



## *CAPCR Shout Out*

### **Why a Campaign to ReInvest in REAL Public Safety?**

by

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St. Louis reminds me of a friend who always hollers broke yet can afford a new expensive outfit or get-away junket. This so-called cash strapped city has money tucked away in all kinds of places. Like uncollected tax abatement monies. Like asset forfeiture monies. Like most of the city revenue that goes towards arrests and incarceration.

There are city dollars being unused or misspent. This is criminal when you uncover the levels of poverty, crime, miseducation, unemployment and unhoused in St. Louis. The Coalition Against Police Crimes & Repression (CAPCR) is committed to working with the community to bring this practice to a halt.

When CAPCR launched its “ReEnvisioning Public Safety” Campaign in 2016, our goals were to create a different narrative for public safety. CAPCR coupled its [social media component](#) with organizing town halls across the city.

The ReEnvisioning campaign was highly effective.

I don’t think City officials truly understand the significance of this shift. You can tell this because the mayor, police chief and public safety director are in lock step with old rhetoric about how great the St. Louis Police Department is and calling for more dollars to a system that has proven beyond a doubt that it’s corrupt and ineffective. St. Louis has made a powerful pivot and there’s no turning back.

Once the community stopped equating public safety with more cops and began understanding the root causes of crime, the logical shift was to begin exploring how to ReInvest our city tax dollars. St. Louis citizens are not in the same place they were pre-Ferguson Uprising. We are looking for not just new ways of looking at public safety but fundamentally different ways.

First, we must know where we can divest so that we effectively ReInvest. The City budget is like a scavenger hunt where you must break the code to get in and find the information you need.

There are a few streams of thought about the concept of policing from community policing to eliminating the department. And we’ll have to discuss and debate our way to consensus on where we’ll ultimately end up over time.

In the meantime, in between time, the code-breakers must share the information we have to those who are also on the hunt. We believe the Justice Policy Institute when it says that cities that spend the most on policing and incarceration have “the greatest opportunity for more effective investments that will more likely promote community well-being and result in safer communities.”

CAPCR joins citizens in looking for a comprehensive and holistic approach to healthy families and neighborhoods. This is where we can get creative but keep it real.

We know we need a different and more responsive educational system. We need an abundance of health and mental health services. We need jobs that pay living wages and that don't expose workers to oppressive work conditions. These systems also need ReEnvisioning if they are to meet the challenges St. Louis faces in 2019.

CAPCR has some ideas about how to move St. Louis to a better place. We're not sitting around complaining about the status quo. We have recommended evidence-based programs like CURE Violence to city officials like Aldermanic President Lewis Reed and Public Safety Director Jimmy Edwards. We'll discuss this program and others in future blogs.

We invite you to become part of a grassroots movement that dares to challenge a racist system of control and ReEnvision a society where all citizens are safe, and their basic human needs are met with dignity. We need REAL Public Safety.

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Photo Credit: Richard Reilly