

From: [Stacia Wick](#)
To: [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: 2021 Budget
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Thank you for reading my comments!

I have lived in St. Paul since 2006 when I settled down with my partner and two children near J.J. Hill Elementary. We have been the beneficiaries of the amazing teachers and staff at the public schools Freya (senior at Open World Learning) and Ingrid (junior at Central HS) have attended. We also knew and loved Philando Castile as the lunchroom supervisor at J.J. Hill—and have been transformed by his tragic death at the hands of a police officer in 2016. This injustice allowed the “scales” to fall from the eyes of everyone in my family (of white-identified people) as to the reality of system racism within our country, state, and city. We have all been reckoning with what it mean to be white in America right now in ways that have been truly transformational.

My white neighbors and I have been meeting in our homes (and since March—in our backyards) to do the work of understanding better the social construction of whiteness, the reality of life and experiences of our Black, Indigenous and other neighbors who are people of color, and the truth about the history of life in America. And what I have discovered, much to my shock and shame, is that this is a segregated country. That life is very different if you are living in a Black body vs. a white body. And this is especially terrifying in the context of policing. Right here in St. Paul, BIPOC citizens are terrified that a police interaction may go awry and end in their death. And this terror is compounded by other systemic inequities embedded in our government and civic life—environmental injustice that disproportionately impacts the neighborhoods where BIPOC families live, opportunity gaps in education, housing, business development, healthcare, and on and on.

So what can I do as a white person who benefits from the current unequal and unfair system? Well, I can urge you to make changes that benefit BIPOC citizens—and center their concerns and needs—no matter what backlash you fear from white citizens. I am a white St. Paul resident who is calling on the City Council to develop public safety systems that focus AWAY from traditional policing and TOWARD investment in communities, children, and systems that measurable benefit BIPOC families in need. Please commit more of the city budget to housing, parks and recreation, libraries, environmental projects—like expanded access to trails, bike routes, and affordable (or free) public transit. And please DO NOT continue to funnel disproportionate amounts to the SPPD. SPPD should also work to let go of some functions it performs in order to reduce officer-involved violence. For example, please invest in NON-POLICE mental health responders to respond to emergency (911) calls with a known mental health concern. I work as a school psychologist and can attest (both personally and professionally) to the training required to respond to people in the midst of a mental health crisis successfully (and without harm to anyone). Conversations I have had with police in the past 4 years have revealed common ground on this topic—officers themselves acknowledge that they do not have sufficient training in this area and would WELCOME directing those calls to others who do. This should not be a difficult decision for the Council. These programs now exist in St. Paul and with SPPD—expand them. This is happening in Minneapolis and cities around the country. We could lead.

Thank you for considering these requests. One of my most proud moments in the time of

Covid has been the activation of my own kids as neighbors and citizens during difficult times. My older daughter voted for the first time in November (and worked with voting groups to register her peers throughout the summer/fall) and my younger daughter has also submitted comments on the 2021 budget. I tell them that using their voice matters. Please make that be so by listening to everyone who is commenting on this budget—and incorporating that feedback into your decision making.

With gratitude and in partnership,
Stacia Wick