



**CITIZENS FOR A GREATER  
DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS**

## **Press Release**

**For Immediate Release June 13, 2023**

### **Citizens Group Releases Report on Inadequate Police Presence in Downtown St. Louis**

Citizens for a Greater Downtown St. Louis is a network of residents, businesses, property owners, and developers who share a passionate interest in downtown St. Louis. We advocate for effective planning and decisive action to make downtown the premier neighborhood in the St. Louis region to live, work, and play. We advocate for changes in governance, finances, policy, and strategy as needed to make downtown better.

As recent events have demonstrated, public safety is a major factor in whether people choose to live downtown, businesses decide to locate Downtown, and conventions choose St. Louis as their host city. Just last week Dot Foods announced that they were moving their annual meeting from St. Louis to Denver because of concerns about public safety. The reputational and economic damage to the City of St. Louis and to our neighborhood from crime and violence is immense, as is the trauma to the victims.

Today, we are releasing a report – Understanding the Level of Police Presence in Downtown St. Louis – that dispels a variety of inaccurate beliefs about safety and policing Downtown. While we know that policing is not the sole answer to improve public safety, effective law enforcement plays an important role in preventing public disorder that too often leads to violence. This report summarizes two independent assessments of the relationship between police workload and police staffing. Both assessments reach a common conclusion – that both the 4<sup>th</sup> District, that contains Downtown, and Downtown more specifically, are significantly understaffed by police, given the exceptionally high level of crime in these areas.

Data for 2022 show that Downtown contains only 3% of citywide and 20% of 4<sup>th</sup> District land area, but 13.2% of citywide crime, and 53% of 4<sup>th</sup> District crime occurs in these areas. Downtown has a disproportionate density of crime -- over four times the citywide average, more than any other City neighborhood. Yet, police manpower is often diverted from Downtown to other neighborhoods. Currently, Downtown's dedicated bike unit (Downtown's primary police force) is operating at only 7 officers out of 28 authorized. If Downtown were assigned manpower based upon police workload, it should have 50 officers instead of 7.

This report addresses what we believe are the false narratives that suggest either that problems are not as bad as we believe and will soon be behind us, or that we are simply the victims of changing conditions affecting many cities, and there is little that we can do to counter those headwinds. We examine the way that inadequate police presence may contribute to diminished public safety.

While some of our public safety problems were certainly exacerbated by the pandemic, the trends of rising crime and disorder were present years before. And as the pandemic abated, the same problems have continued. The claim that it is simply a “perception” that Downtown has become less safe is not confirmed either by data or by the lived experience of those who spend most of their time here and witness firsthand the deterioration of our neighborhood. Lastly, the experience of other cities may be instructive, but it not universal and is not determinative of our fate in St. Louis. We know that there are strategies to address our safety and security of issues and that Downtown can be better – a lot better.

The future of the region’s Downtown will depend upon committed elected leadership that agrees to work collaboratively with residents, businesses, civic groups, and others to address public safety.

Go to the website [www.citizensforagreaterdowntown.org](http://www.citizensforagreaterdowntown.org) to download a copy of the report, learn more about Citizens, and join in our effort to create a great Downtown St. Louis

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