



I'd like to take a moment to provide the community with information about GRPD operations, and reassure our residents that the police department is dedicated to not only making Grand Rapids the safest mid-sized city in the United States, but doing so in a way that prioritizes partnerships and celebrates collaboration. I've been saying for quite some time that "I hear you." And I continue to "hear you." So, I'd like to take a moment to address some of the recent concerns I've heard raised in the community.

2020 saw a level of violence and criminality that I have not experienced in my 30+ years in uniform. We can talk about pandemics, social justice and civil unrest...but regardless of the why, I must lead the team to address the what:

- What are we doing about it?
- What's happening now?
- What's going to happen next?

As an agency we have adopted the strategy to use more data and be more intentional with how we address offenders. Because of this we have gotten very good at understanding the numbers. In the last 14 months our community has lost 40 members to violence. That's 40 loved ones who will never come home, 40 families experiencing heartache during the holidays, 40 smiles that we will never see again.

Since the beginning of this year we have confiscated 142 firearms as either evidence in a violent crime or recovered after being stolen. At this rate we will far surpass the gun crime from last year. Special operations like Safe Neighborhoods are the best way to address these issues under the current conditions with the resources I have available. We adopted a strategic plan that focuses on partnering with community, leveraging technology and using evidenced based tactics to address our current state of affairs. And I can easily say we have kept to that promise. We engage with neighbors before these types of operations, we use proven, fair tactics, and we leverage the available technology to make these operations not only successful, but safe for everyone.

I have heard some of you say a helicopter buzzing overhead does not make you feel safe. I realize it can be disruptive at times and why we only call on those air assets in specific and limited circumstances. I would much rather utilize less intrusive measures like gunfire detection technology or drones, but a helicopter is what I have available at this time to safely address the completely objectionable behavior our streets are experiencing. The advantage of having air assets allows us to track suspects without their knowledge to where they get out of their car without engaging in a dangerous high-speed pursuit. Ultimately, it's about safety. Safety for the community and safety for our officers.

I will continue to listen to anyone who has concerns, ideas or opinions about policing in Grand Rapids. We need to hear from you. If you witness a crime, call us. If you see an officer behaving in a way you feel is inconsistent with our policy or values, we need to know. In addition, I often receive feedback from residents regarding the outstanding work our officers are performing on a daily basis. Both of these situations can be sent to me and the agency on our website. If you have thoughts or feedback on how we can make the community safer, I want to hear it.

I have to lead the members of this department to achieve our goal of making everyone safe, and feel safe, at all times. That is a privilege and a responsibility I take seriously. I may sometimes need to make unpopular decisions, but it will always be based on what I believe to be in the best interest of the community. I appreciate your candor, ask for your patience, and look forward to these on-going conversations as we build on what we've already accomplished together in making sure the Grand Rapids Police Department provides the kind of service the community expects and deserves.

Thank you.