

NEWS



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MAYOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

John F. Street, Mayor
Joe Grace, Acting Director of Communications
www.phila.gov

City Hall - Room 216
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 215-686-6210
Fax: 215-686-2170

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Mayor John F. Street Convenes United We Stand For Safer Streets Community Forum

Philadelphia, PA – Mayor John F. Street today convened a daylong forum to discuss Operation Safer Streets plans for 2007 and solicit ideas and feedback on additional ways to prevent and reduce violence.

Attending the forum were more than 250 people including Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson, Managing Director Pedro A. Ramos, various elected officials, community based organizations, researchers, law enforcement officers, business leaders, government officials, social services providers, town watch members, block captains, ex-offenders, clergy and youth groups.

"Philadelphia has not been immune to the increase in violence sweeping our Nation," Mayor Street said. "Gun violence takes the lives of 30,000 Americans each year – men and women of all ages from city, suburban and rural areas across America. We are fighting more than a poverty of the pocketbook. We're dealing with a poverty of spirit and hope and determination. It will take a commitment from the entire community – neighborhood leaders, business leaders, the clergy, law enforcement and even the news media. Everyone must become involved."

Operation Safer Streets is a four-pronged effort to prevent and reduced violence that employs short-term strategies to address the symptoms of underlying problems – the crime and violence itself – and longer-term strategies to address the underlying root causes of violence, such as family dysfunctions and breakdowns, joblessness, truancy, poverty, drugs, guns.

The four prongs of Operation Safer Streets are:

1. **Policing**
2. **Community Involvement**
3. **City and Social Services**
4. **Gun Reduction**

Prior to the opening plenary session, an interdenominational group of clergy gathered for a morning prayer service, emphasizing the important role the faith-based community serves in Operation Safer Streets.

The opening plenary session presented a year-end review of Operation Safer Streets, moderated by WRNB and WPPI talk show host E. Steven Collins. Morning breakout sessions included panel discussions on "Keeping Kids Safe," "Programs for Ex-offenders," "New Courts" and "Economic Development as a Violence Prevention Strategy."

Afternoon breakout groups highlighted "Straight Talk about Drugs," "Social Service Solutions" and "Illegal Handgun Reduction Strategies." A special afternoon Plenary focused on the concerns and recommendations of young people who are most at risk of being victimized by violence or to become perpetrators of violence. This unique "Youth Speak Out" session was moderated by Radio One, WPPI Program Director, Colby Colb.

During the forum, Mayor Street discussed Operation Safer Streets plans for 2007, including:

- Hiring 200 Additional Police Officers
- Additional Video Surveillance Cameras
- Promoting Conflict Resolution Training in Churches and Schools
- Recruitment of Block Captains and Town Watch members
- Opening 11 Additional Curfew Centers (for a total of 12 Centers)
- City Sponsored Job Fairs
- Truancy Crackdowns
- Continuing Violence Prevention Programs: YVRP & AVRP
- Support for Ex-Offenders through creation of "One Stop Shops"
- State and Federal Lobbying For Stricter Gun Laws
- Best and Innovative Practices

"We have made unprecedented investments in public safety during the past seven years and Philadelphia is a safer city for all our efforts," Mayor Street said. "Serious crime declined 16 percent over the past seven years. We are committed and resolved to doing whatever it takes to ensure Philadelphia remains one of the safest big cities in the nation."

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