

Public Safety

Why this Issue?

- ▶ *Municipal interviews*
- ▶ *Borough staff surveys*
- ▶ *Community leader interviews*
- ▶ *Resident surveys and focus group*
- ▶ *Business surveys*

Across the community, public safety was identified as a priority throughout the strategic planning information gathering period. In general, people want police officers to be well supported and more proactive, as well as an increased focus on pedestrian safety and traffic.

During discussions with municipal leaders about public safety, the following priorities were identified: adequate resources for public safety personnel (equipment, vehicles, physical spaces), identify ways to strengthen relationships between police officers and community members, and the need to be more proactive than reactive.

Community leaders identified several public safety issues, as well. For pedestrian safety, the main topics identified were safety for children, for people with physical limitations and disabilities, and for people with strollers navigating sidewalks and crossing busy main streets. For police presence, the main topics identified were strengthening relationships between police and community members, increasing police presence in the community, and ensuring public safety personnel have extensive training and are prepared to help vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities, people with a mental illness, or people speaking English as a second language. Several community leaders also mentioned a concern about the lack of diverse representation in public safety positions.

Public safety was one of the top priorities identified in the resident surveys and focus group discussion. The main themes included pedestrian safety, enforcement of laws, a desire for increased police presence in the community and police foot patrol, and strengthening relationships between police and community members. Individuals also mentioned public health concerns as issues of public safety, citing things such as sewage backup in homes. Several residents also mentioned a lack of diverse representation in public safety positions. In the resident survey, the following data supports the prioritization of public safety as an issue.

- Safety and traffic was the fourth highest reason cited for why people would not or might not stay in Dormont in the next five years.
- In an open-ended survey question about what should be Dormont's top priority over the next five years, issues of public safety were the third most common response. 139 respondents mentioned issues of public safety as the top priority for Dormont.
- When asked which three items the Borough should prioritize over the next five years, public safety was the fourth most popular response with 240 respondents choosing that answer.
- When asked what services or programs the Borough should invest more in, public safety was the third most popular response with 289 respondents choosing that answer.
- In an open-ended survey question about ideas for Dormont, public safety ideas were the second most common theme, with 92 respondents giving suggestions about public safety.

Businesses seem to have a very positive overall view of both the police and fire departments. The main issues identified from business survey respondents were enforcement of traffic and parking violations.

Recommendations

1. **Provide additional training opportunities to support public safety personnel.** Ideas include:

- Language access training and resources (English as a second language, American Sign Language, etc.)
- Mental health first aid

Resources and potential partners

- Multicultural unit in public safety office in City of Pittsburgh. Has translated material in several languages - things like know your rights.
- Language line solutions (phone interpretation)
- Pittsburgh Language Access Network (includes American Sign Language)
- Phone and in-person
- [Mental health first aid training - find a course](#)
- [FEMA training courses.](#)
- [20 American Sign Language signs for police officers](#)

- 2. Promotion of voluntary database of individuals with special needs.** This database could be used for individuals with physical limitations or disabilities, but also for people who speak English as a second language. Incorporate into welcome packet or general community education plan.

Resources and potential partners

- City/County Task Force on Disabilities
- All for All Communities Program: cultural humility or competency trainings.
- [Immigrant Services and Connections](#) (ISAC) trainings
- [Allegheny County Immigrant and Internationals Advisory Council](#)
- Translation / interpretation
 - Global Wordsmiths (translation)
 - Trust Point One (translation and phone interpretation)
- [FEMA training courses](#)

- 3. Provide adequate resources and spaces for public safety personnel.** Ensure public safety personnel feel valued and have the equipment needed to do their jobs effectively and safely. Recommended ideas to explore:

- New chairs and desks for police station
- Fix water damage issues in police station
- Nicer break spaces for all public safety personnel and volunteers
- Develop a fleet management plan

Resources and Potential Partners

- Vehicle:officer ratio for SHACOG municipalities. Dormont ranks 23rd out of 28.

- 4. Analyze existing data and meet with concerned residents and community leaders to develop recommendations for improving pedestrian safety for vulnerable populations such as older adults, people with disabilities, and children.** Recommended ideas to explore:

- Lengthen the timing for pedestrian crossings at traffic lights
- Increase number of four-way crossing signals for busy intersections
- Install mirrors at intersections with limited visibility
- Cameras to detect pedestrians

Resources and potential partners

- [Active Allegheny](#) plan bicycle and pedestrian plan
- [Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh](#) action plan
- [National Safety Council](#)

- Vision Zero cities (e.g. [San Francisco](#)). Part of two-year plan: Safe Routes Programming
 - Safe Routes to School: Identify opportunities to build coalition of engaged parents and guardians
 - Safe Streets for Seniors: Identify opportunities to build coalition of engaged seniors
 - Safe Routes for People with Disabilities: Initiate a program that engages the disability community in identifying safety concerns, solutions and practices
- PennDOT
- [Aspinwall awarded grant to study safety along Freeport Road](#) (example of funding for studying public safety on PennDOT road)
- Pittsburgh-based tech startup pathVu's free app and "PathMeT" device for walkability studies
- Lively Pittsburgh

5. Explore the feasibility of police officers doing foot patrol. Individuals throughout the community have mentioned wanting to develop better relationships with police officers. Many expressed a desire to see officers walking the beat.

Resources and potential partners

- [Program Profile: Police Foot Patrol–Philadelphia 2009](#) (example -- evidence rating: effective)
- <http://www.erienewsnow.com/story/38107406/police-foot-patrols-resume-in-eries-little-italy> (example - foot patrol)
- [Foot Patrol: Rethinking the cornerstone of policing.](#) A book written by former police officers who went back to school to get their PhDs and do research. Another former police officer turned researcher who provides commentary on the book. "The authors help make the hugely important point that what genuinely matters to good policing is not the police mode of transportation (car, foot, bicycle, horse), but what police officers actually do in identifying, prioritizing, understanding, and resolving the nearly infinite variety of complex problems with which they are confronted.... Asking whether foot patrol is effective in policing is like asking whether surgery is effective in medicine. The answer surely is that it depends on the problem for which you are using it. Surgery is possibly effective for an inflamed gallbladder, but almost certainly not for influenza. Foot patrol is possibly effective for addressing street prostitution problems, but almost certainly not for child abuse."
 - CONNECT
 - SHACOG

6. Provide educational opportunities, in a way people can access, to support community members' public safety knowledge. Evaluate current opportunities to ensure they are appropriate for our community members. For example, one of the highest ranked responses

to why people don't attend, use or visit programs or places in Dormont is that they don't have time. This is the second year in a row where the fire department is seeking people to participate in the Citizen's Fire Academy. Does the length of time or time of day of the Citizens Fire Academy work for people who might be interested in the opportunity?

Providing educational opportunities that fit within people's schedules can be helpful.

Recommended ideas to explore:

- Conduct an evaluation of existing programs such as Citizens Fire Academy and explore potential revisions.
- Proactive information with links provided on the websites. Examples: [Etna Borough public safety website links](#); ACCPA what to do when stopped by the police; [Sharpsburg Borough police](#) - police photos and names, proactive tips, etc.; Castle Shannon police - [useful links](#) and recognize addiction; [PEMA planning for special needs](#)

- 7. Communicate positive statistics and accomplishments more often to help change community perception.** Internally, the police department is aware of the disconnect between what statistics show related to crime and accidents compared to resident perception of public safety in the community. Finding ways to share this data in an easy-to-understand and positive way could help with community-police relationship building and feelings of safety in the community, as well as providing opportunities to recognize the accomplishments of staff.