equity and implicit bias training into our group operations, providing neighbors with resources to live more harmoniously with each other. We recommit to eliminating vacant homes through the Legal Aid of Western Missouri Urban Homesteading program and will seek ways to further expand our impact to ensure that our blocks are filled with families who want to be here, but who need a “hand up” to attain homeownership.

Conflict is natural, but it is what occurs after conflict that defines its value. We hope this letter serves as an awakening to the power and strength of our many diverse neighborhood associations, and that we all unite to embrace our power and begin to dismantle the systemic oppression within our communities. We must all do our best to eliminate the challenges within ALL of our “crime watch” pages and be mindful of our potential to cause harm by being complicit and supportive of over-policing.

Sustainably,

IMNA Board of Directors