



November 15, 2018

Dear Community Members:

There has been a lot of conflicting information in the past week about the City's commitment to community policing and the Community Outreach Unit. I want to take this opportunity to apologize for the confusion and clarify what our plans are for the Police Department's next step for community policing.

The Community Outreach Unit (COU) is not being disbanded and the model of community policing is not being abandoned. Police Department leadership and I have been, and continue to be, dedicated to the policing needs of Columbia and the vision of what kind of community policing our residents want. Even with budget constraints, we continue to look at ways that we can expand community policing for all areas of our diverse and growing city.

Since the creation of COU a few years ago, we've been considering ways to evolve the Unit to best serve the entire Columbia community. The proposed expansion would respond to the City Council's goal of achieving citywide community policing without any more revenue. The selected officers would be assigned to each of the eight current Police beats, instead of just the four current neighborhoods where the COU officers focused their efforts in the past few years. This way we would have one COU officer per beat that can partner with patrol officers and build relationships with residents of the area. There will also be an additional sergeant added for a total of two dedicated to the Community Outreach Unit.

The Community Oriented Policing report is still being finalized and will go back to Council for consideration. I envision continued Council discussion through December about this concept.

We will be sharing more information soon about the eight COU officers and additional sergeant. Again, I apologize for any confusion that was caused by the conflicting information, but I hope you will join me in embracing the evolution of this program as we work to achieve the goal of citywide community policing.

Sincerely,

Mike Matthes
City Manager