

# Lowcountry for Community Control of Police



*Report prepared for the North Charleston Police Department  
by the Lowcountry Action Committee*

16 December 2025

# North Charleston Police Department Background

**Purpose:** The North Charleston Police Department Background looks at the past ten years of North Charleston policing (2015-2025). It is intended to provide insight into the past decade of the department's budgets and community concerns about the police department.

**NCPD Budget:** Over the past decade, NCPD's budget has grown, on average, 4.37% year after year and accounting for, on average, 29.77% of North Charleston's total budget. NCPD also maintains a staff of about 400 people.

- **Fiscal Year 2025-2026**
  - 437 full time authorized positions and 392 full time funded positions
  - Total budget of \$49,645,753
    - 7.66% increase from FYE 2025 budget
    - 28.7% of North Charleston's total budget
- **Fiscal Year 2024-2025**
  - 437 full time authorized positions and 389 full time funded positions
  - Total budget of \$46,110,808
    - 4.38% increase from FYE 2024 budget
    - 29.29% of North Charleston's total budget
- **Fiscal Year 2023-2024**
  - 436 full time authorized positions and 408 full time funded positions
  - Total budget of \$44,175,597
    - 10.82% increase from FYE 2023 budget
    - 30.02% of North Charleston's total budget
  - Actual spend was \$42,640,842
- **Fiscal Year 2022-2023**
  - 437 full time authorized positions and 385 full time funded positions
  - Total budget of \$39,859,610
    - 1.43% increase from FYE 2022 approved budget but a 1.46% decrease from the amended budget
    - 29.96% of North Charleston's total budget
  - Actual spend was \$39,381,868
- **Fiscal Year 2021-2022**
  - 435 full time authorized positions and 415 full time funded positions
  - Total budget of \$39,286,096
    - 2.92% increase from 2020-2021 approved budget and 9.26% increase from 2020-2021 amended budget
      - Amended budget was passed to account for projected losses in revenues due to the Covid-19 pandemic
    - 31.61% of North Charleston's total budget
  - This year's budget would also be amended and increase the Police Department's budget to \$40,450,859

- Actual spend was \$40,047,645
- **Fiscal Year 2020-2021**
  - 421 full time positions
  - Total budget of \$38,137,780
    - 0.80% increase from 2019-2020
    - 29.94% of North Charleston's total budget
  - Actual spend was \$36,030,871
- **Fiscal Year 2019-2020**
  - 420 full time positions
  - Total budget of \$37,834,665
    - 5.44% increase from 2018-2019
    - 29.70% of North Charleston's total budget
- **Fiscal Year 2018-2019**
  - 421 full time positions
  - Total budget of \$35,882,389
    - 0.97% increase from FYE 2018 budget
    - 29.17% of total budget
- **Fiscal Year 2017-2018**
  - 419 full time positions
  - Total budget of \$35,536,023
    - 4.21% increase from FYE 2017
    - 29.76% of total budget
- **Fiscal Year 2016-2017**
  - 421 full time positions
  - Total budget of \$34,097,856
    - 5.09% increase from FYE 2016
    - 29.54% of North Charleston's total budget

**NCPD and the Community:** Yearly increases in the police department budget as well as the largest budget line in the North Charleston city budget have not resulted in full compliance of the goals outlined in the Racial Bias Assessment of NCPD published in 2021, an end to police violence, or community members' feelings of being unsafe.

- The North Charleston community, specifically Black and Brown North Charlestonians, have significant concerns relating to racial tensions and disparities within NCPD's operations. After a multi year campaign of intense pressure, NCPD approved the completion of a racial bias audit of their practices
  - The final report published in 2021 showed that these community concerns were a lived reality

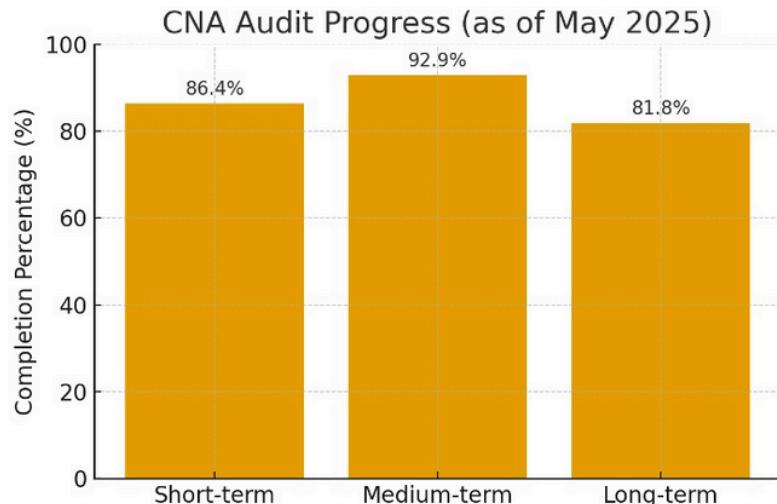
# RECOMMENDATION PROGRESS

The CNA Audit of the North Charleston Police Department (NCPD) was a comprehensive racial disparity audit designed to assess practices, policies, and procedures. Its goal was to identify areas for improvement, promote transparency, and strengthen public trust.

## Key Findings:

- Total Recommendations: 139 (3 already in practice; 136 to complete)
- Short-term Goals: 19 of 22 completed (86%)
- Medium-term Goals: 65 of 70 completed (93%)
- Long-term Goals: 36 of 44 completed (82%)
- Overall Completion Rate: 86.3%

## Progress Chart:



- Per NCPD, as of May 2025, an overall completion rate of 86.3% for the goals outlined in the audit has been achieved.
- Implementation reports have not been published since November 2022 and information about the specifics of which goals have and have not been completed are difficult to find.
  - It is also unclear what goals are being maintained. For example, during an October 2025 town hall, NCPD officials cited ongoing bias sensitivity training that officers complete at the YMCA, but audience members with knowledge of the situation asked how that could be possible when the YMCA hasn't held one of these trainings for years.

- The reason given for the pause in trainings is due to a lack of funding despite NCPD being the most well funded department in North Charleston.
  - Despite an 86.3% completion rate, community members still report disparities in interactions with NCPD and feeling unsafe in their communities.
- **North Charleston Police Officers killed 10 people either by shooting, tasing, or running them over by in the past decade (2016-2025)**
  - 30% of these people showed signs of mental illness at the time of police response
    - One person was killed during a mental health/wellness check and two other victims showed signs of mental illness at the time of the officer response
- Community members also share great concern about the treatment Palmetto Rose artisans and candy sellers at the hands of NCPD
  - During an October town hall, Chief Camacho told audience members that 80 calls were received over the summer regarding Palmetto Rose artisans and *only* 3 resulted in detainment and police misconduct. This means that
    - 3.75% of calls made reporting artisans practicing their cultural heritage resulted in detainment
    - Police misconduct during 2.5% of the detainings was so violent that a town hall had to be called
    - 1.25% of calls made reporting artisans practicing their cultural heritage resulted in an officer being demoted
- **Community members are also deeply concerned about apparent NCPD involvement with ICE even though NCPD has stated repeatedly that they aren't working with ICE**
  - During a two-night operation along Rivers and Remount Roads in early November, an NCPD officer was seen at the scene with ICE agents
    - NCPD reported that the officer was responding to a State Police Officer not responding to dispatch
      - Yet, eyewitnesses say the NCPD officer hung around the scene with ICE for an extended period of time and fist bumped an ICE agent before leaving the scene
  - An NCPD officer was also seen alongside an ICE agent in early December

# Examples of Community Control and Other Alternatives to Policing

- **De-Policing Behavioral Health:** Mental illness is not a crime; however, contact between law enforcement and people with mental illness is all too common. Often, these interactions include a person in crisis, and the situation can escalate and result in law enforcement using force. Estimates show that people with serious mental illness are over ten times as likely to experience use of force in interactions with law enforcement than those without serious mental illness. ([National Alliance of Mental Illness](#))
  - In 2019 CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) in Eugene Oregon was dispatched on 17,700 calls and only required police on 311 of these. Been Active since 1989
  - In 2021 Denver's Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) answered 1,323 calls with zero need for police. Estimates show they could take up to 15% of City Police Calls.
  - There are similar programs in NY, SF and LA that are reducing the amount of calls for mental health emergencies going to police, and drastically improving the care these people get all while being cheaper.
- **CVI's (Community Violence Interventions):** Community violence intervention/interrupter programs focus on individuals most at risk of being a victim of or committing an act of gun violence. CVI provides a public health approach to gun violence prevention, addressing the unique needs of the community where systemic racism, disinvestments, and trauma occur. ([Johns Hopkins](#))
  - CURE Violence approaches drastically reducing violence in communities across the country. They are far cheaper than the police and they work.
  - Sacramento, by including CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) into violence interrupting work, reduced homicides and shootings by 20% and for every \$1 spent to fund saved between \$18 and \$41.
  - Community based solutions are more effective and cheaper than policing.
- **De-Policing Traffic**
  - BerkDOT: would create unarmed civilian traffic control with powers to ticket but not to use force. Would ELIMINATE a major portion of interactions between police and civilians. Waiting on CA State Senate Bill 50 to pass at State Level.
  - Hennepin County Attorney in Minneapolis Minnesota will no longer prosecute cases stemming from non-public safety stops (e.g. taillights,).
    - In the same county after Philando Castille, Lights On! Initiative: Vouchers for free light repairs instead of tickets.
  - Requirement of written consent for Traffic Searches

- **De-Policing Schools**

- 14 Million Students attend school with cops BUT NO nurses, counselors or social workers
- Baltimore County Public Schools' Emotional and Behavioral Health Crisis Response and Prevention program reduced suspensions by 56 percent and disciplinary office referrals by 75 percent between 2015 and 2017. The program cost about \$1.4 million over two years, with the allocation declining in year two. Baltimore spends 10 times this amount on police in schools with no discernible impact.
- Trauma-informed cognitive behavioral therapy in schools costs about \$430 per participant, or about \$90,000 per year for a group of 210 students. This practice significantly reduces PTSD and depression caused by exposure to violence. One such program in Massachusetts costs \$98 million but generated \$177 million in savings in medical care costs and recovered time for teachers and parents, for a net savings of \$98 million.
- After school and youth development program funding has a massive positive impact on community lives and safety. A California study found for every \$1 spent on after school programs, schools and families saved nearly \$13. A similar study in Chicago found for every \$1 spent on after school youth development programs, upwards of \$30 was saved in crime reduction - to say nothing of the positive impact on communities' lives.
- 'Wrap Around' services for youth mental health, which offer subsidized robust mental health and counseling services detailed to specific needs of youth in New Jersey has provided real harm reduction while saving the state nearly \$50 Million in expenses.
- Restorative Justice programs in schools and for youth have proven to reduce recidivism rates for years after program completion.

- **Immigration Enforcement**

- Local governments are finding ways to subvert the ongoing escalation of immigrant communities by federal officers
  - Aurora, IL passed an ordinance tailored to prohibit the use of any City-owned and controlled property, including parking lots, buildings, or parks, as a staging area, processing location, or operations base for civil immigration enforcement activities.
  - Rockland, ME passed an ordinance amending city code so that city employees and resources cannot be used to help any federal agency in an immigration enforcement operation.
    - Similar ordinances have been passed in Madison, WI, San Francisco, CA, King County, WA, and Bernalillo County, NM.

- **Chicago**

- Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS)
  - Passed in 2021
  - Creates District Councils In each police district consisting of 3 commissioners elected by voters. Districts will hold monthly meetings and serve as space for communities to give concerns and criticisms of police. These districts report findings, conclusions, recommendations to City Wide Commission
  - City Wide Commission: Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPCA)
    - One member of each district council join to comprise a nominating committee that proposes nominees to be decided on by Mayor.
    - CCPSA appoints head of COPA which investigates claims against police, can nominate folks to Police board and Superintendent, and CAST A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE ON SITTING SUPERINTENDENT.
    - Can develop policy for CPD vetoable by mayor or super majority of City Council.
  - The Goal is for a CPAC: Civilian Police Accountability Council
- Chicago/Illinois unique “home rule” set up compared to North Charleston/SC mayoral council set up. Chicago can “exercise any power and perform any function pertaining to its government and affairs,” including regulating for public safety and restructuring local government. North Charleston under SC has a mayor-council form. SC Code § 5-9-30 (2024) *“The mayor shall be the chief administrative officer of the municipality. He shall be responsible to the council for the administration of all city affairs placed in his charge by or under Chapters 1 through 17. He shall have the following powers and duties....He may authorize any administrative officer who is subject to his direction and supervision to exercise these powers with respect to subordinates in that officer's department, office or agency;*
- <https://www.masc.sc/sites/default/files/uploads/administration/forms-and-powers2.pdf>

- **Richmond, CA**

- Community Policing, more than just a name
  - Had officers take regular on foot/bike beats and pushed for them to live in subsidized public housing in those areas.
  - Promotions not based on ticketing/arrests, but on problem solving, de-escalation and relationship building (not fake relationships)
  - Drastically reduced community violence, police violence and crime rates.

- **Philadelphia:**

- Uses the standard Cure Violence model: street outreach, conflict mediation, hospital and school components, credible messengers. Implemented via Temple University and community partners. (evidence of 30% shooting reductions.) Community Crisis Intervention Program (civilian responders)
- YEAH Philly: (one of many) Black-led, community based; works with 15–24 year-olds impacted by violence.
- Provides conflict resolution, peer mediation, mental-health support, housing support, employment, and legal advocacy.
- Police oversight remains primarily with mayor, council, and existing accountability agencies. No ECPS style elected police councils

- **Baltimore**

- Cure Violence interrupter model and outreach workers based in neighborhoods with highest shootings.
- Sits under the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE). MONSE is explicitly tasked with reducing reliance on enforcement by building non-police safety infrastructure, but. There is no Chicago style elected council structure

- **Baton Rouge: Safe, Hopeful, Healthy Baton Rouge (SHHBR)**

- Mayoral initiative:
  - Empower individuals, youth, families, and communities.
  - Revitalize neighborhoods.
  - Foster a culture of peace.
  - Build infrastructure for healing-informed policy and systems
  - SHHBR uses federal ARPA and local resources; CVI sits within a broader public safety and neighborhood strategy, not as a separate governing authority.

# Why We and NCPD Need Community Control

- What Is Community Control
  - A **directly-elected all-civilian** council
  - Final authority over police policy, oversight policy, and budget, including writing and reviewing
  - Full authority on disciplinary measures and legal recourse, including subpoena power and the convening of grand juries
  - Hiring and firing power over the police chief or superintendent, all officers on the force, the head of any existing oversight or review boards and offices, and the members of those.
  - Full access to all investigations by the oversight or review institutions
  - Broaden the scope of investigations to include all allegations of misconduct, including sexual assault
- The community needs community control to be able to fully trust NCPD
  - How can police protect and serve if they aren't accountable to the community they are protecting and serving?
  - Without community control, the police operate above and outside of the community.
  - Ongoing concerns about racial disparities in policing (e.g. traffic stops) as well as concerns over ICE and police misconduct towards Palmetto Rose artisans.
- NCPD can't effectively hire without community control
  - If the community doesn't trust the police, they won't become the police.
  - Community control assures community members that by joining the police they are serving their community and not creating harm.
    - This can allow for greater community representation in the police force and greater diversity.
- NCPD can't effectively make decisions without it
  - Community control allows the community to take agency and determine policy that matches the needs of the community.
- NCPD can't focus without community control
  - Police officers are consumed by needing to be the wardens of the homeless, addicted, kids, mentally ill, poor, and otherwise marginalized.
    - With the use of violence interrupters, better youth services, and social provisions, police can reduce what they attend to 90% of the time.

## Questions

- What directives have officers been given if someone calls the police expressing concern about ICE's presence in their neighborhood? What about if they are concerned that ICE is grabbing someone from their vehicle or home?
- Why is North Charleston Police Department's understanding/definition of community violence interrupters so different from areas that have developed their own community violence interrupter models?
- When can we schedule the next North Charleston Police Department town hall?
- What can we expect after this meeting from the North Charleston Police Department?
- What can we expect after this meeting from the city of North Charleston?