

Chronology of Reform

Pre-2020

Santa Monica has a rich history of community efforts to address long-running racial exclusion in the city. Racial exclusion contributed to simmering tension prior to the death of George Floyd and the subsequent protests for Black lives in May 2020.

Read below for a brief history of racial exclusion in Santa Monica (SM or the City).

1920	The City passes an ordinance banning dance halls on Sunday. The ordinance effectively shuts down Caldwell's Dance Hall, an all-Black dance hall. When the owner hosts his dances on weekdays instead of Sundays, the City passes another ordinance banning dance halls in residential areas entirely.	
1957	The City adopts a master plan and constructs the Civic Auditorium which destroys a part of the mostly Black neighborhood of Belmar. The City also elects to build Interstate 10 Freeway through predominantly Black and Latinx communities, displacing many of these families.	
1987	Nat Trives , a former Santa Monica police officer, publishes a report scrutinizing the department's practices of hiring, retaining, and supervising Black officers.	
1993	In the wake of the brutal beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles Police Department officers, the NAACP Santa Monica/Venice Chapter drafts a police civilian review board petition. The petition advocates for the City to enact civilian police oversight.	
4/21/2015	Justin Palmer , a Black man charging his electric vehicle in Santa Monica, was tackled, subjected to pepper spray, and knocked unconscious while being arrested by police. A local bystander's video of the event goes viral. He's awarded \$1.1M by a federal judge for the police brutality. The event prompts discussion of police brutality in Santa Monica and spurs the founding of the Coalition for Police Reform.	
9/2015	Fay Wells, a Black resident of Santa Monica, publishes a first person account in the <i>Washington Post</i> of her experience being racially profiled by her neighbor and police. It gets national attention, including by the New York Times and All Things Considered on NPR , leading to scrutiny of racial dynamics in Santa Monica.	
10/2015	The Committee for Racial Justice launches the Santa Monica Coalition for Police Reform (CPR) . CPR meets quarterly with the SM police chief and City Manager.	
2016	Chief of SMPD implements parts of African American Community Academy for Police training, which trains new police recruits on the City's Black history. However, after one recruit class, the program dissolves.	
1/1/2019	Two new state laws are signed into effect, greatly expanding the public's access to police records. SB 1421 makes police records relating to officer use of force incidents and misconduct accessible under the California Public Records Act. AB 748 requires released video and audio recordings of critical police incidents.	
10/2019	A Budget Task Force advises City Manager Rick Cole on challenges of future structural budget issues.	
4/2020	The COVID pandemic requires dramatic budget cuts. Long-serving City Manager Rick Cole proposes dramatic cuts, gets pushback, then resigns in frustration.	
4/18/2020	The City appoints Lane Dilg to be interim City Manager.	
5/6/2020	City Council announces dramatic budget cuts, layoffs, and reduced social services. Virtually no changes were made to the SMPD budget.	

May 2020

On May 25, 2020, four Minneapolis officers held down a handcuffed George Floyd after detaining the 46-year-old Black man for allegedly using a fraudulent \$20 bill. One officer dug his knee into the neck of Floyd, cutting off the air supply to Floyd's lungs for 9 minutes and 29 seconds. Following Floyd's death, demonstrations were held across the country in his honor – bringing attention to the issue of policing, public safety, and its effects on Black people.

On May 31, 2020, six days after Floyd's murder, peaceful protestors descended on Santa Monica. While the protestors demonstrated, systematic criminal activity occurred in the downtown area of the City.

A full report on the Santa Monica Police Department's mishandling of the protests can be found [here](#).

5/31/2020	Protestors gather and demonstrate in the coastal area of the City. Meanwhile, systematic criminal activity directed at small businesses results in more than 150 businesses being vandalized or looted, and over 400 people arrested. Community members (and even some celebrities) are outraged at the City police department's handling of the protests and separate criminal activity.	
6/3/2020	Three days after the protests, the City Manager and Police Chief publicly give the Santa Monica Police Department (SMPD) an "A" grade for their handling of the protests.	
6/9/2020	City Council unanimously signs onto the Obama Foundation Mayor's Pledge "to engage the public in review and reform of public safety and policing."	
6/10/2020	The Interim City Manager appoints 15 member Public Safety Reform Advisory Committee (PSRAC).	

June 2020 - December 2020

Initially, Santa Monica officials move quickly in addressing police violence by agreeing to review police practices. However, the movement gets undermined by the delay tactics of City officials. For three months, the City failed to implement any actions the City Council adopted to create an oversight commission and review police practices, including failing to draft an ordinance to create a permanent police oversight commission.

7/22/2020	PSRAC holds its first meeting.	
9/1/2020	After eight weeks of work, the PSRAC releases a 44-page document of recommendations . The recommendations include formation of a public safety reform and oversight commission, adoption of alternative responses to 911 calls, additional resources to address mental health crises, increased presence of neighborhood resource officers, promotion of more community engagement including healing and restorative justice, and a comprehensive list of recommended best practices for use of force, among other things.	
9/8/2020	City Council votes to adopt PSRAC recommendations and commits \$100,000 for Santa Monica Black Lives Association. City Council says they will further study reallocation of \$8M from SMPD budget that PSRAC recommends. Also on September 8, SMPOA publishes this blog post with a frustrated tone.	
9/2020 - 12/2020	The City Manager and staff take no steps to engage with PSRAC members.	
9/2020 - 12/2020	No ordinance is drafted by the City Attorney to implement the recommendation to establish a civilian oversight body. No process is set up to engage with the community on the recommendations adopted by City Council. No process is set up to reform the use of force policies to reflect best practices, as required by the City Council's decision.	
10/25/2020	SMPD Chief Cynthia Renaud retires amid accusations of mishandling May 31 protests. Jacqueline Seabrooks, Santa Monica's first Black female officer and Chief from 2012-17, steps in as interim Chief. A petition with 66,000 signatures called for Renaud to resign.	
11/2020	SMPOA President sends a letter to the City Manager, Lane Dilg, criticizing the PSRAC recommendations, which exclude officers from the oversight commission.	
11/2020	An informal draft ordinance to establish the oversight commission, written by community members, is widely circulated in the City. City staff receives it, and shortly thereafter, a draft ordinance appears from the City Attorney. The draft by the City Attorney reflects the language used in the informal draft written by community members.	

January 2021 - December 2021

After a PSRAC member drafts their own ordinance to establish the police oversight commission, the City Council finally adopts it. The SMPD also revises their use of force policy based on recommendations from the PSRAC. However, after the Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission (PSROC) is formed, the SMPD and their Police Association seem to resist every effort to reform their own practices. Some of these efforts to resist include the push for police influence over the oversight commission and filing legal action to prevent the PSROC from undertaking its own power delegated by the City Council.

1/2021	City Council approves the ordinance to establish an oversight commission.	
1/21/2021	SMPD (quietly) revises use of force policy, three months after the recommendation by the PSRAC to revise.	
1/26/2021	The City Council creates a new Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission (PSROC) , turning the PSRAC into a permanent branch of city government; 71 people applied and 11 were selected.	
2/2021	Ordinance to establish the PSROC becomes effective. No appointments are made, and no process is set up to take applications.	
2/2021	SMPOA takes issue with lack of police officer representation on PSROC and pushes for the inclusion of an active or retired officer. The SMPOA files “Unfair Practice Charge” against the City.	
3/4/2021	<i>Santa Monica Mirror</i> posts an article suggesting that the police union is threatening to sue the City of Santa Monica over their exclusion in the PSROC.	
3/9/2021	The City Staff presents an Urgency Ordinance that would increase rules surrounding protests and noise. The City Council approves the ordinance.	
5/2021	City Council appoints 11 members to the PSROC, including George Brown, Angela Scott, Lana Negrete, Greg Morena (former City Council member), Craig Miller, Derek Devermont, Jaime Cruz, George Centeno, Manju Raman, and two “youth” Commissioners (under age 22).	
5/11/2021	City Council presents OIR after-action report of May 31, 2020 protests at its City Council meeting. The report includes 44 recommendations.	
5/2021	City Council delegates part-time assistance from Lisa Parson to support PSROC, which is much less than the help needed to run the commission.	
5/2021	The City refuses to provide or hire subject matter experts on the best practices in policing.	
5/26/2021	PSROC holds its first meeting and swears in its members.	
6/2021	Interim City Manager Lane Dilg resigns. John Jalili takes the helm as Interim City Manager.	
6/6/2021	SMPOA publishes response to after-action report regarding May 2020 protests. The response affirms that “there were critical failures in both areas on that day” and that officers during the protest were “unprepared due to Chief Renaud’s decision not to place the department on tactical alert.” The response states that the after-action report “isn’t a complete and total accounting of the narrative” and justifies the failures it made noting “the day ended with no significant physical injuries to officers or civilians.”	
7/23/2021	SMPOA files a complaint regarding PSROC’s jurisdiction and power.	
7/27/2021	New Noise Ordinance amendment that restricts where peaceful protesting can take place – and how loud it can be – is introduced at a City Council meeting.	
8/24/2021	The City Council privately votes in a settlement with SMPOA regarding PSROC and appoints two new police-allied members to PSROC.	
8/2021	An agenda item during a PSROC meeting is the PSROC report on the May 31, 2020 protests. The draft report is approved 5-4. There are nine members, but the two youth members are absent. The body requires a majority of the 11-member body to take a formal action, so the motion to approve the draft failed .	
8/30/2021	Chair of PSROC George Brown publishes a letter criticizing the City Council’s agreement with SMPOA restricting PSROC.	
9/8/2021	<i>SM Daily Press</i> posts an article that explains PSROC objections to temporary power restrictions.	

9/9/2021	Two SM community members give powerful statements on what they experienced during the May 2020 protests in SM. One community member speaks of encountering a police officer who pointed a rifle at her. The other community member speaks of her daughter who was sprayed with pepper spray and hit with a rubber bullet while peacefully protesting.	
9/30/2021	California Governor signs AB 481 , which requires local governing bodies to adopt ordinances on Military Equipment Use Policies laying out the approval process.	
10/11/2021	SM City Council hires new City Manager David White.	
10/14/2021	SMPD hires new police chief, Ramon Batista, a former chief of the Mesa, Arizona police department.	
11/2021	PSROC unanimously passes its own response regarding the May 2020 protests.	
11/2021	SM Police Officer Association settlement leads several changes: (1) appointment of a non-voting member (SMPOA nominated a commissioner aligned with police interest); (2) PSROC cannot participate in SMPD disciplinary investigations, and; (3) PSROC must provide 72 hours notice of any recommendations or reports. See details.	

January 2022 - June 2022		
The delay and resistance tactics used by City officials and the SMPD successfully undermined reform in Santa Monica. As a result, the efforts of the PSROC have been hampered—with the Chair of the PSROC eventually resigning.		
1/9/2022	New SMPD Chief refuses to address how he will proceed with testimony he heard on Sept. 9, 2022, which outlined instances of use of force during the May 2020 protests. SMPD Chief and City Attorney cite the agreement between SMPOA and the SM City Council, which restricts the PSROC from making recommendations of SMPD policies and practices.	
1/2022	After over nine months of operation, PSROC Inspector General Michael Gennaco begins work with the PSROC. The City Council approved the creation of the PSROC 17 months before hiring Gennaco.	
1/13/2022	Inspector General Michael Gennaco opposes the PSROC project to analyze best practices for protest management.	
2/2022	PSROC Chair George Brown resigns from PSROC amid SMPD, police association, and City's lack of willingness to change.	
2/2022	PSROC Commissioner Derek Devermont becomes chair of the PSROC.	
2/2022	Pursuant to the settlement between the City Council and SMPOA, Paul Winnemore is sworn in as a nonvoting member to the PSROC.	
3/2022	PSROC Commissioner Luis Ramirez resigns from the PSROC, citing an inability to meet the time commitment to sit on the commission.	
4/2022	Brian Stedge-Stroud, a voting member, is appointed to the PSROC.	
4/18/2022	<i>SM Daily Press</i> publishes an article regarding turnover on the PSROC.	
9/9/2022	Santa Monicans for Democracy place an advertisement in the <i>SM Daily Press</i> criticizing the City Council for ignoring the OIR Group report covering the events and police mishandling of the May 2020 protests.	
Although the chronology concludes here, events are still unfolding in Santa Monica. Reform updates will continue to be chronicled.		

Legend

Former PSROC Chair George Brown **outlined the modes of resistance** used to block “change and progress towards the goal of implementing civilian oversight.” We **highlighted the instances in which the modes of resistance were used and color coded the events in the right hand column of the chronology.**

Ignore	Deny	Delay	Dispute	Starve	Taint

Disclaimer: The facts cited in the above chronology were assumed to be true based upon public news sources and direct sourcing from Santa Monica community members. The analysis reflects the opinions of our staff and is intended for educational purposes and policy discussions.

Additional Information

- [PSRAC Recommendations for City Council: Recommendations of the Santa Monica Public Safety Reform Advisory Committee](#) (Sept. 1, 2020).
- [PSROC Ordinance: An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Santa Monica Adding Santa Monica Municipal Code Chapter 2.50 to Establish a Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission](#) (Jan. 26, 2021).
- [OIR Group Report: Independent After Action and Evaluation Regarding the Events Leading to, During, and Following May 31, 2020](#) (May 4, 2021).
- [PSROC Report to City Council on OIR Group Findings: City of Santa Monica Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission Report to City Council regarding: OIR Group Findings and SMPD Response Concerning May 31, 2020 Events](#) (Nov. 11, 2021).
- [Deirdre Pfeiffer’s Thesis on Multiracial Integration in Santa Monica: The Dynamics of Multiracial Integration: A Case Study of the Pico Neighborhood in Santa Monica, CA](#) (2007).
- [Gabriel Weinberger and Michele Wittig’s Paper on Policing in Santa Monica: Policing in Santa Monica: Transparency, Accountability and Oversight](#) (Aug. 2, 2016).