



## Frequently Asked Questions - City of Ithaca Department Redesign January 11, 2021

The City of Ithaca is committed to Reimagining Public Safety and invites the public to participate by sharing ideas and helping to imagine what's possible to address and ensure equitable and just public safety in our community.

The Reimagining Public Safety initiative was spurred following national tragedies and unresolved local issues to examine and reconcile past experiences of marginalized populations who have experienced disproportionate contact with the public safety system. For many People of Color, these devastating national tragedies are reflective of their lived experiences and interactions with local law enforcement which has led to a feeling of dehumanization and distrust of systems of government. The City of Ithaca believes that all residents, particularly marginalized populations, deserve equitable, unbiased, culturally-responsive services that address the needs of the community.

The City of Ithaca is publishing the following frequently asked questions and answers to address concerns and questions posed by the public regarding the Reimagining Public Safety initiative and redesign of the City's department to address public safety needs.

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### **What is the City of Ithaca's Department Redesign Working Group's timeline to provide recommendations to the Common Council?**

The Working Group's Report will be provided to the Common Council and the public on March 2, 2022. The Working Group was announced in June of 2021, went through an onboarding process, and began its work in July. The initial timeline requesting delivery of recommendations by September, 2021 was extended to allow the process to be more inclusive of the Working Group, community engagement and allow for more thorough deliberation and discussion by the Working Group as it considers recommendations.

### **What deliverables will be provided to the Common Council?**

Common Council will receive a report recommending the design of a new department to manage various public safety functions in the City. The report will encompass the call types recommended to be addressed by armed and unarmed responders, the name of the new department, the position descriptions of leadership of the new department, and an outline of the process used to draft the recommendations. The report will respond to the request made and approved by Common Council in the [Reimagining Public Safety Resolution](#).

### **Will there be an opportunity for community feedback on the report provided to the Common Council?**

The final report will be provided to the Common Council and members of the public on March 2, 2022. As with all initiatives, resolutions, and presentations to the Common Council, public input is encouraged. Any member of the community can provide input on plans through [www.publicsafetyreimagined.org](http://www.publicsafetyreimagined.org) or by using the advertisement placed in the free Tompkins Weekly newspaper.

### **What will the Common Council be voting on?**

Following delivery of the report to the Common Council, resolutions to implement recommendations outlined in the report will be drafted and presented for vote at future meetings.

Resources to implement Reimagining initiatives have already been approved in the 2022 City of Ithaca budget, and were based on estimates prepared by City staff and the Reimagining plan accepted by Council. These resources will be used to implement the department redesign to be voted on by Common Council.

### **Who has been involved in the City's working group process?**

The Working Group is comprised of a diverse group of community members, City employees, and elected members of Common Council. A list of members of the working group can be found on the [Reimagining website](#).

### **How does the working group make decisions?**

The Working Group operates through mutual agreement of its members.

### **What role are technical advisors playing with the working group?**

Technical advisors provide answers as needed in their particular field or speciality. Technical advisors are not part of the Working Group.

### **Were the backgrounds of working group members taken into account before they were appointed by the Mayor?**

Yes. The members of the working group represent lived experience crucial to addressing the mandate set forth in Executive Order 203. The City of Ithaca's Mayor Svante Myrick selected the working group members based on their knowledge, experience, and most disproportionately impacted by policing and the criminal justice systems. The City believes that a working group made up of diverse community members with different backgrounds and specialties is the best way to ensure community input.

### **Why are working group meetings not public meetings?**

The results of the Working Group's process will be published in the report made available to both the public and Common Council by March 2022. City staff provide updates on progress once per month at Common Council in addition to updates on the website.

The City of Ithaca believes that the work of redesigning the City department requires intensive deliberation and consensus-building. The Working Group is committed to

transparency and details on both process and decision making will be published alongside recommendations in the report.

**Is the City abolishing its police department?**

No. The City is maintaining armed police officers as a part of a newly redesigned department encompassing a wider response to public safety needs.

**What role has the Center for Policing Equity played in the City's Department Redesign process?**

The Center for Policing Equity (CPE) is a research organization that produces analyses identifying and reducing the causes of racial disparities in law enforcement CPE serves as content-experts and project managers to assist with the department redesign process. CPE brings expertise in data analysis and policing, and context from other reform and reimagining processes throughout the United States. CPE staff assists with meeting preparation and facilitation, keeping the project on track and documenting progress made by the Working Group.

**Why did the City have a report done analyzing 9-1-1 calls, officer workload, and staffing for the Ithaca Police Department? How is this report being used?**

This report, often described as the Matrix Report, was completed by Matrix Consulting based completely on data provided by the IPD, was in support of the Reimagining Public Safety initiative and in response to the unanimously-approved resolution from Common Council accepting the Reimagining plans on March 31, 2021. The analysis was completed in response to questions regarding existing IPD staffing levels and calls for service that were posed throughout the process of drafting the initial Reimagining Report. Law enforcement is a core area of expertise for Matrix consulting, having conducted over 350 studies for law enforcement agencies.

The findings can be viewed [here](#) and a recording of the presentation of the analysis to the City's working group can be found [here](#). Prior to publication, the findings were delivered to the City's Reimagining Public Safety working group, the Ithaca Police Department, and to City Common Council.

**What budgetary resources have been committed to support the Reimagining plans?**

\$707,000 has been committed in the 2022 City of Ithaca budget to support implementation of Reimagining Public Safety plans, including the department redesign. It is expected that more resources will be requested to support the department redesign in the Working Group's report.

**Has the City sought community input on its Department Redesign from the community beyond the appointed working group?**

Input is continually being sought from members of the Ithaca community. Dozens of ideas from community members have been submitted and discussed through the Reimagining website and the interactive advertisement placed weekly in the free Tompkins Weekly newspaper.

Several listening sessions have been held with community members on whom this process is centered and who experience disproportionate interaction with law enforcement, including Black

and brown community members and those experiencing homelessness. There has also been a [virtual town hall](#) for the broader community.

**How are ideas submitted by the community being evaluated?**

Ideas shared by members of the community, working group members, and other stakeholders are being evaluated using the same assessment rubrics and reviewed through the Reimagining website. Methodology will be published alongside recommendations in the Working Group report.

**Is this Department Redesign going to reduce the number of police officers employed by the City?**

According to the [resolution](#) approving the Reimagining plans and department redesign:

...employment of each of the current police officers of the Ithaca Police Department shall continue uninterrupted by such a restructuring, retaining their positions and rank in the Ithaca Police Department, without being required to apply or reapply in order to maintain their current positions and rank,...

The number of armed police officers is determined through the regular City of Ithaca budget process. The report from the Working Group will have additional recommendations on staffing for the redesigned department.

**Would new unarmed responders receive the same rate of pay as armed officers following the recent successful contract negotiations?**

The rate of pay has not been decided yet as the positions are yet to be described and scored through the Civil Service process.

**How can community members be involved?**

You can get involved by [registering for email updates](#) and providing your input through the [Reimagining website](#) or advertisement in the free Tompkins Weekly newspaper.

The City of Ithaca will continue to reach out to impacted community members for participation and feedback as this process continues.