

Heidi Samuel

For Columbus City Council

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Safety in Numbers?

Heidi Samuel says we need to benchmark Columbus against the best.

The implication of insufficient police coverage reaches well beyond the issue of personal safety. Public safety is directly tied to economic development. The growing gap between what is required to keep Columbus safe and the current documented police shortage undermines the progressive efforts by both the business community and public sector to attract and retain new businesses and residents.

Columbus residents need to consider these statistics: Columbus is larger than Cleveland and Cincinnati combined yet has significantly less officers on the street per capita and per square mile. (*See attached graphics.*)

- Columbus is 222 square miles; Cleveland & Cincinnati are 157 square miles together;
- Columbus's population is about 770,000, while the combined population of Cleveland and Cincinnati is about 780,000.
- Cincinnati & Cleveland have 53% more officers per square mile than Columbus;
- Cincinnati & Cleveland have 32% more officers per 1000 residents than Columbus.

"I could understand a difference of 10 percent, maybe even 20 percent, but when you compare things more evenly, a 30 to 50 percent difference in the level of staffing is astounding and unacceptable." Samuel stated. "Staffing levels alone is not the silver bullet, but these statistics are hard to ignore and put into perspective what many citizens are feeling. As a member of Council, I will restore public safety funding as the number one priority, second to none. Strong public safety leads to increase economic development, new opportunities and stronger neighborhoods."

Samuel, endorsed by the FOP who represents the officers of the Columbus Police Department, has also recently called for Columbus City Council to set a goal to commit to the resources necessary for Columbus to achieve a ranking among the top 10 safest big cities in America.

In the past year, when confronted by recent statistics, city leaders compared Columbus with Detroit and Cleveland, both struggling metropolitan areas ranked the 2nd and 7th most dangerous cities in America. In the same ranking of compiled FBI Statistics, Columbus was ranked the 9th most dangerous big city in America; cities with a population greater than 500,000.¹

"Leaders in the Columbus business community benchmark Columbus against the nation's best performing cities in job growth and innovation. Why do we find it acceptable for city leaders to benchmark our public safety against the worst?" Samuel said. "Columbus should be benchmarking against a similar city such as Austin with a growing economy and a ranking as America's 5th safest big city."

Samuel's opponent in the November election recently wrote in her own words, "Although statistically Columbus has some of the best big-city crime figures in the nation, it is not enough."

"She is correct in one regard, what is being done is **not** enough, but when we talk about crime statistics, we can't simply gloss over the serious nature of the long term repercussions," Samuel said. "Columbus is the 15th largest city in America and we need to be looking long term and benchmarking ourselves nationally against the best, not maintaining a status quo advantage over those cities that are in decline."

A recent report from the Brookings Institution stated; "Public safety is 'basic' number two [schools number one]. High crime rates can stall city revitalization efforts, not only by diminishing the quality of urban life, but by signaling to investors and potential residents that government is unable to meet one of its most essential obligations—protecting their citizens and businesses."²

"I believe economic growth and development, revitalization of neighborhoods and attracting new residents is vital to the future of our city. Step one is ensuring Columbus citizens feel safe. If citizens don't feel safe in their neighborhoods, those who can afford to move out of the city will eventually move out."

Samuel's run for city council calls for the city to **protect, preserve and improve** neighborhoods as a method of ensuring the city's long-term health. Her focus is to restore public safety personnel numbers to necessary levels, expand the city's code enforcement program to prevent continued corrosion and blight, and develop better, more substantive partnerships with neighborhoods to answer their unique needs.

For more information, visit the official Heidi Samuel for Columbus Neighborhoods website, www.HeidiSamuel.com.

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¹ Morgan Quitno Press, now part of CQ Press is a division of Congressional Quarterly Inc.

² The Brookings Institution, Metropolitan Policy Program report, "Restoring Prosperity": http://www3.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20070520_oic.pdf

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