



## Coalition for Elliot Park - Public Safety Forum

March 7th, 2024 at 6-8pm

### Panelists:

- MPD 1<sup>st</sup> Precinct Inspector Bill Peterson
- MPD Lieutenant John Engle
- Ward 6 Councilmember Jamal Osman
- MPPD Chief Jason Ohotto
- MPPD Patrol Supervising Lieutenant Andrew Klein
- MPRB 4<sup>th</sup> District Commissioner Elizabeth Shaffer
- MPRB CCVP Coordinator Abdirahman Mukhtar

### Forum Info:

- Crime Prevention Specialists (Precinct 1) are part of the Coalition, but not able to attend due to illness
- Catholic Charities and other businesses are also part of the Coalition but not panelists intentionally- this Forum was created for public safety focus and there will be future forums with opportunity for engaging with businesses in Coalition
- There was not an open mic at the Forum, questions were solicited in advance and collected at the meeting (not every question was asked, but all questions shared with panelists afterwards)
- Metro Transit was not in attendance due to other engagements, they are kept in the loop on what the Coalition is working on
- Mayor Frey was intentionally not invited to this Forum, again because the public safety focus intended to get the ball rolling- he may attend future forums
- Public Safety in the park is a [‘wicked problem’](#) that will require time, patience, and exploration of new and old tactics to solve- partnership, communication, and ongoing commitment will be required

### Panel Notes:

- MPD says there was an uptick in crime during 2021-2022, correlated with Catholic Charities opening
  - Similar to prior experiences at Franklin Steele Park, but without response to increased law enforcement presence
  - Crimes involve repeat offenders who are not put off by consequences
  - Increased major crimes (aggravated assaults, auto thefts, etc.) in Elliot Park- is top monitored Park across the City
- CM Osman agrees Frey Center is a draw for those in need or who have nowhere else to go, Abdi Mukhtar (MPRB- Community Connections & Violence Prevention) also mentions HCMC as a resource for this population
- Community Connections & Violence Prevention (CCVP) are ambassadors for the parks and when they engage with users of Elliot Park, they frequently offer social services and are often first responders to potential encampments
  - Many people who are offered services refuse them and they cannot force anyone to utilize them
  - Usually engaging with loitering people early in the morning is useful because it is before drugs or alcohol are used
- MPD and MPPD emphasize there are systemic issues at play, bigger than police can solve such as increased drug addiction with Fentanyl and homelessness
  - Both PD's say that drug dealers are predatory to people in the Park
- Commissioner Schaffer mentions there is \$1.8 million allocated to redesign Elliot Park- there is an emphasis to examine the East side of the park
  - Emma and Mike (MPRB planners) are a part of the Coalition and have begun to solicit information about what people would like to see in the Park
  - Will host future Forums and continuing conversations with community
- Shannon (mediator of panel, ED of East Town Business Partnership, partner in Coalition for Elliot Park) mentioned the goals of Coalition are: creating events/activations, supporting Park programming, influencing Park design, and soliciting community participation
  - Rec Center offers regular youth programming; Coalition is attempting to support the expansion of events and programming for adults
  - EPNI has been hosting regular clean-ups of the Park, which has been a useful tactic in the changes at Franklin Steele
- CM Osman has begun hosting office hours in Elliot Park and urges community to utilize existing resources such as BCR (Behavioral Crisis Response) and 311
  - Elliot Park is the district which utilizes 311 the least
- 311 can be used to flag activities, people, and damages that are problematic but non-emergencies, response will not be immediate but will happen

- Can also email or use an app to submit information as opposed to or in addition to calling
- Including broken streetlights- MPD shares increase in copper theft from streetlights being broken
- Commissioner also mentions she would like to receive more emails from Elliot residents
  - Park Board meetings are open to public with ~3 minutes offered to anyone who would like to present
  - Most walking groups are begun with concerned residents and are very useful tactics- requires residents to stay involved and challenge fear
    - Activation and presence discourages antisocial behavior
- MPD cameras are out year-round, MPPD cameras will be returning soon (are typically not used during winter)
  - Radio shared across PD's, also accessible to Metro Transit PD
  - Lt. Engle also shared bus shelters are a high priority for Metro Transit PD (specifically 11<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>)
- MPD also shares they are down ~400 officers (1<sup>st</sup> precinct is -50%), however existing officers are committed- many take breaks while parked at Elliot
  - Metro Transit PD is also considerably down in officers
  - Regardless, representatives of each PD say they would like to be contacted and know what is happening at the Park
- Wako (ED of EPNI) has been in office 6-7 months and has spent time reaching out to community members- acknowledges EPNI was defunct through the pandemic but is here now and wants to create change through partnership (with Coalition and with residents)
  - Wako has moved to the neighborhood and seeks solution-driven collaboration, to do so time + patience + trust are what he asks for
  - Action will be slow and following feedback
  - “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.”