



## *CAPCR Shout Out*

Inequitable Better Together “Plan” Won’t Create Equitable Policing

by

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When analyzing the Better Together merger proposal as it relates to the complex process of merging our 55 police departments, I expected to find a long, involved document. Instead, I found almost nothing.

In its 160 page report, barely more than one page discusses Better Together’s recommended policing plan. It is a tribute to the glories of a single department that they say, without evidence, will promote professionalism and equity. Another two pages in Appendix D make similar unsubstantiated claims.

Better Together makes the case that many of the tiny municipal departments are inefficient and of poor quality; we all agree to that. But what will it actually entail to merge the two big departments—County and City? What would be gained or lost?

Would we lose the Civilian Oversight Board (COB) that city residents fought so hard to establish? Would we keep the County’s Board of Police Commissioners, even though City residents did away with the ineffective Police Board after years of seeing it captured and dominated by the Chief of Police?

The answers are implicit in Better Together’s proposed decision-making process.

The County Executive would be the new mayor.

The County Charter, with its police board provisions, would be the new Charter.

The process for changing that Charter is undemocratic—a proposal for a new governmental plan will be put forward by the current City and County mayors and will go into effect (apparently without chance for amendments) unless two thirds of the new metro council vote it down.

All local ordinances will be re-written by the city counselor, who is appointed by the current County Executive; again, the council must vote up or down on the whole package.

Clearly, this is less a merging of partners and more the County swallowing the City whole.

The resulting police force will be the County police force.

In its [2015 Collaborative Review](#), the Department of Justice criticized the County police for their overly tactical, militarized approach and a lack of emphasis on community policing. We saw the resulting militarized response in Ferguson. Is this the model of policing we want throughout the region?

It's hard to see how this would result in better policing. Neither the City nor the County has a history of equity. Bigger and allegedly more efficient does not change the culture of police departments that have historically been unfair to their Black and Hispanic populations.

The County police department is [more than twice as likely](#) to stop Black drivers as it is to stop White drivers. Why would Black people feel the police are any less of an occupying army when this culture expands into their own neighborhoods? This is the elephant in the room, and it is not solved by this merger proposal.

In 2015, the Coalition Against Police Crimes & Repression (CAPCR) [proposed a merger plan](#) to solve the problems created by mini-departments and create more police accountability.

CAPCR's plan calls for a "federated" policing model. Small departments would keep their ability to hire and fire, and their ability to enforce local ordinances, while the plan calls for making uniform crucial policies such as use of force.

Simultaneously, the CAPCR plan would centralize accountability in one Internal Affairs office and create an overarching civilian oversight office with smaller localized oversight boards--three or four for the entire metropolitan region. The smaller boards would reflect local populations and standards.

These proposals provide the efficiencies of centralization (such as professional investigators for the COB, not affordable by small munis) with local representation and responsiveness.

These principles need to be applied to the whole merger plan—one that would be better having been created together, from a shared vision, complete with details.