

Making Dubuque a Safer Community

Mayor Roy D. Buol and the Dubuque City Council hosted a community forum in September 2009 to initiate open dialogue on crime issues in our community and how to address them. The forum was attended by more than 130 citizens. In response to this high level of community engagement, the Mayor and City Council appointed 25 volunteer citizens to a "Safe Community Task Force."

This diverse group of volunteers was asked to holistically look at both the causes of, and solutions to, crime in Dubuque and provide recommend goals and objectives to the leadership of Dubuque. Beyond the 25 appointed members, the Safe Community Task Force utilized sub-committees and work groups to get all interested parties involved. The sub-committees were: 1) neighborhood engagement/social capital, 2) enforcement, 3) management of physical environment, and 4) research and facts. A series of meetings were held and a number of recommendations were submitted to the City Council for further action.

The following recommendations were developed by the Safe Community Task Force (SCTF) and subcommittees over 17 months and 35 meetings and submitted to the City Council from January 2010 through March 2011.

- 1) Reduce the time between rental inspections for problem properties
- 2) Do not allow property owners to receive city, state or federal funding unless their properties are in compliance or the owner is actively working towards compliance
- 3) Conduct crime study
- 4) Allow the Task force to act as a conduit for accurate information to public
- 5) Create ways to encourage people to light up their own property and surrounding public property
- 6) Install surveillance cameras in high crime areas in public places
- 7) Install 911 emergency kiosks
- 8) Reduce the time allotted for correcting property violations from the current two years
- 9) Encourage development of planned communities through mixed-use zoning
- 10) Develop and implement a juvenile curfew ordinance to use as a tool to help reduce crime. Research utility, efficacy and enforcement issues, taking the following suggestions into consideration:
 - a) The police department would not conduct curfew sweeps of the community
 - b) There would be designated and staffed location to hold juveniles who violate the curfew. Contact with parents or a responsible adult would not be handled by police. Penalties for curfew violations could include fines, community service requirements and parenting classes (See recommendation #43)
- 11) Provide additional resources for the Community Oriented Policing (COP) Program
- 12) Direct Police Dept. to enforce noise ordinances more aggressively
- 13) Direct Police Dept to enforce traffic ordinances more aggressively
- 14) Give the SCTF and Police Dept. the opportunity to respond to the crime study report and recommendations
- 15) The SCTF recommends its continued existence to monitor the implementation and progress of its recommendations through quarterly progress reports from city staff, and special meetings as necessary. The SCTF further recommends that the City Council consider creation of a Safe Community Commission
- 16) Support landlords in evicting problem tenants for cause
- 17) Mandate that landlords conduct renter backgrounds checks, using the City's free service
- 18) Establish threshold number of complaint calls that will place a problem property in priority category. Establish policies and processes for immediate response and resolution of problems involving those properties
- 19) Tie frequency of property inspections to landlord's history of cooperation with code compliance. Establish a threshold number of problem complaints that will trigger a meeting among the landlord, the tenant, and representatives of the Housing & Police Depts.
- 20) Intensify exterior code enforcement efforts. Encourage city employees across depts. To identify and report property code enforcement problems and establish ways to reward employees
- 21) Create a data clearing house limited to verifiable and factual information that landlords and tenants can share and reference when making their rental decisions
- 22) Develop and offer frequently a training program on code enforcement and property management for all landlords. Require all landlords to attend the program; issue only temporary occupancy permits/licenses until training has been completed
- 23) Address community concerns about the real or perceived impact of the Section 8 Program on the community by:
 - a) Decreasing the desired number of Section 8 vouchers in the program to 900
 - b) Limiting voucher eligibility to Dubuque residents
 - c) Increasing the staff capacity of the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program
- 24) Increase public understanding of the Section 8 Program
- 25) Increase participation of Section 8 residents in effective self-sufficiency programs
- 26) Provide training to housing commissioners to increase their leadership, public relations and community building skills
- 27) Implement an exception rent program to avoid concentrated pockets of poverty
- 28) Develop a stronger role for the Resident Advisory Board to encourage residents of subsidize housing to give feedback on proposed new policies and procedures and to cultivate leadership within the low income residential community
- 29) Provide community service credits for participation in effective programs that foster self sufficiency
- 30) Continue to provide resources to Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program based upon evidence of success

31) Human Relations:

- a) Increase tolerance and mutual understanding among the diverse segments of the population. The adoption of educational initiatives that foster community solidarity and global citizenship should be among the first practical steps taken by our City
- b) Implement appropriate measures that safeguard the rights and opportunities of all

32) Develop a Neighborhood Watch Program

33) Increase resident participation using such vehicles as clean up campaigns, neighborhood picnics, new neighbor welcome events and other strategies developed by residents

34) Intercultural Competency Training should be offered periodically to businesses and the community at large. It should be mandatory for city board and commission members as well as for city staff

35) The Human Rights Dept. should receive continued support. In addition the city should devote resources to a human relations initiative that could include programs in the arts, cultural programs and other strategies that promote respect and understanding among residents

36) Support a welcoming program for all new renters through community-based organizations

37) Install street lights in the middle of the block to brighten up the streets at night and increase visibility for residents

38) Improve neighborhoods by:

- a) Encouraging home ownership
- b) Encouraging a mixed-income approach to neighborhood development
- c) Creating (or re-creating) a sense of place through good design. All buildings using city, state or federal dollars should be required to meet these objectives and all projects should be required to meet the City's sustainability goals

39) Create an ordinance prohibiting the boarding of windows and doors facing streets

40) Develop and enforce policies consistent with the "preservation briefs" to maintain historic properties

41) Increase the number of trash receptacles on the street

42) Increase the number of neighborhood clean-ups and educate the community on City waste disposal policies in an effort to clarify the purpose of neighborhood clean-up programs

43) Modify the recommendation for a juvenile curfew ordinance and focus instead on creating a parental responsibility ordinance

that is modeled after successful programs that includes engaging parents and teens in prevention efforts

44) Encourage and engage parents and youth in out-of-school-time programs and parenting classes by ensuring the programs are designed to matter to the participants

45) Encourage the Dubuque Community School District to develop a meaningful intercultural competence program for students at all levels

46) Create a conduit, such as a speakers bureau, to continue conveying accurate information to the public on crime and the perception of crime in the community. Include a broad group of informed residents on the panel and focus on reaching a broad cross-section of the community with the information

47) Use the information from the crime and poverty study to create a formal way to continue tracking data for the community in an ongoing manner, and investigate the potential for using crime mapping software.

48) Encourage the Telegraph Herald to run an "I'm a Dubuquer" series

49) Raise awareness among the general public and develop individual ambassadors through Intercultural Competence Training, the Bridges Initiative, and similar programs, who can then talk with others about what they have learned

50) Expand the recommendation for a neighborhood watch program to include efforts to build relationships amongst residents within the neighborhood

51) Expand the emphasis on community-oriented policing and consider expanding the number of non-sworn employees, including interns and volunteers, in the Police Department in effort to assist with Community-Oriented Policing (COP) efforts and to coordinate with other departments and organizations in the community policing effort

52) Engage community volunteers of various races and income levels in a monthly "Days of Caring" initiative by encouraging businesses to allow volunteers to participate on work time

53) As exterior code violations are identified in neighborhoods, identify volunteers who are willing to assist with helping property owners remedy those violations, which will address the property conditions while also building relationships and a sense of community.

54) Encourage community-wide support of initiatives that support self-sufficiency (i.e., beyond government and the public

schools), with a particular focus on existing programs: Circles, Project HOPE, Intercultural Competence Training, Every Child/Every Promise, and the work that the Colts are doing with community outreach. Engage colleges, churches, businesses

55) Support economic development efforts to create opportunities

56) Connect new residents, particularly those who may not be referred by an employer, to the welcoming program at the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation

57) Challenge all departments within the City to develop and maintain a model Section 8 Program for a city of this size, meeting the needs of the elderly and disabled and also developing self-sufficiency for families

58) Expand the lighting recommendation to "Brighten up the streets and alleys at night and increase visibility for residents wherever lights are needed."

59) Emphasize hot-spot policing and focus on problem solving within those crime hotspots

60) Publicize the owners, numbers and types of complaints/violations in the top problem properties

Many of these recommendations have been implemented and others are being reviewed for implementation.

In October 2010, the City Council approved (upon recommendation from the Task Force) the creation of a Safe Community Advisory Committee. This committee has been commissioned for a year to oversee the implementation progress of the recommendations submitted to the City Council by the task force. The current committee members are:

- Anthony Allen
- Mary Rae Bragg
- Diane Callahan
- Jonathan Cheatham
- Rachel Daack
- Amanda Elkins
- Ann Ernst
- Doug Stillings
- Susan Stork

The Safe Community Advisory Committee meets regularly to monitor progress and offer additional recommendations. For more information, call the City Manager's Office 563-589-4110 or visit: www.cityofdubuque.org/safecommunity.