

Hello. My name is Gaye Sorenson. I'm an ISAIAH leader and live in Ward 7.

Being safe in our homes and communities is very important to all St. Paulites no matter their race, income or neighborhood.

It's important we have mechanisms to collectively assess how St. Paul is becoming the safe place we all want.

For too long the police department in St. Paul has demanded huge amounts of our tax money and then operated in the shadows with limited accountability and transparency.

We're seeing this currently play out in the questions some community members have about the Saint Paul police department's role in the no knock warrant that led to Amir Locke's death.

Only a small group of Saint Paulites are benefiting from pushing for only the "more cops" solution to public safety, even though this approach has never been adequate and tends to target black and brown citizens, and residents of low-income neighborhoods.

It's dangerous when our leaders give into the fear and divisive rhetoric of some of their constituents who call only for more law and order.

As a resident of Ward 7, I believe we can transform public safety so that it's based on prevention and restoration, because it's what St. Paul wants, and because we've already started this important and exciting work.

We know that many 9-1-1 calls can be responded to by professionals that are not police officers.

We know we need people responding to tense situations who live in our neighborhoods and can de-escalate situations, know how to respond to a mental health crisis, and can direct people to the services they need to live a peaceful life.

We know that addressing the root causes of crime and violence, like poverty and unequal access to good schools, can make us safer, make us a real community.

I'm excited that we are moving forward with establishing an Office of Neighborhood safety to set priorities and implement community centered prevention and restorative strategies. And they can help make sure we treat all members of the community with dignity, regardless of race or class. We can create true public safety in St. Paul.