City of Seattle
Mayor Katie B. Wilson

SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

2026 Police Chief Search Community Engagement Report

Prepared by: City of Seattle's Innovation & Performance Team & Seattle Neighborhood Group

Date: 10/19/26



"I am looking for a leader who understands that public safety starts with public trust. It is a trust that is earned every single day. Seattle's next police chief must be visible, accountable, and present in our neighborhoods, listening to residents, workers, and businesses across our city. We need a leader who will also be present and engaged within SPD, with a focus on operational excellence, leadership development, and internal culture, ensuring that SPD is a great place to work and that every employee does their part to build relationships with the communities this department serves."

— Mayor Katie Wilson

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Executive Summary

Using a community-informed engagement strategy, Mayor Wilson is guiding the Police Chief search by creating opportunities for residents, workers, visitors, and community leaders to share what they believe is most important for future public-safety leadership for the City of Seattle. The City partnered with Seattle Neighborhood Group, an organization that envisions safe, crime-free communities where people work together, children feel secure, and businesses flourish. Grounded in core values of integrity, inclusiveness, teamwork, communication, and community collaboration, Seattle Neighborhood Group helped ensure the engagement process was rooted in trust and centered on authentic community voice.

The engagement approach included a public survey, small roundtable discussions with community leaders, and public listening sessions across South, Central, and North Seattle. In total, 1,322 survey respondents and more than 400 participants across roundtables and listening sessions contributed their perspectives. This report provides a summary of the engagement, including the methods used, key themes raised across communities, and how this input will inform the Police Chief search. These insights will guide the Police Chief Search Advisory Committee as it assesses how well candidates align with community priorities.

Community Engagement Approach

Mayor Wilson made a commitment to lead the Seattle Police Chief search with a community-informed approach.

The community engagement strategy included three ways to share feedback:

1. An online public survey
2. Small, invitation-only, roundtables with leaders from diverse communities
3. Public listening sessions with interpretation in the most commonly spoken local languages

The public survey and conversations focused on the qualities and experiences candidates would bring to the role, how the community hopes the next Chief will engage with residents, and what positive outcomes candidates have driven in their previous work. By ensuring that interpretation was available in languages such as Somali, Amharic, Tigrinya, Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Mandarin at the listening sessions, and through direct outreach to dozens of organizations and community members by the Mayor's Office Community Relations Team, Seattle Neighborhood Group, and the City's Department of Neighborhoods, Mayor Wilson's office was able to engage a substantial cross-section of residents who live, work, and play in Seattle.

We hosted an additional listening session at the Filipino Community Center, with intentional recruitment done among Vietnamese, Cantonese, and Mandarin-speaking populations, as well as conducted individual interviews with community organizations in West Seattle. Community feedback gathered through this process will support the Police Chief Search Advisory Committee in identifying priorities for the qualities, experience, and expertise to look for during the initial assessment of candidates.

Engagement Principles and Goals

As a former community organizer, Mayor Wilson believes strongly in the value of community input in her most important decisions. The community engagement approach was centered on the understanding that Seattle's communities are diverse in their perspectives, experiences, and priorities. Engagement activities were designed to help the Police Chief Search Advisory Committee and the mayor better understand these viewpoints and what residents consider most important for public safety leadership. Gathering and synthesizing this input into Advisory Committee guidance was intended to ensure that community priorities are meaningfully reflected in the decisions surrounding the future leadership of the Seattle Police Department.

Methods

Public Survey

A public survey was developed and promoted as a part of the announcement of the Police Chief search. The survey included ranking questions to help surface which skills, experiences, and qualities community members see as top priorities, recognizing that all are important, but some rise to the top. An open-ended question was also included to allow respondents to share additional perspectives on what they believe is most important for the next Chief.

The survey consisted of seven questions including two demographic items about survey respondents' connection to Seattle, four ranking questions about preferred leadership skills and approaches, and one open-ended question for any additional priorities. **See Appendix A**.

Community Leader Roundtables

Mayor Wilson hosted a series of small community roundtables, facilitated by the Seattle Neighborhood Group, to hear from leaders with diverse experiences and backgrounds about their priorities for the next Police Chief. These roundtables took place from September to October 2026. Like the public survey, participants discussed three questions

over 60 minutes, focusing on the experience, personal qualities, and community engagement approach they expect from the next Chief. **See Appendix B.**

Public Listening Sessions

Lastly, on behalf of the Mayor's Office, the Seattle Neighborhood Group facilitated four public listening sessions in South (September 26, 2026), Central (September 28, 2026), North (September 30, 2026) Seattle as well as a south-end, Asian communities listening session with interpretation (October 16, 2026). The sessions used the same questions as the community roundtables and were conducted in small groups over two hours. Seattle Neighborhood Group provided live recaps from each small-group discussion and synthesized the results into the summaries included in this report.

Public listening session participation included:

- **South Seattle:** 78 participants
- **Central Seattle:** 55 participants
- **North Seattle:** 78 participants
- **South-End, Asian Communities:** 42 participants

Timeline

Date	Milestone	Time/Location
8/25/2026	Public Announcement	Mayor Wilson Launches Search for Seattle's Next Police Chief - Office of the Mayor
8/25/2026	Community Survey Open	Seattleites weigh in on the search for the city's next police chief Seattle police chief search: Residents say they want someone local
9/15/2026	Community Survey Closed	
9/16/2026	Youth Roundtable	4:30PM-5:30PM, City Hall
9/23/2026	Immigrant & Refugee Leaders Roundtable	5:30PM-6:30PM, City Hall
9/24/2026	LGBTQIA+ Leaders Roundtable	4:30PM-5:30PM, City Hall

9/26/2026	Indigenous Leaders Roundtable	11:30AM-12:30PM, City Hall
9/26/2026	Community Listening Session #1 – South	12:00PM-2:00PM, Van Asselt Community Center Gym
9/28/2026	Community Listening Session #2 - Central	6:00PM-8:00PM, Seattle University, Campion Ballroom
9/29/2026	African American Leaders Roundtable	1:30PM-2:30PM, City Hall
9/30/2026	Community Listening Session #3 – North	6:00PM-8:00PM, North Seattle College, World Community Center
10/3/2026	Asian American, Native Hawaiian, & Pacific Islander Leaders Roundtable	3:00PM-4:00PM, Remote
10/5/2026	Indigenous Leaders Roundtable	11:00AM-12:00PM, Remote
10/7/2026	Business Leaders Roundtable	5:30PM-6:30PM, City Hall
10/16/2026	South-End, Asian Communities Listening Session	6:00PM-8:00PM, Filipino Community of Seatle
10/20/2026	Latinx Leaders Roundtable	5:00PM-6:00PM, El Centro de La Raza
10/20/2026	Community Engagement Complete	---

Key Themes and Insights

Across all community engagement efforts and methods, participants expressed consistent alignment on the qualities and priorities they expect from the next Police Chief. **The following themes capture the shared priorities and points of broad agreement expressed by participants from diverse neighborhoods and lived experiences throughout the process:**

1. Strong desire for a Chief who is deeply connected to Seattle, actively engaged in neighborhoods, and responsive to the city's diverse communities.
2. Interest in proactive, relationship-based engagement with youth, immigrant and refugee communities, LGBTQIA+ residents, Indigenous communities, and neighborhoods facing long-standing safety challenges.

3. Universal emphasis on accountability, transparency, cultural reform within SPD, and rebuilding community trust through consistent, relationship-based policing.
4. Broad agreement that operational performance must improve, including faster 9-1-1 response, more visible patrols, better coordination across departments, and measurable safety outcomes.
5. Desire for a balanced public safety approach that pairs enforcement with prevention, public health strategies, and expanded diversified crisis response such as CARE.
6. Clear preference for a leader with cultural competence, emotional intelligence, humility, and the ability to build strong relationships with community members.
7. Desire for a collaborative, data-driven Chief who can partner effectively with city departments, schools, businesses, and community organizations to address crime, disorder, and everyday safety.

Areas of Differing Perspectives

While many themes were consistent across engagement efforts, participants also expressed differing viewpoints. These variations reflect the diverse experiences and priorities of those who participated, as well as perspectives we may not have captured from community members who were unable or chose not to take part.

These differing viewpoints include:

1. Mixed views on whether the Chief should be an internal candidate familiar with SPD or an external reformer capable of breaking old patterns.
2. Differences in how strongly communities emphasize enforcement versus prevention or public health approaches.
3. Varied comfort levels with surveillance and technology, especially across age and cultural groups.
4. Different expectations around police presence in schools, with youth wanting supportive but well-trained officers, not disciplinary monitors.
5. Some participants prioritize reducing police footprint in social crises, while others want increased patrols for deterrence and reassurance.

What the Community Input Suggests

Based on community input, candidates need to demonstrate the following:

1. Deep experience building trust with communities and a track record of relationship-based policing.
2. Clear, consistent communication skills, humility, and the ability to navigate complex environments with steadiness, transparency, and integrity.

3. Proven capability to strengthen operational performance, including improved investigations, crisis response, and visible, reliable police presence.
4. A commitment to balancing enforcement with upstream, public-health-aligned safety strategies is essential.
5. Comfort working alongside diversified response teams, civilian oversight entities, and multidisciplinary partners to deliver coordinated community safety.

Opportunities Identified by Participants

In addition to expectations for the next Chief, participants outlined broader opportunities for system-level improvement:

1. Restore trust by rebuilding community policing models, foot and bike patrols, and consistent presence in schools and neighborhoods.
2. Strengthen cross-agency partnerships to address homelessness, behavioral health, youth violence, and neighborhood safety.
3. Redesign transparency practices through public dashboards, community briefings, and accessible data.
4. Build systems that elevate community voice beyond listening sessions, especially youth, elders, immigrant communities, LGBTQIA+ residents, and people most impacted by violence.
5. Implement modern, data-driven strategies and rethink outdated practices through innovation and community co-design.

Recommendations for Consideration

Participants also provided recommendations to consider beyond the Police Chief Search to ensure the new Chief is held accountable to community standards:

1. Require a clear, evidence-based plan for cultural reform, meaningful accountability measures, and constructive engagement with labor partners.
2. Evaluate the Chief's performance based on measurable operational improvements, including response times, investigative effectiveness, and cross department coordination.
3. Set explicit expectations for transparency, consistent communication, and ongoing, proactive community engagement.
4. Establish structured feedback loops that ensure community input continues well beyond the hiring process and informs ongoing oversight.

Additional Comments and Feedback

Survey respondents and participants in the public listening sessions and roundtables provided comments beyond the specific questions addressed through the survey and listening sessions. These comments included observations and feedback about the survey format and approach, neighborhood representation in the survey's geographic question, as well as broader comments regarding the decision-making process, past actions, and views of the mayor.

Because these comments did not directly address the questions included in the survey or the topics identified for the listening sessions, they were not included in the quantitative or thematic analysis captured in this report. However, they provide additional context regarding participants' experiences with the engagement process and their broader perspectives that can be leveraged in future community engagement that will be conducted during the confirmation and onboarding of the new Police Chief.

Next Steps

The Police Chief Search Advisory Committee will review the findings from the community engagement process and reflect on the skills, qualities, experience, and leadership characteristics that the community identified as priorities. These priorities will inform a rubric that will be used to support a consistent assessment of candidates throughout the process.

The community engagement findings will also provide context for the mayor's interviews with finalists, helping ensure that community perspectives are considered as she evaluates candidates. Together, these steps will help connect the community engagement process to the broader leadership selection process.

Stay up to date on the Police Chief search at Police Chief Search - Mayor | seattle.gov.

Appendix

Appendix A: Survey

We Want Your Input! Tell Us What You Want to See in Seattle's Next Police Chief

The City of Seattle is hiring a new Police Chief and wants to hear what you think. Your feedback will guide the Police Chief Search Advisory Committee in recommending which candidates should move forward before Mayor Katie Wilson makes a final choice.

The new Police Chief will work with other law enforcement agencies, build strong teams inside the Seattle Police Department, and collaborate with other City departments, community organizations, and businesses to create comprehensive public safety strategies. The Chief will also speak with the public, explain decisions clearly, and help build trust in all Seattle neighborhoods. Candidates must meet Washington State's standards for police officers and Police Chiefs.

Information provided in this form is considered a public record and may be subject to public disclosure. For more information, see the Public Records Act, RCW Chapter 42.56. To learn more about how we manage your information, see our Privacy Statement at https://www.seattle.gov/privacy-statement.

This survey will take about five minutes

1. **Do you live, work, or spend time in Seattle? Select all that apply.** *

- [ ] I live in Seattle
- [ ] I work in Seattle
- [ ] I spend time in Seattle
- [ ] I own a business in Seattle

2. **What part of the city do you live or spend most of your time in?** *

- ○ North Seattle (e.g., Ballard, Greenwood, Northgate, Lake City, Ravenna)
- ○ South Seattle (e.g., Rainier Beach, Beacon Hill, Columbia City, Seward Park, Georgetown)
- ○ Southwest Seattle (e.g., West Seattle, Delridge, South Park, Fauntleroy)
- ○ East Seattle (e.g., Capitol Hill, Central District, Madison Park, Montlake)
- ○ Downtown Seattle (e.g., Belltown, Chinatown-International District, Pike Place, Pioneer Square, South Lake Union)

3. **What skills or experiences should the next Police Chief have? Please rank them from most important to least important.** *

- Knows Seattle's safety issues and community needs
- Has led a police department or held a high-level police job
- Has worked in many police roles during their career
- Has a record of applying an equity lens to policing
- Has improved safety and accountability in real, measurable ways

4. **What qualities do you think are most important for our next leader? Please rank them from most important to least important.** *

- Dedicated to serving the community and works well with others
- Can make difficult decisions and stay calm when things get stressful
- Knows what they are good at and what they need to work on, listens to others, and takes action to move forward
- Treats everyone with respect, no matter who they are or where they come from
- Believes that keeping people safe means more than responding to emergencies by helping prevent problems and supporting the community's well-being

5. **What public safety leadership experience should the next Police Chief have? Please rank them from most important to least important.** *

- Built neighborhood-focused safety strategies that work on the ground
- Has worked with civilian crisis responders or social workers
- Has helped with issues like noise, public intoxication, and drug problems
- Has strengthened accountability systems and built trust with communities
- Has successfully hired, trained, and/or supervised officers who reflect the community

6. **How should the Police Chief work with the community? Please rank them from most important to least important.** *

- Shows up at events and meetings hosted by the community
- Communicates clearly about decisions and policies
- Builds long-term relationships with local groups and businesses
- Listens first to understand concerns
- Spends time in the precincts building relationships with captains and staff, and supports their focus on connecting with neighborhood residents, community groups, and small businesses

7. Are there other qualities or experiences not listed that you think are important for the next Police Chief?

Please enter at most 4000 characters

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Microsoft Forms


Seattle Police Chief
Community Listening
SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP


Welcome &
Introductions
SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

Groundrules & Expectations

Discuss, don't debate: The goal is to share different views and learn, not to win an argument or change minds.

One person speaks at a time: Listen actively while others talk and avoid side conversations or interrupting.

Respect all perspectives: Acknowledge that everyone has a right to their own lived experience, even if you disagree.

Share the airtime

Working towards the goal

SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

Chief of Police Search Process

A community informed recruitment process

August 2026

Job Posting
Announcement of the job opening

September – October 2026

Community Engagement
Survey, listening sessions & roundtables

October – November 2026

Advisory Committee
Candidate recommendations based on community input

November – December 2026

Candidate Evaluation
Exam, site visits, interview with the Mayor & selection

Early 2027

Announcement
Public announcement of the new Police Chief

Job Posting

Announcement

SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

Discussion questions

What kind of experience is most important to you for the next Police Chief?

(examples: "knows Seattle and its communities" or "developed neighborhood-based public safety strategies" or "has worked with civilian responders or social workers")

(10 min)

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Discussion questions

What kinds of character qualities are most important to you in the next Police Chief?

(examples: "able to stay calm under pressure" or "works well with other leaders and officers")

(10 min)

SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

Discussion questions

How should the next chief engage and build trust with the community ?

(examples: "build long-term relationships" or "show up at community events")

(10 min)



Recap & Thank you



Appendix C: Community Engagement Summary

Community Survey Results

Community Survey Demographics

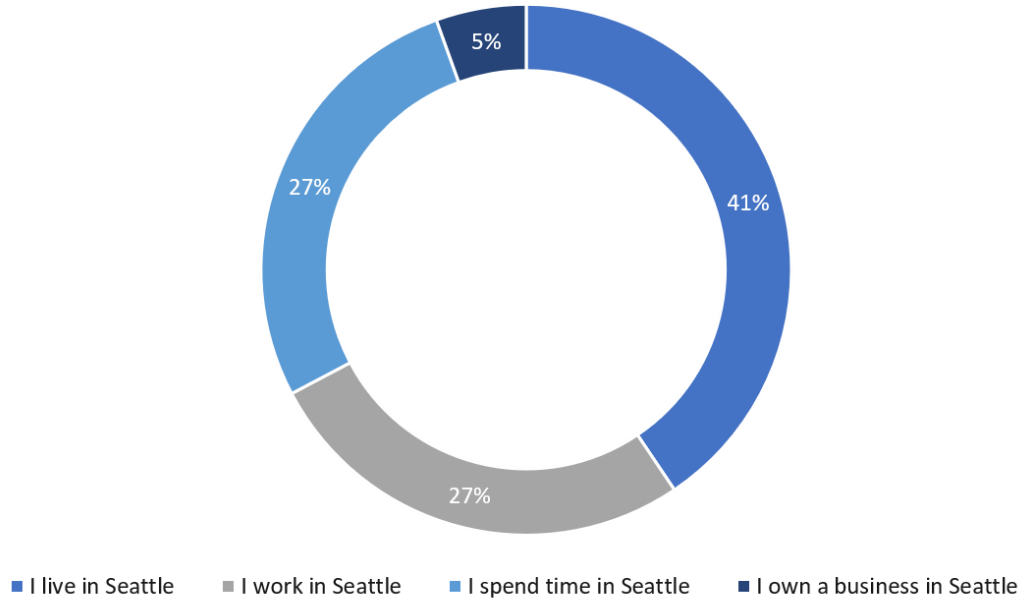
The community survey generated 1,322 responses from across the city, with most survey responses represented by North Seattle (28%) followed by Downtown Seattle (24%), Southwest (19%), East Seattle (19%), and South Seattle (10%).

Survey Limitations

A key limitation of the survey was how it was distributed, primarily through the Police Chief search announcement, with limited proactive outreach. As a result, some community members may not have been aware of the survey, which could have influenced who chose to participate. The findings should therefore be interpreted with an understanding of the potential for selection bias. Additional community-engagement methods were used to help address these gaps and strengthen the overall input.

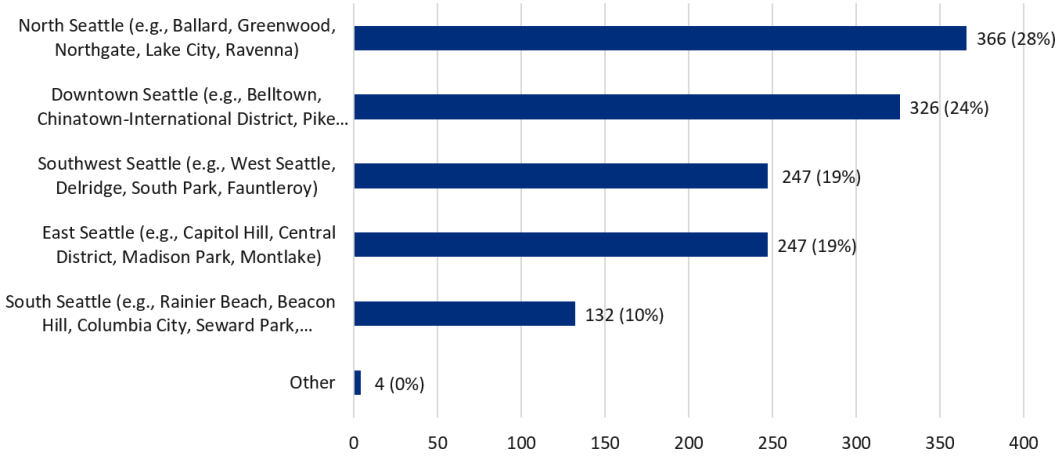
Demographic Representation

Do you live, work, or spend time in Seattle? Select all that apply.



Geographic Representation

What part of the city do you live or spend time in?

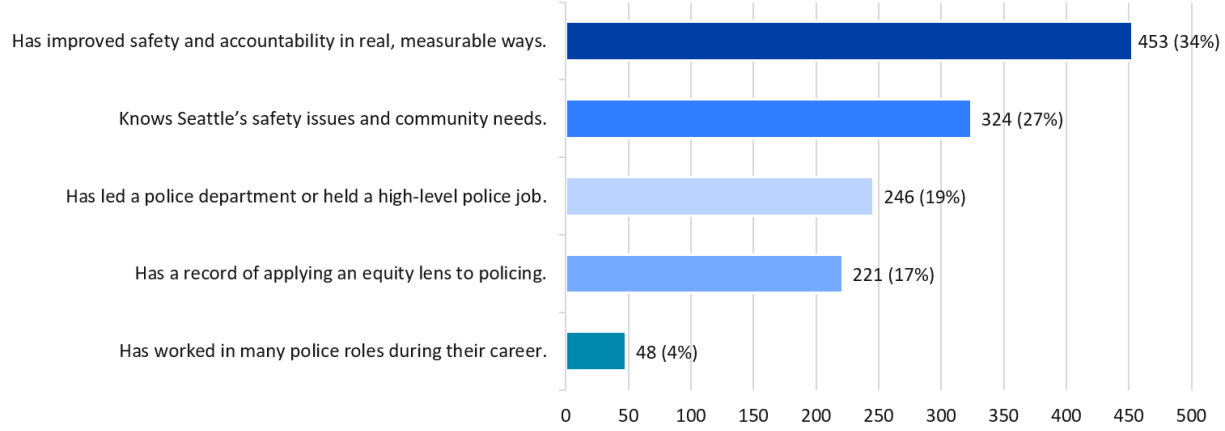


Community Survey Summary

What skills or experiences should the next Police Chief have?

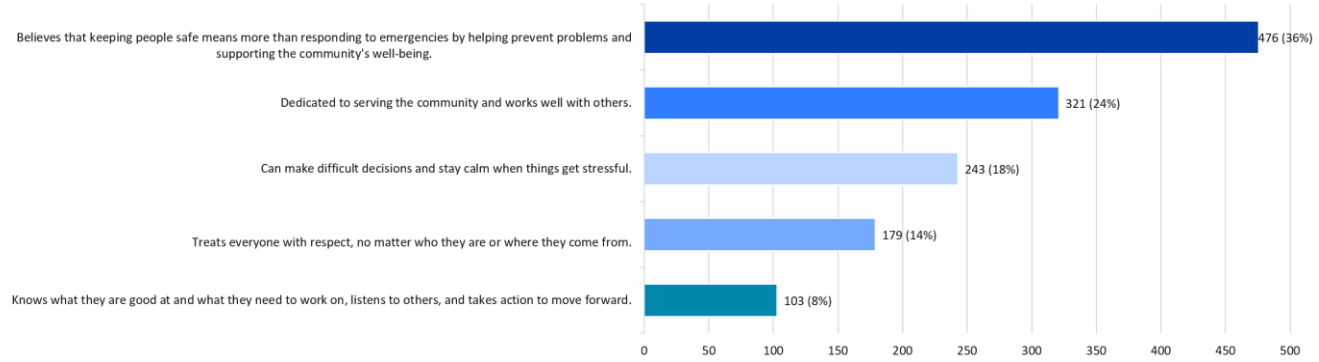
Survey respondents' top rankings (34%) reflect a primary emphasis on candidates demonstrating documented improvements in safety and accountability.

A closely ranked secondary priority (27%) was familiarity with Seattle's unique safety issues and community needs.



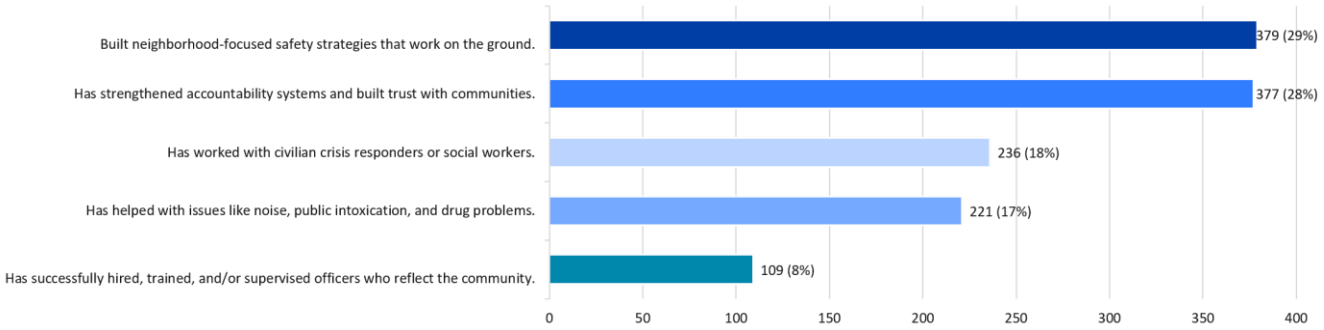
What qualities do you think are most important for our next leader?

Survey respondents' top choice (36%) is a leader who takes a proactive approach to safety and invests in community well-being. The next most selected priority (24%) emphasizes a leader who is community-minded and works well with others.



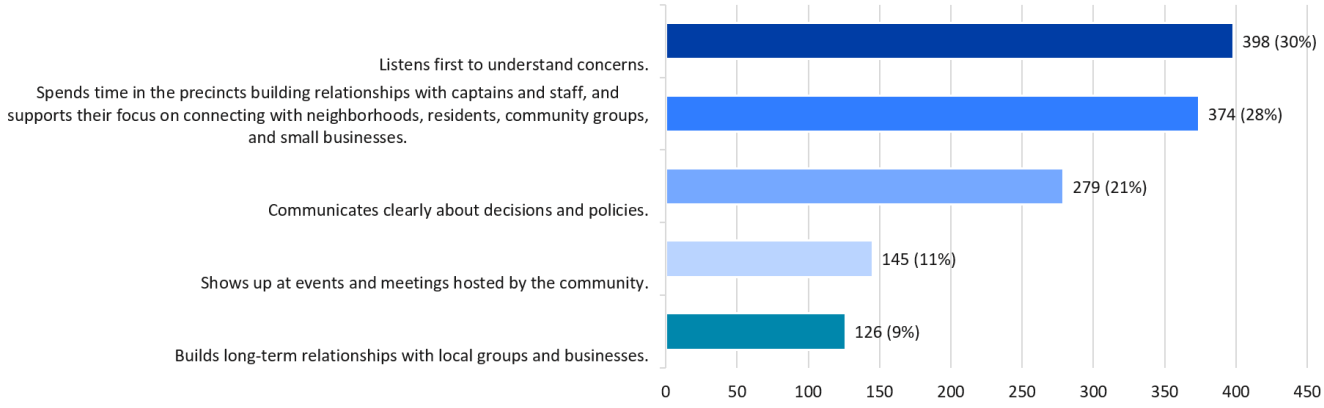
What public safety leadership experience should the next Police Chief have?

Two nearly equal priorities emerged for public safety leadership experience including neighborhood-based safety strategies (29%) and accountability and trust (28%).



How should the Police Chief work with the community?

Survey respondents prioritized leadership that is accessible and engaged by listening first (30%), builds relationships (28%), and communicates decisions clearly (21%).



Are there other qualities or experiences not listed that you think are important for the next Police Chief?

Four key expectations for the next Police Chief were surfaced by survey 931 of the respondents in response to the open-ended question:

1. **Personal & Professional Commitment to Seattle:** understands Seattle neighborhoods and engages with the community firsthand.
2. **Visible Crime Reduction & Improvement to Everyday Safety:** focuses on open-air drug markets, property crime, gun violence, street disorder, and reliable response times.
3. **Cultural Reform & Real Accountability:** strengthens professional conduct, transparency, discipline for misconduct, and trust across communities.
4. **Balanced Enforcement & Modern Public Safety Approaches:** supports CARE and diversified crisis response, public-health strategies, prevention, and community engagement.

Theme 1: Personal & Professional Commitment to Seattle

Survey respondents have strong expectations that the next Police Chief should have a personal and professional commitment to the city.
Key takeaways:

1. Desire for the Chief to reside in Seattle.
2. Preference for local or regional candidates who understand Seattle.
3. Deep connection to Seattle communities.

Illustrative Comments:

- *"Ties to the community - we need somebody who lives in the city that they serve. Somebody willing to speak truth to power while navigating the political realities of the job."*
- *"The chief must live in Seattle. True leadership requires being an active, visible part of our local communities. Reformers and researchers alike have long identified community ties as an essential factor in reducing adversarial relationships between police and communities, particularly for marginalized communities."*
- *"Our next Police Chief should take this job because they want to serve and protect Seattle….not to advance their career or agenda."*

Sub-Theme: Executive Qualities Needed for Effective Police Leadership

Survey respondents want a Police Chief that has integrity, is a clear communicator and critical thinker, has experience in a large city, is data driven, and can recruit and retain officers:

- *"The best qualities in a police chief combine unwavering integrity, community-centered vision, and the ability to balance the complex demands of both the public and the force. Also, safety of the city must be top of mind so a chief with strong data-driven strategy skills, clear accountability, and deep community trust is crucial."*
- *"The next chief should also be a critical thinker who does the necessary homework before taking public positions on complicated issues. They should be comfortable giving the mayor candid professional advice while also respecting civilian oversight and the policy decisions made by elected leadership."*
- *"The police chief should be someone who can inspire enforcement and work ethic in the police force."*
- *"A police chief must build and lead a police organization that can deliver the public safety services that the city wants. That's recruiting, training, sustaining, managing and operating a police service."*
- *"The new police chief should be someone with a passion for humane and respectful treatment of the entire community, even the accused and convicted."*
- *"You need someone who is a non-political professional. Someone who understands the community. Someone who is independent and can push back on elected officials' well-intended but often bad policies."*
- *"While experience is key, education broadens the decision-making mindset. Our candidate should have bolstered their career experience with high academic achievements outside of any military advancement."*
- *"Understands what other cities are doing and what is working that can be brought to Seattle."*

Theme 2: Visible Crime Reduction & Improvement to Everyday Safety

Survey respondents want someone who will apply a consistent approach to law enforcement that produces visible progress in reducing crime and traffic violations and restores Seattle's public spaces.

Key takeaways:

1. Address open-air drug markets and street disorder.
2. Prioritize reducing gang activity, gun violence.
3. Take nonviolent crimes and civil infractions seriously, too (property crimes, traffic violations, street racing, expired tabs).
4. Restore a sense of safety in public spaces and transit.

Illustrative Comments:

- *"My top priority for the next Police Chief is a leader who will prioritize proactive policing and strictly enforce laws regarding property crime, theft, and public disorder. We need a Chief with a proven track record of dismantling open-air drug markets and strictly enforcing laws against public drug consumption."*
- *"Researches policies and approaches that have successfully led to declining crime rates in other cities and implements them in Seattle."*
- *"Deter and prevent crime - even small ones like shoplifting - and enforce the laws on our books."*
- *"We need someone who sees traffic violence as a public safety threat, and who believes that remedies to traffic safety mean taking swift bold action to protect the most vulnerable road users."*
- *"Will commit to enforcing the law to improve Seattle's public spaces so that they can be safely used by residents, their children, and visitors."*
- *"We want a drug free Seattle!!!! I want a safe city where I can walk freely without seeing people shooting drugs in front of my family"*
- *"We need someone who puts stopping crime first and feelings second. Who understands how to stop repeating offender from ongoing crime and can work with prosecutors to end the revolving door. Takes all crime seriously because they understand small crime leads to big crime."*
- *"We need someone who has experience working in cities with gang violence, and experience at addressing these issues."*
- *"Understands that quality of life and public safety issues are one and the same for residents of the city--IE, street racing happens every weekend in my neighborhood and affects both those domains equally."*

Sub-Theme: Strengthen Seattle Police Department's Operational Capacity

Survey respondents want someone who can deliver faster 911 response and stronger operational performance:

- *"Improve 911 response times, it often takes hours."*
- *"Better training in mental health and de-escalation."*
- *"Fix dispatch prioritization and interdepartmental coordination."*
- *"Someone with experience operating with or expanding RTCCs and who can improve tech-assisted enforcement operations; with experience hiring and training specialized enforcement units (detectives, gang violence units). Someone with experience partnering across regional, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to build investigative and carceral capacity."*

- *"A modern police chief that's educated and knowledgeable about best policing practices. A chief that actually spends time not just with community members, but with rank and file police officers; they understand patrol operations, 9-1-1 systems, alternative response, etc."*
- *"We need someone who improves the time it takes for officers to actually reach crime scenes. So many people I know— myself included—try to report crime only for SPD to respond hours later after the danger has passed. It has made me get to a point where I can't rely on our police force, and if I ever feel in danger I typically try and plan out how I'd resolve it myself because I know SPD wouldn't respond in an urgent enough manner. Our police chief has to change that. Too much funding goes to SPD for the people of Seattle to feel that they can't rely on its police force."*

Sub-Theme: Understand and Tackle the Homelessness–Addiction Crisis

Survey respondents want a Police Chief who understands the connections between homelessness, addiction, and mental health, and can address root causes while enforcing laws that keep the city safe:

- *"We have an acute problem with homelessness tied to drug addiction. Unaddressed, these issues spill over into criminal activity. We need a police chief that understands the underlying problem and is willing to work with other agencies to address the cause while also dealing effectively and strongly with the resulting criminal behavior."*
- *"Being able to root causality for complex problems, such as for homelessness and drug problems. And if lacking perspective on specific problems, being able to identify and hire people that are able to do so."*
- *"Understands the connection between drugs/homelessness and mental health."*
- *He/she and staff have working knowledge of addiction, mental health, and homelessness issues in large urban area; focus on problem identification and solutions in reasonable time frame.*
- *"Experience addressing homelessness & actually enforces laws surrounding illegal encampments and drug use. Our city no longer feels safe."*

Sub-Theme: Balance Technology, Privacy, and Public Safety

Survey respondents want a Police Chief with deep, practical understanding of modern surveillance, privacy, and public-safety technology who can adopt tools wisely and explain them clearly:

- *"Most importantly, I think the next chief needs to be technologically sophisticated and have a serious understanding of modern surveillance, privacy, and public-safety*

technology. These issues are only going to become more important, and Seattle needs a chief who understands them well enough to make informed decisions rather than learning about them after problems arise."

- *"Extremely knowledgeable about technology. Seattle and the nation have entered the era of high-tech policing. Seattle's chief needs to be able to select technologies in an educated way with the highest level of discernment and be immune to sales pitches from big tech companies. Seattle's chief also needs to be able to explain how these techs work, why they are used, and what protections exist - and they need to do it in their own words, on the fly - not just reading off of a note sheet the real SPD techies made for him."*
- *"Understands technology and how it can be used to fight robberies, burglaries, and car theft."*
- *"One who believes in the use and deployment of new technology and proven approaches to law enforcement to evolve and develop an efficient and world class department."*

Theme 3: Accountability and Community Trust

Respondents want a Chief committed to building and leading a department that is aligned with the City's values, demanding the highest standards of integrity and working constantly to improve community trust.

Key takeaways:

1. Commitment to work closely with civilian oversight and City's accountability bodies.
2. Build and support a cultural shift that restores community connection and trust.
3. Demand the highest expectations for officer integrity and respect within the department and across Seattle's diverse communities.

Illustrative Comments:

- *"Proven to hold officers accountable when they abuse their power in excessive force, harassment, or racialized violence."*
- *"The new chief needs to understand the legacy of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other bigotry within the department and directed at the community by police officers, and must make every effort to change the culture within the department, up to and including firing staff who do not believe in the values of equity that the city claims to believe in."*
- *"Commit to changing the culture at SPD by aligning policies to reflect community expectations and impose meaningful discipline when community expectations are not met."*
- *"It is important for the next chief to be someone who has an actionable plan for transformational change across all levels of SPD."*

Sub-Theme: Transparent, Reform-Focused Leadership

Survey respondents want a reform-minded Police Chief who embraces accountability, supports civilian oversight, follows OPA recommendations, and confronts internal barriers to change:

- *"We need an accountable, reform-minded chief who embraces the guardian model for policing."*
- *"It would be nice to have someone that will implement what OPA suggests."*
- *"I want transparency without being asked. Publish use-of-force data, stop data by race, complaint outcomes, and overtime spending in formats the public can actually read. Cooperate fully with civilian oversight rather than negotiating around it."*
- *"I am hoping this Police Chief will guide the department in a direction of transparency, accountability, and rigorous oversight."*
- *"Improving accountability is my top priority. How will the mayor and new Chief work together to improve SPD's accountability to residents, transparency to policy makers and transform their internal toxic cop-culture so we can truly invest in community safety and not have to fear police inflicted violence."*

Sub-Theme: Restore Community Connection & Trust

Survey respondents want a Police Chief who can repair broken trust by understanding community history, strengthening relationships, and bridging the gap between officer morale and public confidence:

- *"Seattle needs a Chief with the ability to bridge the gap between internal departmental morale and external community trust."*
- *"We need a police chief who is serious about improving police relations with the city's residents."*
- *"The new chief needs to understand how the trust between SPD and residents got broken to begin with and should come to the interview table with a solid plan in place to restore it, complete with measurable impact."*
- *"Someone who doesn't see police as a line of defense but someone who sees police as fellow community members that are just one part of an ecosystem that involves community crisis response for example."*
- *"Is familiar with and appreciative of unique history of Seattle and Pacific Northwest, including understanding of Native American and African American histories and populations therein."*
- *"Building trust with the community is the first task. Without genuine trust, little else in policing can succeed."*
- *"We need somebody that believes that being visible is important. The police are not visible in the community, you rarely see police in the streets and when they are in the*

streets, in their police cruisers instead of walking the neighborhood getting to know the business owners and residents. Walk the streets, stop the open drug use and congregating of drugged out people making the streets look like hell."

Sub-Theme: Promote Integrity, Non-Discrimination, and Responsible Policing

Survey respondents want someone who has zero tolerance for discriminatory conduct, who understands Seattle's policing history, and strengthens ethical leadership and accountability:

- *"He or she must have great ethics that quickly permeate the department. This person should therefore never allow bullying or sexual harassment or misconduct."*
- *"We need someone who understands that many fewer interactions with police require someone who has a gun. They should not be seeking tons more resources for surveillance, expensive military technology."*
- *"Seattle needs a police chief who believes in the power of effective public policy and who is willing to hold wrongdoers in the force accountable for their actions when they violate department 'rules of the road.' Without accountability by the police, building trust to ensure community cooperation is extraordinarily challenging."*
- *"An understanding that policing can be fixed/improved to address historical discrepancies in tactics without surrendering any hope of tackling persistent problems."*
- *"Understands that safety also means freedom to not be hit by a car, or be attacked for being trans, or harassed for being unhoused."*

Theme 4: Balance Enforcement with Modern Public Safety Approaches

Survey respondents want someone who supports expansion of civilian crisis response where appropriate as well as a commitment to interdepartmental coordination and partnerships.

Key takeaways:

1. Expand availability of CARE Community Crisis Responders and diversion programs.
2. Unlock civilian primary response capacity for mental health, substance use, and nonviolent crisis calls.
3. Clarify and standardize protocols for civilian primary dispatch and smooth coordination of sworn backup and handoffs among sworn and civilian responders.
4. Reserve police response for dangerous crises that might require an armed response, crime deterrence, or criminal law investigation and enforcement.

Illustrative Comments:

- *"Expand CARE — offload mental health and nonviolent calls."*

- *"We need diversion programs and social workers responding first."*
- *"Policing isn't the solution for homelessness and drug crises."*
- *"Must be committed to alternative response CARE and violence interruption as an integral part of public safety."*
- *"It is essential that our next Chief understands, supports, and will partner with our CARE team to respond to non-violent, non-criminal 911 calls. That's how we provide more effective response to help solve persistent community problems and to focus SPD on responding to crimes and investigating crimes to prevent them."*
- *"We need the next police chief to be committed to interdepartmental partnerships, particularly in facilitating the success and efficacy of the CARE department, which should be more empowered to act/take the lead in situations and environments where their skills are more helpful than the status quo over-policing strategies which damage social trust and public safety."*

Sub-Theme: Leverage Public Health Approaches to Public Safety

Survey respondents want someone who strengthens safety by focusing on prevention and community well-being, prioritizing police partnership with housing and service providers, using violence interrupters, relying on evidence-based strategies, and applying public-health models:

- *"The next chief must treat crime and public safety as public health issues. This requires a deep understanding of the social determinants of crime and the disparate impacts of structural inequality on criminal legal involvement."*
- *"We must address poverty and trauma to reduce crime."*
- *"Treat crime as a public health issue and invest in root causes."*
- *"Views community partners such as the CARE team, violence interrupters, and low-income housing providers as providing services that reduce community violence and thus reduce workload for law enforcement and increase community safety."*
- *"The Police Chief needs to work with other City and County organizations who are on the ground trying to help people get housed, get services, and access to mental health organizations. It is super important that the Care Team is a priority."*
- *"We need a police chief who is excited to work with crisis responders and social workers, someone who wants to take a progressive approach to handling the drug epidemic in the city and treats every community with the same level of respect. It's past time that we allocate more funds to alternative policing and we need a chief who will work with social worker groups to find new ways to provide help for the communities that are struggling the most."*

Sub-Theme: Address Racial Disparities and Strengthen Inclusive Public Safety

Survey respondents want someone who safeguards marginalized communities, addresses racial disparities, and advances trauma-informed, de-escalation practices:

- *"I want a chief of police who sees themselves as community advocates for ALL Seattleites, including our unhoused and immigrant neighbors. I want a chief that understands policing is only a small part of community safety and will redistribute duties to other care services that have to training and capacity to care for our neighbors in crisis. Safety is for everyone and requires preventive care more than reactive response."*
- *"I think it is important that they understand the culture and politics of Seattle. Specifically, our supportive and inclusive culture towards the LGBTQIA+ community and also, that we are still, in many ways, a segregated city with a poor history of hearing and responding to the needs and concerns of communities of color."*
- *They also should be well versed in the systemic biases within the police system, and well versed and actively working to undo said biases (racial (primarily towards black & brown people), gender, LGBTQ+, mental health, etc.)."*
- *"We need someone with integrity, who has a progressive mindset about policing. Someone who can see and acknowledge the system as inherently racist and classist and wants to protect and serve first and foremost vs. take down the 'bad guys'."*

Public Listening Sessions Summaries

South Seattle Listening Session Summary

The South Seattle Listening Session was held on September 26, 2026 at the Van Asselt Community Center in South Seattle. 78 participants, many representing immigrant and refugee communities, participated and expressed a strong desire for a Chief who moves beyond reactive policing to build authentic, proactive relationships, demonstrates deep cultural competence, and maintains strict accountability within the department. Participants highlighted urgent safety needs such as gun violence, gang activity, and 9-1-1 response times. In addition to the South Seattle listening session, follow-up conversations were held with 3 community organizations from West Seattle to capture additional feedback.

Summary

1. Essential Experience & Expertise

- **Deep Cultural Competence & Immigrant/Refugee Engagement:** Proven experience working with diverse Black, Brown, youth and immigrant and refugee,

communities, understanding Seattle's specific racial and cultural dynamics. If not from Seattle, the Chief must demonstrate a genuine willingness to learn the unique needs of local neighborhoods.

- **Large, complex city experience with Seattle familiarity:** Participants want someone who understands big-city policing with a strong preference towards someone who knows the city's neighborhoods and social dynamics.
- **Experience in community-centered and alternative response models:** Participants want a Chief experienced in multidisciplinary public safety, including working with civilian responders, social workers, and diversified crisis response initiatives like diversion programs, the CARE Community Crisis Response team and the Fire Department's Mobile Integrated Health unit.
- **Navigating City Governance & Union Dynamics:** The Chief must be capable of working constructively with the mayor, city departments, and labor unions to stabilize department fragmentation and lead without being swayed by national or local political pressures.
- Proven operational leadership: Managing complicated departments, building internal morale, and demonstrating a record of reducing crime.
- **Commitment to equity and constitutional policing:** Experience leading with an anti-racism lens and promote racial equity; ability to stand up to federal overreach (e.g., ICE).

2. Core Character Qualities & Leadership Traits

- **Strong Interpersonal Skills:** Ability to relate to every level of the department and to a wide range of communities.
- **Empathy, Patience, and Approachability:** Participants prioritized leaders who are friendly, patient, and deeply empathetic toward families and communities impacted by trauma and violence.
- **Accountability, Honesty, and Integrity:** A leader who upholds the highest standards for themselves and the department, someone with strong moral integrity who leads transparently, addresses misconduct directly, reports wrongdoing, and takes responsibility when mistakes occur.
- **Calmness Under Pressure:** The ideal Chief must remain composed during crisis situations and handle high-pressure environments with grace and steady communication.
- **Team Leadership and Humility:** A "people-first" manager who listens and doesn't take criticism personally.
- **New, Innovative Strategies:** Participants want someone who is a creative problem solver and will bring fresh thinking, not recycling old approaches.

3. Community Trust & Relationship Building

- **Reliable, Consistent, Proactive Presence:** Trust is built through regular, everyday engagement, not only after high-profile incidents or when seeking information. Both the Chief and officers should be visible in public schools, cultural events, and community spaces, interacting with people outside of patrol vehicles. Residents should feel confident that officers will show up when called.
- **Authentic Engagement:** Build relationships with residents directly, not only with leaders or institutions.
- **Two-Way Communication & Follow-Through:** Participants want regular updates on investigations and clear reporting on how community feedback is utilized to implement change.
- **Honest, Transparent Communication:** Participants want to see communications strengthened with a strong communications team that will support the Chief to have honest transparent communication.
- **Language Access & Inclusive Outreach:** Engagement strategies must include adequate translation services and multi-lingual alerts so all demographics can access services and feel heard.
- **Support Trusted Intermediaries:** Leverage Community Safety Officers, community leaders, and alternative response teams to strengthen connections.

4. Action Priorities for Public Safety

- **Gun Violence, Gangs, and Drug Mitigation:** Immediate focus areas for the Chief recommended by community members include addressing neighborhood gun violence, gang activity, open-air drug concerns (e.g., fentanyl), and reducing 9-1-1 response times. This includes addressing school-age crime and strengthening relationships with young people.
- **Balancing Officer Staffing & Street Visibility:** Participants noted that officers appear overworked and called for increased police presence, patrols for traffic/safety violations, and better response times.
- **Substance use and its intersection with homelessness and poverty:** More creative solutions beyond the status quo, with a mix of diversion and accountability.
- **Visible Enforcement:** Follow through on enforcing the law, including open drug use and auto-theft.

Additional Insights

- **Youth Focus & Safe Spaces:** Youth experience frequent trauma from local violence (e.g., shootings near community spaces like Van Asselt). Feedback included trauma-informed police training, positive non-uniform interactions, and expanded youth programming to build trust early.

- **Immigration & Surveillance Concerns:** Immigrant and refugee communities raised concerns regarding ICE access to police data and the deployment of surveillance tech.
- **Skepticism of the Engagement Process:** A notable portion of attendees voiced frustration, viewing the listening sessions as performative. They highlighted decades of recurring safety issues, questioned if community input will truly shape decisions, and demanded explicit commitments regarding officer accountability.

Central Seattle Listening Session Summary

The Central Seattle Listening Session was held on September 28, 2026 at Seattle University. 55 participants composed of local business owners, youth advocates, and community leaders shared that Seattle requires an accountable, transparent, and empathetic leader who possesses substantial large-city executive experience, understands Seattle's unique neighborhood dynamics, and is deeply committed to internal culture change within the Seattle Police Department. Key takeaways emphasize the need to rebuild trust through direct officer accountability, strengthen multi-agency collaboration with civilian teams like the CARE CCRs, address rising youth gun violence and retail theft, and ensure a consistent, visible police presence across all precincts and community spaces.

Summary

1. Essential Experience & Expertise

- **Big-City Metropolitan Leadership:** Candidates must have extensive experience managing large police departments or serving as Chief/Deputy Chief in major metropolitan areas with complex urban dynamics. Participants noted that leadership experience in smaller cities does not adequately prepare a Chief for Seattle's scale.
- **Deep Local Knowledge & Seattle Familiarity:** Strong preference for candidates who know Seattle, its history, and its diverse neighborhoods. Many participants expressed a desire for a candidate who is already a local resident or who can be elevated from within the Seattle Police Department if they demonstrate strong leadership and commitment.
- **Collaborative & Multi-Tiered Public Safety Model:** Experience working beyond traditional law enforcement to integrate unarmed civilian crisis responders, social workers, school districts, and community-based gun violence prevention (e.g., CARE CCR teams and Community Service Officers, CSOs).
- **Modern Technology & Data Privacy:** Track record of utilizing modern technology (crime analytics, surveillance cameras, rapid alert systems) paired with robust data privacy safeguards.

- **Union & Labor Relations:** Demonstrated ability to manage complex labor contracts and constructively engage with SPMA and the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG)

2. Core Character Qualities & Leadership Traits

- **Integrity:** A transparent "straight talker" who communicates with honesty and clarity, avoiding defensive policy jargon or excuses.
- **Accountability & Courage:** Demonstrates personal accountability and has the courage to publicly address officer misconduct, enforce policy adherence, and admit when mistakes occur.
- **Humility, Empathy, & Emotional Intelligence:** A grounded leader who listens to understand rather than dictate, exhibits emotional intelligence, and recognizes the historical trauma and tension between law enforcement and communities of color.
- **Resilience & Commitment:** Able to stay calm under pressure, navigate polarizing political views, and remain dedicated to making Seattle their long-term home.

3. Community Trust & Relationship Building

- **Proactive & Consistent Presence:** Shows-up regularly at community meetings, neighborhood councils, youth centers, and local events, not just during crises or photo opportunities.
- **Rebuilding Community Police Teams:** Strong consensus around bringing back designated Community Police Teams (CPTs) and encouraging foot and bike patrols to build personal, long-term relationships between officers and residents.
- **Direct & Transparent Communication:** Provides direct, timely updates via newsletters, accessible websites, and neighborhood updates rather than relying solely on press releases or media outlets.
- **Decisive Misconduct Accountability:** Establishes trust by publicly addressing wrongdoing, supporting civilian oversight boards, and ensuring clear accountability when policies are violated.
- **Two-Way Bridge:** Serving as an active bridge connecting rank-and-file officers with the community, humanizing officers while holding them accountable to the communities they serve.

4. Action Priorities for Public Safety

- **Violent Crime & Youth Interventions:** Priority action on reducing gun violence, particularly juvenile gun violence, human trafficking, and open-air drug markets.
- **Property Crime & Retail Protection:** Increased focus on retail theft, commercial vandalism, storage break-ins, and property destruction. Participants want stronger coordination with the City Attorney’s Office to ensure repeat offenders are prosecuted.

- **SPD Culture Shift:** Transform internal departmental culture toward de-escalation, mutual respect, equity, and eliminating internal siloing.
- **Staffing & Recruitment:** Reach staffing goals through focused recruitment, hiring, and development of diverse candidates.
- **Targeted High-Crime Area Focus:** Visible foot/bike patrols and dedicated resources in designated hot spots, including 12th & Jackson (CID), Belltown, Pioneer Square, the Central Business District, and Aurora Avenue.

North Seattle Listening Session Summary

The North Seattle Listening Session was held on September 30, 2026 at North Seattle College. Feedback for Seattle's Police Chief search brought together 78 participants with a mix of community members, business owners, and community leaders. Participant feedback highlights a desire for accountability, visible presence, and balanced public safety solutions. While participants expressed diverse views on whether the ideal Chief should be an internal candidate or an outside reformer, there was consensus that the next leader must demonstrate high ethical standards, emotional intelligence, and a track record of transparency.

Summary

1. Essential Experience & Expertise

- **Understanding Seattle's Neighborhoods:** A majority of participants preferred a Chief who knows Seattle's geography, culture, and distinct neighborhood needs, citing that outside hires may face a steep learning curve.
- **External Reformer Option:** Conversely, several participants argued that an outside candidate without ties to current SPD leadership is necessary to break up “boys' club” dynamics, reform internal culture, and handle disciplinary cases without bias.
- **Proven Track Record & Measurable Results:** Participants insisted on quantifiable proof of leadership success, such as improved crime clearance rates, successful team management, and experience in similar-sized metropolitan departments.
- **Civilian & Diversified Response Expertise:** Candidates should have direct experience collaborating with civilian responders, social workers, and behavioral health teams, understanding when armed police are not the best intervention and may risk escalating crisis.

2. Core Character Qualities & Leadership Traits

- **Ethics & Independence:** Participants want a leader with strong ethics who is comfortable standing up to political pressures, actively engage unions, and who is willing to take risks to do the right thing.

- **Humility & Non-Defensive Listening:** Participants are looking for a Chief with a "small ego" who actively listens to critique, admits mistakes, communicates transparently, and engages constructively with critics.
- **Calmness Under Pressure & De-escalation:** Emotional regulation and levelheadedness during crises were highlighted as non-negotiable traits, alongside a deep commitment to de-escalation to prevent officer-involved shootings and violence.
- **Officer Wellness & Support:** Participants noted that officer stress and trauma impact community interactions, and advocated the importance of robust mental health support, counseling, and wellness programs for the rank and file.

3. Community Trust & Relationship Building

- **Trust as an Earned Byproduct:** Participants noted that trust cannot be built through public relations alone; it must be a byproduct of ethical actions, consistency, and tangible safety results.
- **Proactive Visibility & Foot Patrols:** Participants want a Chief who will get officers out of patrol cars and onto foot or bicycle beats, fostering direct, positive interactions with residents and business owners.
- **Data Transparency & Accessibility:** Participants requested public dashboards showing crime metrics, response times, camera locations, and use-of-force data to ensure accountability.
- **Clear Distinction from Federal Agencies:** Participants stressed that SPD must remain distinct from federal immigration enforcement (ICE/Border Patrol) to preserve trust among immigrant and marginalized populations.

4. Action Priorities for Public Safety

- **Human Trafficking & Aurora Avenue Safety:** A major priority for North Seattle is dismantling human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation along the Aurora corridor, advocating a survivor-centered approach targeting traffickers/buyers while protecting students at nearby schools (Ingraham High School and Eagle Staff Middle School).
- **Property Crime, Retail Theft & Drug Markets:** Participants called for active disruption of open-air drug markets, stolen goods fencing, human trafficking, and organized retail theft.
- **Staffing Shortages & 9-1-1 Response:** Addressing police understaffing, speeding up 9-1-1 dispatch response times, and expanding the Community Service Officer (CSO) program were highlighted as critical operational needs.
- **Internal Reform & Disciplinary Process:** Participants expressed concern about impunity for excessive force and public record denials, urging reform of internal discipline policies.

Additional Insights

- **Local Familiarity vs. Fresh Perspective:** Debate emerged between hiring a local candidate who understands Seattle's unique neighborhood dynamics (e.g., Aurora Avenue, Belltown, Greenwood, North Precinct) versus an outside Chief capable of reforming department culture without existing political or internal ties.
- **Disciplined Culture & Accountability:** Participants want meaningful officer discipline, transparency in internal misconduct investigations.
- **Integration of Diversified Response & CARE CCR Teams:** Participants emphasized that public safety extends beyond traditional armed policing, urging deep collaboration with civilian responders, social workers, mental health professionals, and the City's CARE department.
- **Urgent Neighborhood Safety Priorities:** North Seattle residents prioritized tackling human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation along Aurora Avenue, eliminating open-air drug markets and encampment-related crime, reducing gun violence, improving 9-1-1 response times, and restoring community-oriented policing (foot and bicycle patrols).

South-End, Asian Communities Listening Session Summary

On October 16, 2026, 42 Asian identifying community members gathered at the Filipino Community Center to share their perspectives, priorities, and criteria for Seattle's next Police Chief. Key themes from the conversation revolved around deep local knowledge, strong public presence, cultural humility, and tangible solutions for public safety concerns.

Key Themes

1. **Essential Experience & Expertise**
   - Local Familiarity & Proven Leadership: Participants emphasized the importance of choosing a candidate with extensive law enforcement experience who understands Seattle's unique landscape. Having a chief with firsthand experience who knows the local area is seen as critical to hitting the ground running.
   - Cultural Competency & Diversity: Experience working directly with diverse ethnic communities, understanding cultural dynamics, and handling juvenile cases with care were highlighted as essential qualifications.
   - Targeted Safety Focus: Participants expressed the need for experience in addressing hate crimes targeting the Asian community, maintaining a visible presence in areas like South Seattle, and implementing effective neighborhood-based safety strategies.

2. Core Character Qualities & Leadership Traits

- Integrity & Transparency: Community members prioritized high moral standards, honesty, neutrality, and freedom from political agendas.

- Compassion & Empathy: Desirable qualities included being caring, polite, patient, open-minded, and handling the community with the care and understanding of a parent.
- Calm & Decisive Leadership: The chief must remain calm under pressure, make swift decisions during crises, take full accountability, and boost morale within the department while holding officers accountable.

3. Community Trust & Relationship Building

- Consistent, Honest, & Straightforward: Trust is built by consistently showing up—attending community events without uniforms, meeting directly with neighborhood leaders, and maintaining an open, approachable demeanor.
- Tailored Engagement & Education: Recognizing that different communities face distinct challenges, the chief should tailor engagement approaches and focus on educating community members about city services, resources, and 911 access in multiple languages.
- Cross-Sector Collaboration: Participants emphasized working hand-in-hand with community-based organizations, social services, and the Mayor's Office rather than operating in isolation.

4. Action Priorities for Public Safety

- Revitalized Neighborhood Safety & Cleanliness: Immediate attention is requested for public safety and cleanliness in commercial and residential hubs, specifically Downtown, Hing Hay Park, 12th and Jackson, and the Chinatown-International District (CID).
- Comprehensive Strategy for Substance Use & Homelessness: A clear, coordinated approach is needed to tackle public drug use, alcohol-related problems, and homelessness, combining enforcement with supportive crisis response training for officers.
- De-escalation: Participants voiced a strong desire for proper officer training to de-escalate situations, avoiding unnecessary force, and prevent instances of police violence from recurring.

Roundtable Summaries

Youth Leaders' Roundtable

September 16, 2026

Youth Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Experience for the Next Police Chief

Youth leaders emphasized that the next Police Chief must have direct experience working in school environments, noting that Seattle Public Schools serves 57,000 students, each with unique needs. They want someone who understands the realities of youth spaces, not through secondhand reports but through real, consistent engagement.

Youth also highlighted the need for a Chief with experience recruiting additional officers, particularly given staffing shortages that affect neighborhood safety and response times. They stressed that the Chief should know Seattle beyond the map by understanding distinct neighborhoods, cultures, and histories.

Youth also want a Chief who knows how to connect with young people, not just adults. This includes visiting schools, asking youth what makes them feel safe, and building relationships on their terms. Crisis management skills were seen as essential, along with the ability to "take the heat," a leader willing to face accountability, own mistakes, and adapt accordingly.

Youth Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Personal Qualities for the Next Police Chief

Youth described a leader who is responsive, calm, and steady under pressure, with experience working across diverse ethnic and cultural groups. They want someone who adapts in the face of adversity and communicates clearly and transparently with communities, especially about priorities and budget.

Youth want a Chief with a preventative mindset who understands the root causes of harm and instability, not someone who relies solely on traditional policing approaches. Building trust with the Black community was repeatedly named as a priority.
Youth emphasized qualities such as integrity, a strong moral compass, and a sense of higher purpose. They want someone who is open-minded, flexible, embraces diversified response strategies, and accepts that change is constant.

A good listener who doesn't shy away from public interaction was non-negotiable. Youth spoke about the importance of the Chief learning neighborhoods firsthand, collaborating with the mayor and community partners, being visible and proactive, demonstrating de-escalation, and leading by example.

Youth want the next Chief to come with a track record of using data effectively, responding quickly to trends, and applying measurable strategies to improve safety. Many hoped the Chief has experience supporting or implementing diversified response systems, recognizing that police officers are not the right primary responders in every situation. Reducing violence in schools was a major priority. Youth were specific that at Rainier Beach, they want officers present in or near the school, "absolutely necessary until things change" but emphasized they want trained officers, not hallway monitors.
They also hope the Chief has worked in a large city with complex needs, has led community dialogues, reinstated or expanded roles like Community Safety Officers, and emphasized relational work with new recruits *before* they receive badges.

Youth want a Chief who can advocate for effective staffing in schools, deploy officers thoughtfully, and demonstrate a relational approach, noting that "relationship moves at the speed of trust." They referenced experiences like Kingmakers Breakfasts, a space where relationship-building happens. A teacher who attended the roundtable with the youth summed it up with, "Rules without relationship will always get you rebellion." They want a Chief who embodies the relational approach necessary to build safety, trust, and meaningful change.

Youth Leaders' Roundtable: How the Next Police Chief Should Engage and Build Trust with the Community

Youth want the Chief to have consistent presence in every school, acknowledging that each school has different cultures and needs. They want to see the Chief active in the community, not just making appearances but sharing information, building connections, and being memorable.

They emphasized wanting the Chief to be accessible by creating avenues for youth to meet the Chief where they already are such as at schools, community centers, sports programs while considering mobility barriers, time constraints, and incentives like food or proximity. They also want youth-only spaces to talk to the Chief about public safety, where adults don't dominate the conversations.

Participants stressed that trust requires repeated interactions over time. They asked for regular youth feedback opportunities, such as monthly listening sessions and consistent updates on what SPD is doing, with transparent statistics and results. They also emphasized promoting community belonging, such as encouraging "knowing your neighbor," because stronger community ties make people safer. Above all, youth want to see tangible progress and changes they can observe and feel in their everyday lives.

Immigrant & Refugees Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Experience for the Next Police Chief

Community leaders from the Immigrant & Refugee community want a Police Chief with deep, demonstrated experience engaging immigrant and refugee communities, especially those who currently feel overlooked, such as the Somali community. Accessibility, cultural competency, and the ability to understand the nuances of Seattle's diverse neighborhoods were described as essential. They want someone who has truly been present in communities, not just spoken about them.

The next Chief should have a proven track record of building trust, supported by real examples rather than polished talking points. Specifically, community members want evidence that the candidate has successfully engaged hard-to-reach populations, including groups who have been historically harmed or marginalized by policing. They also want someone experienced in reducing violence, understanding root causes of crime, and implementing restorative programs for at-risk youth.

The Chief must be able to navigate accountability, holding themselves and their staff responsible, while approaching public safety from a survivor-centered, trauma-informed perspective. Community leaders emphasized that the Chief should understand how frightening police interactions can be for people with lived trauma, and that those experiences carry real consequences for the families that have lost loved ones. There was strong desire for someone who understands Seattle's history firsthand. Ideally, the Chief would be born and raised here or have demonstrable long-term engagement with Seattle's communities. Past experiences with out-of-state Chiefs left many feeling unheard and misunderstood.

Community leaders also want someone who recognizes the intersection of mental health needs with policing, can collaborate across departments, and is intentional about recruiting officers from diverse communities. People stressed the importance of a leader who prioritizes the community as much as their officers and shows up consistently to build partnerships.

Community leaders emphasized wanting a Chief with experience supporting business districts, including addressing issues such as smash-and-grab thefts, which impact both safety and local economics. They also want someone who has created or led programs for parents and youth who have lost loved ones, demonstrating the ability to sit with families,

victims, and survivors, someone who not only enforces laws but actively helps communities heal.

Immigrant & Refugees Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Personal Qualities for the Next Police Chief

Community leaders expressed that wearing the police uniform carries a unique weight, regardless of the individual. They want a Chief who understands that weight, approaches communities with care, and intentionally works to humanize policing.
The Chief should know who key community leaders are and proactively build relationships with them. A successful Chief will bring humanity to the work by being calm, collected, resilient, and grounded in compassion for people struggling with addiction, grief, and generational trauma.

Community leaders emphasized wanting someone who listens without defensiveness, accepts feedback, and translates it into meaningful action. They stressed the need for a Chief who continuously asks communities, "How can I help?", someone whose purpose is rooted in protecting the people of Seattle rather than preserving the department's image. Because of ongoing trust concerns, many participants also want transparency around the Chief's stance toward ICE and immigration enforcement, which impacts safety and willingness to engage among immigrant and refugee communities.

Immigrant & Refugees Leaders' Roundtable: How the Next Police Chief Should Engage and Build Trust with the Community

Community leaders described their neighborhoods as exceptionally complex, each with thousands of perspectives and unique experiences with police presence. They want a Chief who understands that trust and distrust can vary dramatically across communities and who tailors their approach accordingly. They emphasized that trust takes time, and many shared frustrations that community-police meetings often feel repetitive, with the same agenda: communities share concerns, police share what they see, but little changes. They want a Chief who can break this cycle by demonstrating progress between conversations, not simply repeating the same exchanges.

The Chief and their team should research what other cities have done, bring those ideas back to the community, and ask, "Would this approach work here?" This two-way dialogue should be ongoing, respectful, and focused on solutions shaped with community input. Community leaders also highlighted the importance of partnering with community leadership to help the Chief navigate cultural differences, expectations, and the varied impacts of policing on different groups.

Across all comments, participants emphasized that building trust takes time, and the next Chief must be willing to invest that time consistently. They also want the Chief to be clear in drawing boundaries with ICE, given the fear and harm immigrant communities have experienced due to immigration enforcement.

LGBTQIA+ Leaders' Roundtable

September 29, 2026

LGBTQIA+ Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Experience for the Next Police Chief

LGBTQIA+ community leaders emphasized wanting a Chief with broad, well-rounded experience, personally, professionally, and socially shaped by living in multiple cities and seeing firsthand what has and has not worked in policing over time. They want someone who understands past harms (for example, the use of wooden batons), recognizes failed leadership behaviors, and knows how to avoid repeating those patterns. They highlighted wanting someone who knows Seattle well enough to recognize when certain individuals should not be in leadership positions, referencing specific incidents that showed a lack of restraint and professionalism. They stressed the importance of a Chief who acknowledges both community leaders and survivors of violence, understanding how violence impacts people personally, not just institutionally. They want someone who asks: What harm has been done? What has the department's role been? And how do we repair it?

There was strong emphasis on experience with interdepartmental coordination, working well with other government entities, and being able to move change within SPD by clarifying processes, expectations, and ensuring consistency across ranks. A Chief should be transparent, communicative, and trusted to alert community about shifts in practice or policy.

Creativity and vision were highlighted as essential. Community leaders want a leader who recognizes that "what worked in the past isn't what works today," someone capable of rethinking response models and redesigning outdated tactics. They shared positive examples of current SPD officers whose communication helped community members feel safer and more connected.

Several participants emphasized that the next Chief must be able to take ownership of SPD's history, including harm done to LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities. This includes confronting cultural problems within SPD like racist or homophobic remarks posted in precincts, and leading genuine cultural change across the department.

Many also believe the Chief must have experience challenging police unions when necessary. As one person noted, unions often protect officers regardless of community impact, and confronting that dynamic requires courage, commitment, and clarity of values.

LGBTQIA+ Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Personal Qualities for the Next Police Chief

Community leaders want someone who knows what resources they have such as the SPD LGBTQ+ Advisor and uses them appropriately. They want a Chief who can acknowledge what they don't know, tap into expertise, and demonstrate humility.

Ethos and character were recurring themes. Community leaders want someone who embodies equity, equality, kindness, and moral clarity, and who can articulate how they've responded in the face of racism, discrimination, addiction, and harm. They stressed that the Chief doesn't need to share identities (such as LGBTQ+) to show deep respect, understanding, and allyship.

Openness and growth were viewed as essential. A Chief should be trainable, curious, and self-reflective, willing to admit mistakes, take corrective action, and partner with community to find solutions. Community leaders want someone who can show up neutrally, help all parties feel seen, and ask thoughtful questions about long-standing policies that no longer serve the community. Curiosity was highlighted as a leadership quality, someone who can challenge the status quo and ask why things haven't changed, especially when recommendations (e.g., around Cal Anderson) look the same year after year.

LGBTQIA+ Leaders' Roundtable: How the Next Police Chief Should Engage and Build Trust with the Community

Community leaders recommended establishing a community-engagement liaison who reports directly to the Chief, with a dotted-line relationship to the Mayor's Office, to support ongoing trust-building. They pointed to the credibility built by trusted liaisons like Dominique Stephens as an example of what works. They want deeper transparency into SPD practices (such as "921 time") and a Chief who takes initiative to engage with community even on their own time, seeing these interactions as opportunities to listen, learn, and amplify voices.

Community leaders emphasized that trust comes from showing up long before things go wrong. The Chief should attend community events, large and small, and maintain relationships consistently, not just during crisis or during specific months like Pride. Trust comes from seeing a leader show up over and over again.

Diplomacy was also highlighted. Community leaders want a Chief who collaborates across agencies and does not blame partners publicly, even when disagreements arise. They want someone who promotes cooperation, shared goals, and mutual respect. The Chief should also be aligned with and supportive of care teams, who work with the most vulnerable populations; participants felt these teams have too often been undermined or dismissed by SPD leadership.

They also stressed that trust must extend beyond the Chief to the entire department. Even when the Chief behaves well, the community's experience with officers' year-round matters. For example, participants shared frustrations that officers were supportive and respectful during Pride season but not after June.

Finally, community leaders want a Chief who takes joy in community engagement, who genuinely loves listening to Seattle residents, and who is willing to learn Seattle's progressive culture, especially if they come from a more conservative environment. This includes training on laws, cultural competency, and unlearning anti-LGBTQ or anti-queer bias.

African American Leaders' Roundtable

September 29, 2026

African American Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Experience for the Next Police Chief

African American community leaders want a Chief who deeply understands community policing, what it looks like in practice, how communities experience it, and how to build safety collaboratively rather than through enforcement alone. They emphasized the need for experience working with community-based organizations, investing time and resources into restorative justice groups that already have credibility with youth and young adults. These organizations often serve as bridges where young people feel comfortable, so the Chief must see them as partners, not competitors.

The Chief must have strong experience in de-escalation, particularly with youth and individuals experiencing mental illness. Community leaders want someone who is visible and involved by attending events, joining panels, and acting as a vocal advocate for what is happening on the ground in neighborhoods.

Deep understanding of the histories of Seattle, King County, Washington State, and specifically African American and Asian communities, was repeatedly emphasized. Community leaders spoke about the need for leaders who grasp the history of retaliation against Black youth and know how to "de-escalate 100–0." They also want someone who

has shown they can respond appropriately to complaints and allegations of brutality, demonstrating accountability through concrete actions and discipline, not just words. A successful Chief must be a creative problem solver, able to find opportunity in crisis and rethink outdated police responses. Community leaders shared local examples of past leadership, both positive and harmful, that shaped their expectations. They want a visionary leader who collaborates with clergy and community leaders and who understands their responsibility to acknowledge and repair harm caused by SPD.

Community leaders stressed the importance of change management experience, not only around process improvement but true cultural transformation. They cited incidents of racist and homophobic behavior within precincts as examples of why culture change is essential. This includes someone willing to hold officers accountable consistently, even when unions resist.

Finally, community leaders want a Chief who knows Seattle intimately, not someone "plopped in from another place," but someone who understands its history, current dynamics, and the lived experiences of its people. They want a Chief prepared to implement measurable accountability, transparent benchmarks, and participatory frameworks so outcomes, not just outputs, drive public safety strategy.

African American Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Personal Qualities for the Next Police Chief

Community leaders emphasized wanting a Chief who demonstrates introspection and personal accountability. They want someone who takes responsibility quickly without scapegoating and who publicly communicates what they will do differently when things go wrong.

Consistency, authenticity, and credibility were recurring themes. As one leader said, "It's hard to hear what you are saying when I see what you are doing." They want a leader whose values and actions align. The Chief must lead with humility, empathy, and compassion, recognizing the toll of trauma on youth experiencing gun violence, on families affected by addiction, and on people facing homelessness. The ability to admit mistakes and commit to a healing process was described as essential.

Community leaders also stressed the importance of balancing head work and heart work, thinking strategically while showing up emotionally for families and communities. They want someone who can demonstrate that compassion by understanding root causes of violence and taking a proactive, not reactive, approach.

The next Chief should be someone who stays calm without defensiveness, who builds authentic relationships, and who questions how resources, like the Police Department budget, can better address root causes rather than symptoms. Many named the historical origins of policing in the U.S. as a factor shaping distrust, and they want a Chief who acknowledges that history and actively works to create safety for Black and Brown communities. They also want a leader who understands that public safety and crime are not the same thing, and who is capable of bold, innovative thinking about what true safety looks like to the people of Seattle.

African American Leaders' Roundtable: How the Next Police Chief Should Engage and Build Trust with the Community

Community leaders described wanting a Chief who shows up consistently, noting that an interim Chief had begun doing this over the summer. They want a leader whose use of SPD resources reflects their values, someone who invests time and dollars where community needs are greatest.

Engagement must be broad and ongoing. They want regular contact with African American clergy, youth, NAACP, LGBTQ+ communities, and neighborhood organizations, not just during crises. They emphasized the need for a coalition of trusted, community-oriented officers within SPD who can support relationship building across precincts.
Community leaders emphasized that one person cannot be everywhere; therefore, the Chief must build internal capacity for community engagement, returning to models where precincts had full engagement units, not single staff members.

Community leaders reflected that trust requires transparency, they want clarity about the mayor's public safety vision, noting concern about frequent turnover in SPD leadership and uncertainty about what the City is truly seeking in a Chief. They stressed the importance of the Chief and as many officers as possible, living in the community, arguing that one cannot lead or pastor a community from the outside. Community leaders referenced other cities like Baltimore as examples of what community policing can look like when done well. They want a Chief who articulates their vision of public safety clearly enough that community leaders can share that vision with their own constituencies.

They also expressed deep concern about racist officers or officers who do not live in Seattle, noting the need for accountability when harm occurs. They anticipate cultural challenges similar to the noose incident in the fire department to continue in the police department and want a Chief prepared to confront such issues directly.

Lastly, community leaders stressed the need to close communication gaps, provide clear bullet points about expectations and strategies, and build a relationship where police

presence in marches or community events can be restored over time, after trust is rebuilt both from the top and bottom of the department.

Asian American, Pacific Islander, & Native Hawaiian Leaders' Roundtable

October 3, 2026

Asian American, Pacific Islander, & Native Hawaiian Leaders' Roundtable Desired Experience for the Next Police Chief

Asian American, Pacific Islander, & Native Hawaiian community leaders want a Police Chief who is a visionary and upstream thinker who understands the importance of prevention, coordination, and connecting systems from CARE teams to housing, nonprofits, and crisis response partners. They want a leader who is committed to putting officers in community settings, responding to neighborhood specific needs, and collaborating rather than working in isolation.

They emphasized the need for strong, trusted relationships across nonprofits, social service agencies, homelessness providers, and culturally specific organizations, including those serving immigrants and refugees. The next Chief must understand the wide range of perspectives across these communities, even when opinions differ within the community, and navigate those dynamics with respect.

Community leaders stressed that the Chief must have experience coordinating effectively with other city and county departments. They noted that some agencies have stronger reputations for community care than others, and SPD must work more closely with those partners to rebuild trust.

There was strong preference for someone from Seattle or deeply rooted in Seattle's communities, familiar with the local history of public safety systems and the communities most harmed by them. They want someone who understands that community neglect has contributed to today's challenges and who has shown accountability in previous leadership roles.

Community leaders want someone experienced in de-escalation and crisis response, who can point to real examples of supporting crisis teams. They also want a Chief who understands the limits of enforcement, that more officers or more arrests do not automatically create safety, and who instead focuses on outcomes, not outputs. Community leaders highlighted the need to balance dramatically different viewpoints (e.g., CID seniors supportive of surveillance vs. younger community members who oppose policing). They want a Chief who can listen, synthesize, and respond thoughtfully.

Finally, they want someone who has successfully transformed a department, held officers accountable, and demonstrated success based on measurable public safety outcomes, not just activity metrics.

Asian American, Pacific Islander, & Native Hawaiian Leaders' Roundtable Desired Personal Qualities for the Next Police Chief

Community leaders want the next Chief to be defined by integrity, transparency, and honesty. They want a leader who will not lie, cover up problems, or hide difficult news, but instead will speak candidly and follow through on commitments.

A key expectation is the ability to admit mistakes, use data to identify errors, and make corrections, always with the understanding that accountability is first and foremost to the community, not to officers. Community leaders were clear that the Chief must challenge the "us vs. them" mentality within policing and reinforce that officers are paid to serve the community, not oppose it.

Accessibility and visibility are essential. The Chief should collaborate openly with community partners and be present in neighborhoods, not secluded in an office. People want someone who genuinely enjoys being in community and who naturally approaches the role with care and compassion. They gave examples of officers who brought groceries to elders or drove youth home instead of arresting them, saying they want that spirit reflected in the Chief.

A trauma informed approach was highlighted as a critical personal quality. Community leaders want a Chief who understands the impact of trauma on individuals and communities and who prioritizes trauma informed practices among SPD staff.
In short, they want a leader who is community grounded, empathetic, self-aware, and aligned with values of safety, dignity, and service.

Asian American, Pacific Islander, & Native Hawaiian Leaders' Roundtable How the Next Police Chief Should Engage and Build Trust with the Community

Community leaders described trust building as something deeply relational and rooted in presence, familiarity, and everyday interactions. They want the Chief spending time in neighborhoods like CID, Japantown, and Little Saigon, getting takeout, talking with people, and being visible in informal settings. Several individuals shared personal stories about times when police helped them during dangerous situations and expressed wanting to see more of that accessible, community-based presence.

At the same time, they recalled moments where police presence was notably absent such as the blackout in the CID when people were frightened and emphasized the need for better coordination with other departments during emergencies. They want officers on bikes and on foot, talking with people, and making themselves known, not isolated in vehicles or buildings. The lack of visible identification from ICE officials was mentioned as a contrast, communities need to know who the police are and who they can trust. Community leaders emphasized that command staff, including the Chief, must understand what is happening in different neighborhoods. Issues like repeated gunfire into homes require proactive outreach, creativity, and a sense of ownership.

Community leaders shared historical examples of positive engagement, such as the SPD drill team led by Officer Ted Euroback in the 70's, describing it as a model of long-term, community rooted relationship building. However, they also noted that police presence can be harmful in certain contexts, especially for people with mental health challenges. The Chief must know when police presence is appropriate and when alternative approaches are needed.

Community leaders strongly emphasized the need for a clear stance on ICE, given the fear and trauma immigration enforcement has caused in local communities. They want assurance that SPD will not act as an extension of federal immigration systems. Finally, they want the Chief to build strong networks with trusted organizations like ACRS, REWA, and others to build relationships rooted in protection, connection to resources, and long-term trust, especially for vulnerable immigrants, refugees, and people with mental health challenges.

Indigenous Leaders' Roundtable Summary

October 6, 2026

Indigenous Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Experience for the Next Police Chief

Indigenous community leaders emphasized that the next police chief must be deeply invested in Seattle's community, even if they are not originally from the city. What matters most is genuine buy in, someone who shows through their actions that they care about the people who live here.

A recurring theme was a chief with a proven ability to build and strengthen community relationships. Participants shared stories about police officers coming down to local Clubs, shooting hoops with kids, handing out stickers, and making themselves known as real people rather than distant authority figures. Several people emphasized that

community policing used to work because officers knew the neighborhoods, and the neighborhoods knew them.
Many talked about the importance of knowing Seattle's unique history. They noted that Seattle of the 1970s was a very different place and back then, community members often saw incidents unfold and step in before police arrived, and officers tended to have more people skills. One community leader shared a personal story about losing a brother, an 8th generation carver from the Native community to police violence, using it to emphasize how essential it is for Native communities and other marginalized groups to have a reason to trust the Chief. They described watching mayors and chiefs come and go, but seeing little change as Seattle "has changed for the worse."

Community leaders stressed that the next Chief must show up for the people, not just for photo ops. They need to be present at schools, in neighborhoods, and in community spaces, working "in the trenches" alongside residents. As one community leader put it, you can tell when a leader is there for the picture versus when they're there for the people. Another story focused on growing up in Seattle when the community was primarily Black and Brown, before gentrification in the 1990s. Policing was rough, especially for Black and Brown youth and a participant reflected that although the Youth Violence Prevention Initiative had good intentions, much of the funding went to uniforms and police cars rather than youth services, and programs like Seattle Youth Employment Program, originally championed by the Black Panthers, were deprioritized. These examples were used to underscore the importance of a chief who understands how past decisions have harmed communities and who works to rebuild trust and opportunity.

Community leaders also highlighted the origin story of the Community Police Commission (CPC**)**, created by Black and Brown leaders as a vehicle for equitable policing. They stressed that the next Chief must work closely with CPC recognizing its imperfections but honoring its role as the community's voice.

Across all perspectives, there was a consistent message that the next Police Chief must be present, authentic, community minded, historically aware, and actively committed to rebuilding trust through real relationships, not symbolic gestures.

Indigenous Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Personal Qualities for the Next Police Chief

Community leaders emphasized that the next Police Chief must possess strong people skills, the kind that go beyond "talking pretty". Several people reflected on earlier decades in Seattle, recalling how officers from the 1960s to early 1970s were polite, respectful, and genuinely connected to the community. Those qualities faded as policing became more aggressive in the early 1970s and 1980s, with more targeted enforcement based on skin color. One community leader described the shift through simple examples, officers once

bought people coffee, but over time, interactions turned punitive, like stopping someone over a bottle of vodka. This contrast illustrated what "real" people skills look like and how much has been lost.

Another key quality raised was the ability to leave ego at the door. People noted that ego can be hard to detect in interviews; it only becomes obvious in how a leader behaves day-to-day. The group wants a Chief who listens first, doesn't posture, and doesn't make decisions to prove a point.

There was a strong call for deep respect for vulnerable populations and elders. People want a Chief who treats these groups with dignity, understands their specific needs, and ensures officers do the same. Community leaders also emphasized the importance of a Chief who prioritizes crimes against Indigenous women and children. Community members shared concerns that these cases often don't get the seriousness they deserve.

Community leaders also described how many officers lack basic knowledge of tribal identification, like Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) cards and how that lack of understanding results in women and children from tribal communities not being taken seriously. For the next Chief, this means embodying humility, cultural competence, and a willingness to ensure the entire department is trained to respect tribal sovereignty and identity.

Across all comments, people expressed a desire for a Chief who leads with humility, cultural awareness, genuine human connection, and a commitment to protecting the most vulnerable.

Indigenous Leaders' Roundtable: How the Next Police Chief Should Engage and Build Trust with the Community

Community leaders emphasized that trust-building cannot rest solely on the shoulders of the next Police Chief. They described policing as a system made up of the Mayor, Chief, SPOG, SPMA, and broader institutional structures. Because of this, they felt it is unrealistic to think of "trusting the police" as trusting a single individual. Engagement must come through transparent communication, true accountability, and shared decision-making across the entire system. People expressed frustration that community often learns about major decisions last, and that community voice is frequently filtered through the "usual bodies," limiting who gets heard. Within this complex system, the Chief is "one cog", still important, but not the only one responsible.

A consistent desire emerged for a Chief who shows up in community outside of moments of crisis. Participants stressed emotional maturity, someone who doesn't only appear

during conflict or headline driven moments but is present during everyday life, building relationships proactively.

Honesty and integrity were repeated themes. People want a Chief who stands by their values even when it's politically inconvenient, who avoids vague statements and empty rhetoric, and who brings everyone from businesses to community stakeholders, and those most impacted into the conversation. They want a bridgebuilder whose words are backed by consistent actions.

The same participant who had shared their personal story of losing his brother to the police, described how unions have historically stood in the way of accountability. They said chiefs are often "good talkers and good teachers," but the department's culture and union dynamics protect officers over the community. For them, trust will only be rebuilt by a Chief who is committed to protecting and serving the people, not the department.

Finally, community leaders agreed that trust must be earned, and that doing so will take time. Community members are less concerned with whether the next Chief is from inside or outside the department and more concerned about whether the Chief shows up, listens, and protects the community. Integrity, consistency, and presence were described as the foundation for rebuilding the trust that has eroded over decades.

Business Leaders' Roundtable Summary

October 7, 2026

Business Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Experience for the Next Police Chief

Business leaders emphasized wanting a Police Chief with strong experience managing large-scale public gatherings such as Superbowl parades, Bumbershoot, Seafair, and major sporting events. They stressed the need for someone who understands both the cultural importance of these events and the complex public safety needs they involve, including crisis prevention, coordination, and crowd management.

They also want a Chief who is neighborhood oriented, who knows small business owners, and who brings an innovative, "scrappy" approach to serving communities despite staffing shortages. People want someone who can get response times down, do more with fewer officers, and rethink how SPD deploys resources.

Business leaders stressed the importance of a Chief who prioritizes relationships with trusted advocates, proactively building systems across neighborhoods and partnering with local leaders. They emphasized needing someone who truly understands the role of small

businesses, the mistrust that emerged after 2020, and the need for a Chief who can "meet the moment" with conviction, courage, and responsiveness, not just PR.

The next Chief must work in lockstep with the Mayor, steward department resources wisely, and set clear expectations across SPD to build a strong workplace culture. Participants shared that leadership turnover has hurt morale and consistency, and they want someone who can stabilize the department and unify staff.

Business leaders emphasized that most Seattle residents will never meet the Chief, and most police interactions happen on people's worst days. Because officers experience trauma daily, business leaders want a Chief who can build trust internally, someone calm, steady, and deeply connected to frontline staff.

Several business leaders reflected on memories of earlier community policing, officers on horseback, at football games at Garfield High School, or simply known by name, like Officer Benny. They want a Chief who embodies that relational approach and inspires youth to see officers as part of community life, that they can be friends with and say hello to. Business leaders also want someone experienced in cross-department coordination, familiar with partnerships between CARE, REACH, police, and fire, and able to learn from national models. They want a Chief who can clarify first responder roles and help improve the CARE system with community feedback.

Business Leaders' Roundtable: Desired Personal Qualities for the Next Police Chief

Business leaders want a leader who is open-minded, humble, and willing to engage in deep relationship building, referencing positive experiences with peacemaking circles involving officers, community groups, and residents. They want someone who can replicate and expand such transformational efforts.

Many expressed wanting someone local or internal who understands Seattle's context and knows what they're stepping into. Business leaders stressed the need for a leader who promotes officer level engagement in neighborhoods and listens to what communities want from their police.

They highlighted humility and curiosity as essential traits, qualities that matter regardless of a candidate's background. They want a big picture thinker who sees the opportunities in Seattle, understands long-term potential, and doesn't get stuck in short-term crisis thinking.

Communication was described as critical both with the Mayor's Office, within SPD and to the public. They want a Chief who explains policies clearly, communicates the "why"

behind decisions, and fosters respect within the team. People emphasized that no leader could do everything alone; they want someone who surrounds themselves with a trusted, skilled team, including strong communication strategists, so the department can shift narratives and operate cohesively.

Business leaders also want someone who understands the bigger safety landscape to address issues like officers spending hours in hospitals, citywide staffing challenges, and historical trauma in communities. Curiosity, humility, and team-oriented leadership were repeated priorities.

Business Leaders' Roundtable: How the Next Police Chief Should Engage and Build Trust with the Community

Business leaders emphasized that trust building begins with reliable service and presence. Many people shared that they don't know what the police can provide and often experience no response in moments of crisis. They want clearer roles between SPD and CARE and a Chief who visibly shows up in community, but more importantly, promotes a culture where officers consistently get out of their cars, walk neighborhoods, and build relationships. They want alignment across SPD ranks with a shared set of core values so the Chief and officers "sing from the same playbook."

Community presence was highlighted repeatedly. People appreciated seeing the mayor and current SPD leadership in community and want SPD leadership to model that same engagement that the mayor is modeling. However, they stressed that showing up is not enough; the Chief must do their homework before attending events, understanding local issues and collaborating with safety ambassadors who often know the immediate ground conditions better than anyone.

Business leaders also raised the need for data sharing agreements, referencing the Los Angeles model where safety ambassadors have access to integrated public safety information. They want a Seattle Chief who brings this level of innovation and cross agency coherence so community doesn't have to "keep calling" without results.

Overall, they want a Chief who brings clarity, presence, follow through, and institution-wide alignment, fostering both community trust and internal cohesion across a department that has faced years of instability.

Latinx Leaders' Roundtable Summary

October 20, 2026

In addition to the summary below from the Latinx Leaders Roundtable, **see Appendix D** for a letter from Seattle Latino Chamber of Commerce.

Latinx Roundtable: Desired Experience for the Next Police Chief

Latinx community leaders want the next Police Chief should bring extensive experience in community-centered policing, including working closely with community resource officers and demonstrating a history of building trust, humility, and strong relationships. They should have experience in sanctuary cities and be knowledgeable about the needs of immigrants, refugees, and undocumented residents, including navigating interactions with ICE and federal agencies.

Community leaders expect that they are skilled at operating in complex political environments with the ability to balance federal pressures, police unions, and community needs. The Chief must have a track record of transparency, communication, and translating strategic decisions for the community, using varied engagement forms and breaking down silos to better use existing resources.

Ideally, community leaders want the Chief to understand racial justice, the historical context of oppression, and trauma-informed approaches. They want someone with experience in similar-size city, that has multi-jurisdictional environments, and cross-border issues especially given our borders with the water and Canada as well as neighboring jurisdictions that are not as immigrant and refugee friendly like Seattle. They should show evidence of power-sharing, repairing past police harm, and developing actionable, trackable community-informed priorities. Community leaders want the Chief to be able to demonstrate, not just state what they have accomplished and how they plan to uphold safety, especially in politically charged times.

Latinx Roundtable: Desired Personal Qualities for the Next Police Chief

Community leaders hope the Chief will have an approachable, friendly, and open demeanor, seeing community members as partners rather than problems.
They should model and encourage officer behavior that centers on building relationships, demonstrating cultural awareness, and making genuine efforts to connect with residents. For example, community members shared that when officers engage with youth or make even small attempts to communicate in another language, such as trying to speak Spanish, it creates a meaningful sense of connection and goes a long way in strengthening trust.

They hope for a coalition builder who can work across sectors, think strategically and creatively, push innovation, and communicate complex issues clearly. They should be actively anti-racist, uphold community and city values, and support de-escalation, mentorship, and broader civic goals. Community leaders noted that past Chiefs who participated in the Undoing Racism training signaled to the community that they were genuinely committed to understanding and applying a racial equity lens to policing.

Community leaders want a Chief who is a community protector who is willing to speak up for those most vulnerable to federal systems and committed to everyone who lives, works, and plays in Seattle. They also emphasized the importance of community-oriented values, which they believe are reflected not just in professional decisions but in how the Chief spends their time outside of work, such as whether they volunteer or where they choose to donate.

Latinx Roundtable: How the Next Police Chief Should Engage and Build Trust with the Community

Community leaders expect trust to be built through authentic, transparent, and vulnerable engagement, showing genuine presence, acknowledging challenges directly, and avoiding blame-shifting. They want someone who can demonstrate humility, recognizing that public safety requires coalition work across departments and sectors, not unilateral action. Community leaders also expressed that they want to know how the Chief will partner with the Community Police Commission (CPC), ensuring it stays grounded in community voice.

Lastly, community leaders offered the suggestion for a community reception or meet-and-greet events once the Chief is selected so residents can connect with the Chief personally.

Appendix D: Seattle Latino Chamber of Commerce Letter

Mayor Katie Wilson

City of Seattle

Dear Mayor Wilson,

First, thank you for including us in this process and for requesting our comments on selecting Seattle's next Chief of Police.

I am writing this letter after speaking with many of our members and businesses throughout the City of Seattle, considering the concerns surrounding public safety, homelessness and people living on the streets, drug addiction and open drug use, and the relationship between the police and the community.

Our first conclusion is that the challenges facing the Seattle Police Department are systemic. No single individual can solve them alone. Therefore, we believe that simply appointing a new Chief of Police and expecting one person to transform the department and correct its shortcomings sets that person up for failure, as we have clearly seen through the leadership changes from Carmen Best to the present.

The Seattle Police Department needs to move away from a Broken Windows approach to policing. We believe the City needs police officers who know the communities they serve and are known by the people and businesses in those communities. Regardless of how many people may be transient or otherwise move through the city, police officers should be trusted partners of established businesses and residents.

When a citizen sees a police officer, that person should feel safer because they know the officer and trust that the officer is there to protect the community. Instead, when we see police officers today, one of the first concerns that comes to mind is whether we are going to receive a traffic citation. It appears that, among other responsibilities, the police department has also been tasked with generating revenue for the City through moving violations.

We therefore recommend that the Mayor restructure the police department around this vision. The City should establish meaningful community-policing programs that foster regular contact between officers, residents, and businesses, including opportunities to interact outside enforcement settings. These relationships would help residents know and trust the officers who serve them while enabling officers to build genuine connections with the communities they protect.

When an officer feels committed to and is part of the community, their approach to that community becomes one of protection and service. An officer who knows the city and its people is also better positioned to distinguish between situations and individuals that require intervention and those that do not. This can reduce confusion, improve judgment, and minimize unnecessary errors.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a genuine restructuring of the Seattle Police Department with this mission in mind, including moving away from Broken Windows policies. We believe that without addressing this broader structural disconnect and rebuilding trust between the police force and the public, no Chief of Police, regardless of experience or qualifications, will be able to fully resolve the City's public-safety challenges.

The Seattle Latino Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce stands ready to assist in advancing this objective, particularly by helping strengthen relationships between law enforcement, local businesses, and the Latino community.

Sincerely

Marcos Wanless

President & Founder of the Seattle Latino Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
Elected Chair, Washington Minority Business Coalition

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