

Greener Safer Communities Task Force

The Greener Safer Communities Taskforce seeks the creation of a Department of Justice (DOJ) incentive program that local government agencies can utilize to create safer communities through coordinated community policing and urban greening. The purpose of the program is to invest in lowering crime and calming traffic. Trees correlate not only with less crime against both people and property, but also traffic calming along streets where kids play, and can be designed without sacrificing traffic mobility and driver safety.

DOJ

- Create the Greener Safer Communities Program with related guidelines. Mandate that all agencies that receive federal funds from this program implement the latest Greener Safer Communities Program guidelines. Consultation during the development of these guidelines must be provided by Technical Advisory Committees that are composed of local planning and ISA certified arboricultural experts and utilize the American Planning Association design standards. Science-based tree-siting guidelines should ensure that trees are not planted in locations that will disrupt pre-existing infrastructure or damage power lines. The program will also create an educational campaign that highlights the synergies between trees and safer communities, and emphasizes planting the right tree in the right place.
- Designate an applicable DOJ department to collect information- or fund a national NGO such as the Alliance for Community Trees to create a reporting method- with details including: crime metrics and existing urban forestry data related to neighborhoods and municipalities benefiting from this program. Require municipalities and other participating agencies to include an annual review that:
 - Compares crime with tree canopy cover for that city or region.
 - Includes a 10 year plan for including greening in community policing outreach efforts.
 - Establishes a goal for minimum greenspace or canopy cover and timetables within which to achieve those minimums in high-crime areas.
 - Designates a staff member responsible for tracking and educating intra-agency, partnering agencies, and local citizens.
- Encourage DOJ to develop working partnerships that are aimed at increasing understanding of and communication with national and local urban forest organizations.
- That all municipalities or other participating agencies include a three-year plan for post-planting tree care as well as a minimum canopy cover goal for developments targeted to benefit from this program. At minimum, trees shall be selected and installed based on appropriate International Society for Arboriculture (ISA), American Planning Association (APA), and best management practices design

guidelines and industry standards. The minimum canopy cover goal shall not be less than 40%.

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Implementation

- Create incentives that give preference to neighborhoods with the highest crime or highest proportion of post-release/ex-offender populations. For example, Delaware Center for Horticulture has established a post-release job-training program with the Delaware Departments of Justice and Labor to plant trees. One approach could be to award grants on a competitive basis, and award points for location priority. A minimum of 50% of program funds must go towards expenses for plant materials and other green infrastructure expenses including tree space preparation, irrigation, and maintenance.
- Require municipalities to give priority in awarding grants to projects that meet a verified level of overall existing and projected crime rates, with additional points for more rigorous standards such as... Programs driven locally by community leader. Plantings in any area, in addition to high crime areas, have proven to be most effective when led and implemented by community leaders.
- Establish incentives for targeting the project at new and rehab affordable housing construction.
- Work with security experts to better define Crime Prevention through Environmental Design. Too frequently the term is interpreted to mean heavy pruning of trees where criminals may “hide.” Also, there needs to be a better balance the need for security cameras to have a clear line of sight through existing tree canopies.
- Require municipalities and other agencies participating in the program to partner with a certified tree-planting organization(s) who will ensure proper tree planting, maintenance, and at least three years of plant survival or replacement.

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Funding

- Incentives may be loans or grants to states or municipalities. Administered by Department of Justice.
- Establish a federal revolving loan fund for greening-crime fighting partnerships, and/or offer a federal match to municipalities with revolving loan funds for such projects.
- Require a cost sharing match of 80/20 (federal to state/municipal/other non-Federal funds).
- As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, States have until June 17, 2009 to solicit green projects for the State Revolving Loan Funds unless at least 20% of their intended use plans are already green projects. "Green projects" is defined per EPA. No state match is required (never any project level match)

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Partners & Other General Policy Ideas

- Could attach to:
 - H.R.827, seeking to appropriate money to LISC for its Community Safety Initiative, but Joe Wilson was not supportive.
 - S.453- wrote a letter is cooperation with NYRP.
 - H.R.932- mirror bill of one in Senate. No word from Rep. Ryan (OH).
 - Wrote letter to Reps. Weiner (NY) and Scott (VA).
- Expand criteria under the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to encourage investments in green community redevelopment efforts. Integrated neighborhood planning and efforts that promote the creation of green collar jobs should all receive specific and additional credits in compliance with the CRA.

- APA’s policy objective regarding parks and open space is to provide resources and incentives for land conservation and park development; promote new public health strategies that address the linkage between land use, air quality, and overall physical health. More generally, one of APA’s policy objectives is: Build Safe Communities. This includes: Support programs to provide resources for local governments to improve mitigation planning, modernize planning and building regulations, conduct critical infrastructure threat assessments, and acquire technology for advanced visualization and scenario planning.

- Possible Partners:
 - Weed and Seed
 - National Crime Prevention Council
 - National Safety Council. They are leaders in traffic safety and can help with traffic calming perspectives. Scott Jamieson is on their board.

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