

JUSTICELA

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After Community Outcry, West Hollywood City Council Votes to Remove 5 Sheriff's Deputies in the 2023 Fiscal Year and Reconsider Law Enforcement's Patrol of Pride

Los Angeles, CA—Monday night, West Hollywood (WeHo) City Council made a historic vote to reallocate \$1.6 million from the sheriff's contract to a different model of security. Council agreed to invest in its own alternative crisis response team as well as the replacement of armed Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) deputies at next year's Pride parade.

WeHo is the first of 42 contract cities in LA County's history to successfully challenge the skyrocketing costs of its annual service agreement with the LASD. In February, the WeHo Public Safety Commission recommended the City Council direct \$3.6M out of the Sheriff's contract into social services such as mental health, alternative crisis response teams, and permanent supportive housing.

While this recommended reallocation of \$3.6M is a drop in the bucket of the overall \$3.6 billion budget of the sheriff's department, WeHo Captain Moulder claimed during the meeting that a lack of deputies has resulted in skyrocketing grand theft in the city. It has come to light that this grand theft refers to stolen cell phones at nightclubs. With 60 LASD Officers in the two square mile city, soaking up one sixth of the annual budget, the Department admitted that the thefts it solved summed up to [2 out of 249 stolen phones](#).

An unprecedented campaign to reallocate dollars from LASD to social services has been supported by the 17th [president of the NAACP](#), founder of [CalEITC4Me](#), former mayors, and more. City staff [ignored data, residents' demands](#), as well as the Safety Commission's recommendations — and proposed allocating an additional \$1,030,000 to LASD this year plus \$500,000 to audit the sheriff department's self-audit.

Community organizations such as JusticeLA, Partners for Justice, Fund for Guaranteed Income, CURB, La Defensa, Dignity and Power Now, Gender Justice LA, Re-Imagine LA Coalition, and ACLU along with West Hollywood residents spent weeks making their concerns about this misappropriation of funds heard. As a result of this successful mobilization, WeHo will remove five deputies from the FY2023 contract.

Ivette Alé-Ferlito, Dignity and Power Now's Director of Policy and Advocacy shared, "West Hollywood City Council's decision to significantly reduce the reallocation of funding from the

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corrupt and fiscally incompetent Los Angeles Sheriff's Department is indefensible. As a Queer migrant organizer, I and many others in the community would like to see a full transformation of WeHo's public safety system. The Public Safety Committee's proposal to shift \$3.6 million from the Sheriff's budget was not that; it was simply a pragmatic step towards a more holistic vision that prioritizes care, and the Council could not deliver. The \$2.4 million dollars they chose *not* to reallocate means that community-based services like HIV prevention, alternative crisis response, and mental health care will remain underfunded. Queer, Trans, Black, Brown, low income and otherwise vulnerable community members will continue to be most impacted by the Council's lack of political will. We encourage West Hollywood leadership to stop tinkering at the margins and make the bold decisions their residents so desperately need."

Ambrose Brooks, JusticeLA Coalition coordinator, remarked, "West Hollywood City Council's June 27th budget vote is a step in the right direction: away from funding Sheriff's violence and towards investing in care. The LA County Sheriff's Department is charging contract cities tens of millions of dollars each year to criminalize Black, Brown, Queer, and Trans communities. All this while LASD imposes astronomical liability costs on cities with limited operating budgets. We thank Councilmembers Sepi Shyne, John D'Amico, and Lindsey Horvath, who openly recognized both these inequities and the fiscal irresponsibility of LASD, and voted accordingly. Other Los Angeles County contract cities must take the same path as West Hollywood, and also re-evaluate their costly contracts with LASD."

During the Monday night meeting, WeHo residents expressed their frustrations with the Sheriff's department budget and contract. And hundreds of [letters](#) were sent to Council over the past several months as residents learned the amount of money the city spends on one Sheriff's deputy. WeHo's bold yet insufficient decision to reallocate funds from the largest and deadliest sheriff's department in the world laid down the gauntlet for other contract cities. The Council's decision indicates what is possible, and what is next, in LA county — the reimagination of public safety as investments in community-based alternatives to law enforcement.

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About the JusticeLA Coalition:

JusticeLA is a partnership of grassroots organizations, advocates, directly impacted communities, and stakeholders to reduce the footprint of incarceration by stopping jail expansion and reclaiming, reimagining and reinvesting dollars away from incarceration and into community-based systems of care.