

October 14, 2025

President Choi,

Thank you for your continued interest in addressing issues of crime in Columbia.

The current city council consists of six Mizzou graduates and five former Mizzou employees. The University of Missouri prepared us all for a life filled with a commitment to address the challenges and needs of our community. We do so with respect, responsibility, discovery, and excellence. We share the University's mission of supporting civil discourse, resilience of our leaders, creativity and intellectual pluralism ([University of Missouri-Columbia, 2024](#)).

The council is engaging in problem-solving measures that seek the truth of our community's needs and challenges, determining the current status of crime (among many other council responsibilities), and identifying stakeholders to build collaborative and forward-thinking relationships to respond to the city's needs more effectively. To be successful, stakeholders must be open to discourse and an "open exchange about both ideas and decisions" ([University of Missouri-Columbia, n.d.](#)). The decisions we make must be examined and made "acknowledging the context and considering the consequences, both intended and unintended" ([University of Missouri-Columbia, n.d.](#)).

As we examine, research, and discover evidence-based practices to address crime in our community, we must be specific about the crime that has been committed or the situation that has occurred. This means addressing crime in a different way than homelessness, as they are not always related. We have to accept that some efforts take time, and accept the fact that this discovery process may cause "...uncertainty and ambiguity" ([University of Missouri-Columbia, n.d.](#)). We remain focused on addressing homelessness and maintaining the inherent dignity of all people living in our community, regardless of their housing status.

Even through this difficult and sometimes frustratingly slow process, we will remain committed not only to the stakeholders, but to our community and the citizens, students, and visitors who are here. Part of this commitment is maintaining the accurate and responsible reporting of crime data as reported by our law enforcement officers.

Per a report from Assistant Chief Mark Fitzgerald as presented at the downtown safety meeting on September 22, 2025 (emphasis added):

"Looking at crime data citywide, total crime is up just over nine percent compared to last year. Crimes against persons is very slightly up (+2%), property crimes are down (-16%), and crimes against society - offenses like drug use, trespassing,

weapons offenses without a victim, liquor law violations etc – is up significantly (+36%).

The crimes against society category of offenses is the main driver for our total crime rate. The offenses in this category are often counted only when there is an arrest of the offender. As our capacity has increased and our policing activities have increased in a per officer context it's expected that this category of crime has increased. **The increase reflects more enforcement and being more responsive as a department, not necessarily more offenses occurring.**

The data makes clear that while we're reporting a crime increase, it is largely the product of officers being more active and total staffing improvements that have allowed for more enforcement. **These results show that our strategy is working,** and with continued growth in staffing capacity, we expect to build on this progress."

While doing the slow and difficult work of finding long-term and data-based solutions, the city is also doing the immediate, day-to-day work of keeping our community safe. The city has consistently engaged in community-focused efforts that are not always headline-grabbing, but are instead steady, quiet, and intentional. Some of those initiatives are included below.

Public Safety

- ~50% of the city's general fund is dedicated to public safety.
 - [~\\$35,000,000+ is dedicated to the Columbia Police Department](#)
 - [~\\$30,000,000+ is dedicated to the Columbia Fire Department](#)
- Police staff vacancies at all levels have decreased from about 50 in fiscal year 2024 to about 8 at the present time (per report from Police Chief Jill Schlude on October 6, 2025).
 - Per the report by Assistant Chief Mark Fitzgerald presented at the community safety meeting on September 22, 2025, 8 officers were added to the night shift. This was a 12% increase to patrol staffing from June of 2025 and nearly a 20% increase from July of 2024. This allowed increased support for downtown safety initiatives and enforcement.
- The city has 118 locations for FLOCK cameras to be installed with 96 cameras currently live as of October 3, 2025 (per report from the City Manager's office).

As city leaders, we recognize that our work is neither perfect nor done. We are dedicated to continuing to work with all community members to address the needs and safety of our community and all those who live, work, learn, and play here.

Valerie Carroll, Ward 1 City Councilmember
Vera Elwood, Ward 2 City Councilmember
Jacque Sample, Ward 3 City Councilmember