

For Immediate Release  
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## **St. Louis' "Defund. Re-envision. Transform." Campaign Mobilizes Residents as City Budget Talks Enue**

*Defund. Re-envision. Transform. (DRT) is a campaign that focuses on defunding the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD), and investing that money into policies and programs that create actual public safety like housing, education, and violence interruption. Since DRT launched in April of 2021, the campaign has trained a growing number of City residents to not only understand how their tax dollars disproportionately fund policing, they have also mobilized St. Louisans to testify during the City's public budget hearings. In Fiscal Year 2022, DRT successfully advocated to defund 98 vacant positions within the SLMPD, which resulted in 4 million dollars in savings that went towards community reinvestment. As public hearings on the City's Fiscal Year 2023 budget continue, DRT is releasing its second "Budget Toolkit" and an online "People's Budget Tool."*

On May 10, 2022 – Defund. Re-envision. Transform. published its second "Budget Toolkit," encouraging St. Louisans to understand how the City spends public money, how budgets largely subsidize policing and surveillance without increasing safety, and how individuals can advocate for those funds to be divested and re-invested in resources that support the health and well-being of residents and neighborhoods. Available [online](#), the "Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Toolkit" covers DRT's demands, information about the City's General Fund budget, examples of how police budgets can be decreased, alternatives for public safety, and how to prepare individuals to testify for public hearings.

*"Budget season is here and we want to make sure you have all the information and tools to talk to your elected official about how your tax dollars are spent. Starting Monday afternoon you can go to [DRT-STL.org](https://drt-stl.org) to read the FY23 DRT Toolkit and use the People's Budget Tool to create a St. Louis City budget that reflects the priorities that are important to you," said Inez Bordeaux, an Organizer with DRT and Manager of Community Collaborations at ArchCity Defenders.*

In addition to the Budget Toolkit, DRT has released the "People's Budget Tool," an interactive, [online tool](#) for individuals to participate in the City's budgeting process. The tool allows users to move sliders to reallocate funds by department, in order to help residents practice applying their values and vision toward their tax dollars. Once an individual decides how they'd like to allocate the City's General Fund budget dollars using the Budget Tool, they can share their results on social media, and inspire other residents to participate as well.

During the May 5th DRT and Close the Workhouse meeting, organizers recapped updates from the latest Board of E&A meeting, what's happening at the CJC and the Workhouse, and what's next in the FY23 Budget Cycle.

In April, DRT facilitated the first of three learning sessions on the city's annual budget and its approval process. Individuals learned how their tax dollars are spent, and engaged in conversations about whether that aligned with their values and definitions of safety. On April 22, 2022 at the [St. Louis Board of Estimates and Apportionment Budget Hearing](#), over 30 advocates testified in support of defunding SLMPD and reinvesting in basic services and resources.

Launched last spring, Defund. Re-envision. Transform. has joined the Close the Workhouse campaign in the Monthly Movement meeting space that encourages the community to receive political education and become more civically engaged. This collaboration has hosted many events and webinars, in addition to holding 2 vigils for families who lost loved ones due to state violence. Over the past year, DRT has denounced spending on vacant SLMPD positions, the Real Time Crime Center, and Shotspotter—a surveillance system that uses sensors to detect the sound of gunfire. In February, DRT and CTW held “The People’s Town Hall” with Mayor Tishaura Jones about the specific plans and timeline The Workhouse would be closed in 2023, issues of policing, and concerns about jail conditions. Defund. Re-envision. Transform. is anchored by a coalition of St. Louis-based organizations— Action St. Louis, ArchCity Defenders, Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression, Freedom Community Center, and Forward Through Ferguson.

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Media Contact:  
Z Gorley, Communications Director, ArchCity Defenders  
[zgorley@archcitydefenders.org](mailto:zgorley@archcitydefenders.org)  
(314) 643-2463