

Ronald R. Saunier
Position Paper for
Chief of Police,
City and County of Denver

As the next Chief of Police for Denver, I would look to building upon the many successes the department has experienced over the past six years. Moving forward into the next decade with the Department, I shall continue to build on the relationships that have been established and continually work to connect with the community in the overall goal of crime prevention. I believe the best avenue to achieve this will be through the continued development of Community Policing. As a young officer (before community policing was the buzzword), I was asked to attend the Curtis Park Neighborhood meeting by my District Captain of the time. I remember walking into the meeting – which was packed with people from the neighborhood – and the atmosphere was anti-police. I was faced with many hard questions that as a young officer I did not have the answers to, but I gave them the best I had. I continued to attend the monthly meetings and got to know each of the neighbors. Soon, I would be flagged down during routine patrol by those neighbors, and they would report drug houses or stolen cars in the area. I am a firm believer that had I not developed those relationships, I would not have been as effective as possible at addressing crime in the neighborhood. As I stated in my cover letter, I believe that Community Policing is a top-down approach that needs to be embraced by all members. Community Policing is not a single Community Resource Officer or a small unit of officers. I believe for it to work, officers need to develop these relationships as they are handling the day to day calls. To this end, I will continue to look for opportunities to free up an officer's time, so they can engage in more community related policing. Civilian Report Writers have been an excellent start to this, but we must continue to look at other means of providing officers the extra time needed.

I feel it is vital that the Department continues to build on the relationships that have already established with the community and businesses alike. This public-private collaboration has proven to be a success in the Downtown Business Improvement District. With all the players coming together toward a common goal and working together we have been able to achieve the goal of providing a safer environment for those who live, work, and play in Denver.

I am a firm believer in the importance of communication. As I always stress at community meetings, along with officers, that communication needs to be constant and timely. People should not wait until it is a more significant problem before they start communicating. I have found that many of the issues we face as a police department are easier to deal with when they are small before they grow in size or traction. I believe in making sure the right people are receiving the communication and putting the community in touch with the right resources that can address the issue.

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I believe my philosophies of having an open-door policy, transparency, along with getting out of the office and meeting people on their turf, will be vital to the success of the Denver Police Department. As the Chief, I am a firm believer that you must be approachable and open to the citizens, businesses, and officers. Once you cease to hear of problems or feedback, you have failed as a leader. I believe in the importance of making the outreach many ways. At times you can hold a meeting, and the people will come to you, other times you must go to the people at their level. I also see the importance of getting out and meeting people more on an impromptu basis. This casual setting can set people more at ease and allow them to feel comfortable with discussing their issues. Each of these methods will provide you with the feedback that is required to be a successful leader.

Looking back at one of the past successes of the department, the reorganization and requirement to have every appointed position re-apply for the job created movement and new appointments. I was involved in every interview for the Major Crimes Division during this process. The Cold Case Unit previously had a sergeant and ten detectives assigned to the unit and in my opinion, was not the most effective unit. I was able to reduce this unit to four detectives, because I selected the right detectives and supervisor, the new unit was able to outperform what the old group of ten detectives had accomplished. Moving forward, I do not believe we have to complete a re-interview process again, but we must continue to actively monitor the productivity of each area and to empower the leaders to address any issues and to ensure we do not resort back to the status quo.

The department has made great strides around Use of Force and continued to make necessary adjustments. With that being said, we cannot just stop at that; I believe there needs to be continued refresher training and changes to the policy as we move forward. I believe that de-escalation and proper decision-making models are the keys to a successful process. During my career, I have seen new policies implemented and the initial training conducted, only to have the information fade away until the next critical incident brings up the policy again. I believe that on critical incidents there needs to be continual discussion, training, and debriefing of each occurrence.

I have seen the success of data-driven policing and strategically approaching problems in my time as the Commander of the Major Crimes Division and District Six. As the next Chief, I would continue to improve on the Command Operations Review and Evaluation (C.O.R.E.) process to focus on using the provided data and allocating the resources and providing guidance towards the prevention of crime. I have been involved in the C.O.R.E. process from the beginning. While assigned to the Office of the Chief of Police, I worked closely with the Denver Police Foundation and the original consultants George Kelling and Robert Wasserman in the development of the process. I have seen the many changes to the process and would look to build on the successes and to create a more efficient method. The overall concept behind the C.O.R.E. process has yielded positive results and is an excellent asset in generating ideas and holding the department accountable towards the mission.

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The Denver Police Department needs to continue or improve on recruitment efforts. With the number of officers that are retiring or scheduled to retire, we will need to increase efforts to maintain or increase the size of the department. This recruitment needs to continue to work on providing a diverse workforce and continue to keep the diversity throughout the ranks of the department. I believe we need to look at what the best practices other areas are using along with developing innovative recruitment within.

As we continue forward, the Department needs to remain on the leading edge of technology, from body-worn cameras to fingerprint readers, giving the officers the best tools to do their job is essential. I believe in continuing to examine the software developments and to make sure we are using all available data to help make evidence based decisions.

Moving forward I believe I have the reputation, skills, and abilities to lead the Denver Police Department to the next higher level. The department needs a leader who can bring the department together in a united front. We need to continue to reach out to the community and work with them and listen to all sides. I have experienced the importance of communication while dealing with the hundreds of first amendment assemblies that have occurred. I have approached many of the organizers of these events (many of which are against policing) and have been able to establish a communication and working together to create a safe environment for all parties involved. I know that—as with any relationship—it takes constant efforts and communication to make the Department successful and that to stop listening or ignoring someone because of differences is never the solution.