The Story
The City of Falcon Heights, Minnesota faced serious questions about inclusion and policing following the death of Philando Castile during a traffic stop in their community. In order to address these issues, the City Council formed the Falcon Heights Task Force on Inclusion and Policing.

The OCDR Problem Solving Process
OCDR, the Center for Integrative Leadership at the University of Minnesota, and the Mitchell Hamline School of Law Dispute Resolution Institute designed and facilitated the Task Force process and five Community Conversations where citizens gathered to articulate community values, identify community needs, and recommend programming and policies to improve policing and make the City of Falcon Heights a more inclusive community. More than 140 people participated in the Community Conversations, which provided a needed venue for dialogue and community building as well as input to the Task Force.

The Results
Through thoughtful deliberation, engagement with the community through the Community Conversations process, and consultation with subject matter experts, the Task Force developed two sets of recommendations (see sidebar). The first was dedicated to issues of policing and focused on restoring mutual trust and safety. The second focused on making Falcon Heights a more inclusive community. The City Council adopted both sets of recommendations, the Council also unanimously agreed to seek grants and allocate funds in upcoming budgets to dedicate staff to implementing the recommendations, and shifted from contracting with the St. Anthony police department to the Ramsey County police department. In addition, participants in the Community Conversations made personal and community level commitments to making Falcon Heights a more inclusive community.

Participant Voices
“I never wanted to come to the Community Conversations. I thought the City was just checking a box. Mayor Lindstrom and (Task Force co-chair) Melanie Leahy kept calling me asking me to go. Finally I said ok ok and everything that I thought about it was totally different. I was seated at a table with (St. Anthony Police) Chief Mangseth and I got to talk to him. Now I don’t agree with him on everything but I said lets work on this thing. Am I mad? Yes I am mad, but I got to tell him and he apologized. And I was seated at a table with Mayor Lindstrom. I had never talked to him before. I just yelled at him. Now I see he is crying and I realize that he is young and a new mayor and now I realize I have some things to figure out. I lost Philando and that was all I was thinking about. I didn’t think about how Mayor Lindstrom was young and a new mayor. If I hadn’t been at the Community Conversations I would still have these feelings.”
John Thompson, friend of Philando Castile
“After nearly 20 years of public service, I realize that sustainable solutions come from all of us sitting down together in a spirit of openness to share our truth. The facilitated, structured dialogues provided by OCDR enabled that sharing and helped me hear the important and necessary words and feelings that will make me a better neighbor and community leader.”
Mayor Peter Lindstrom, City of Falcon Heights, MN

“We were a small metro city in shock and upheaval. Early on as we began to put a plan together the Office for Collaboration and Dispute Resolution was introduced as part of the equation to bring healing and rebuild trust. Together we did something that had never been done before. As a result our city, its residents, and others in the larger metro community are on a path of healing. This pathway could not have been made possible without the process we undertook together”.
Melanie Leehy, Co-Chair of Falcon Heights Task Force on Policing and Inclusion

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