

# Department of Safety Programs Update

John W. Hickenlooper, Mayor

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## Community Involvement

The Department of Safety has achieved unprecedented levels in the past four years of citizen involvement with partners in government in making critical policy decisions. Several important task forces have engaged residents whose diversity reflects that of the community and have striven to reach individuals who have not previously participated in the public arena. Many of the task forces are described below.

### Use of Force and Oversight

The Use of Force Task Force was a community and city panel convened by Mayor Hickenlooper to examine and propose revisions to policies related to police use of force. The group also re-examined how safety personnel were held accountable for behavior and what safety agencies disclosed about how they processed allegations of misconduct.

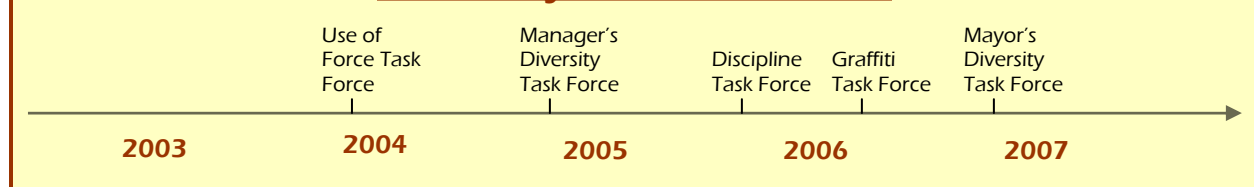
**Use of Force:** Recommendations from the Task Force resulted in greater emphasis on

- Using mediation to speed complaint resolution and facilitate face-to-face interaction to bridge gaps
- Publishing an annual report of discipline cases and commentary on safety agencies' capabilities to manage complaints effectively
- Allowing the OIM inside police investigations, with presence at critical incidents, monitoring of investigatory activities, and input into outcomes

### Discipline

Manager LaCabe included dozens of Denver citizens and city employees in a study of how existing policies, ordinances and the Charter can limit the police department's ability to dispense appropriate discipline. The Task Force then spent several months formulating a new discipline policy. The proposed new system would replace the so-called "comparable discipline" doctrine, under which the Manager has been prohibited from imposing sanctions for a given circumstance if they are more severe

## Community Task Force Timeline



police tactics that lessen the need for use of deadly force; expansion of the less-lethal force program, including Taser deployment and other tools intended to reduce the likelihood of life-threatening injuries; and increased investment in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), resulting in over 500 police and sheriff employees receiving CIT certifications.

**Oversight:** The Office of the Independent Monitor (OIM) and the Citizen Oversight Board are having a major impact:

- Streamlining the citizen complaint process

than previous punishments under similar circumstances. Instead, police would use a new discipline matrix aimed at establishing a new baseline for matching punishments to specific types of behaviors.

### Diversity

The Department of Safety has invested countless hours studying the barriers that exist to achieving employment diversity objectives. Two task forces have concluded their work, one convened by the Manager of Safety and the other appointed by the



Mayor and City Council. The Department of Safety has implemented the following recommendations from these bodies:

- Increasing the number of applicants reviewed by the Manager of Safety, and no longer listing candidates in rank order according to their standardized test scores
- Conducting oral interviews
- Awarding points for foreign-language proficiency
- Increasing the number of recruiters
- Emphasizing public school students when recruiting for the Cadet program, a major source of applicants (especially minorities and women) for Denver safety agencies
- Incorporating a “plus factor” for African-American and female applicants to the Fire Department

## **Graffiti**

Graffiti is a growing scourge in our community and nationwide. Mayor Hickenlooper formed the Graffiti Task Force in October 2006 to bring diverse community perspectives together to recommend new policies in three areas: *enforcement, abatement, and prevention*. Final recommendations from the Task Force are expected in May or June of 2007.

## **2004 and Beyond (Sheriff Dept.)**

This entity formed to advise the Manager of Safety on measures to increase the perceived professionalism and stature of the Sheriff Department. Manager LaCabe has implemented a number of changes, the most visible of which was the widely welcomed new sheriff uniforms.

## **Police Performance Reforms**

In December 2005, Mayor Hickenlooper worked to hire renowned criminologist George Kelling to recommend changes to improve police department performance. At the same time, the Mayor appointed Jeremy Bronson to work with police to implement these recommendations. Mr. Bronson has also led an effort to overhaul police data collection and reporting procedures, coordinated neighborhood safety initiatives across police and other city agencies, and overseen several other major projects within the police department.

Meanwhile, the City has hired nearly 500 new police officers since Mayor Hickenlooper took office in 2003, expanding the size of the police force and replacing retiring officers. The police department has also hired civilians to fill dozens of positions, freeing sworn officers to work in more traditional policing roles.

## **Command Operations Review and Evaluation (CORE)**

CORE is Denver’s version of Compstat, a program of using accurate and timely crime information to drive real-time deployment of police officers to the places they are most needed. Commanders meet weekly with the chiefs to review crime data and evaluate current strategies. CORE has sped up police response to neighborhood crime and established higher accountability throughout the department.

As a result, police activity is increasing, including arrests, citations, DUI enforcement, citizen contacts, foot and bike patrols, and attendance at neighborhood meetings.

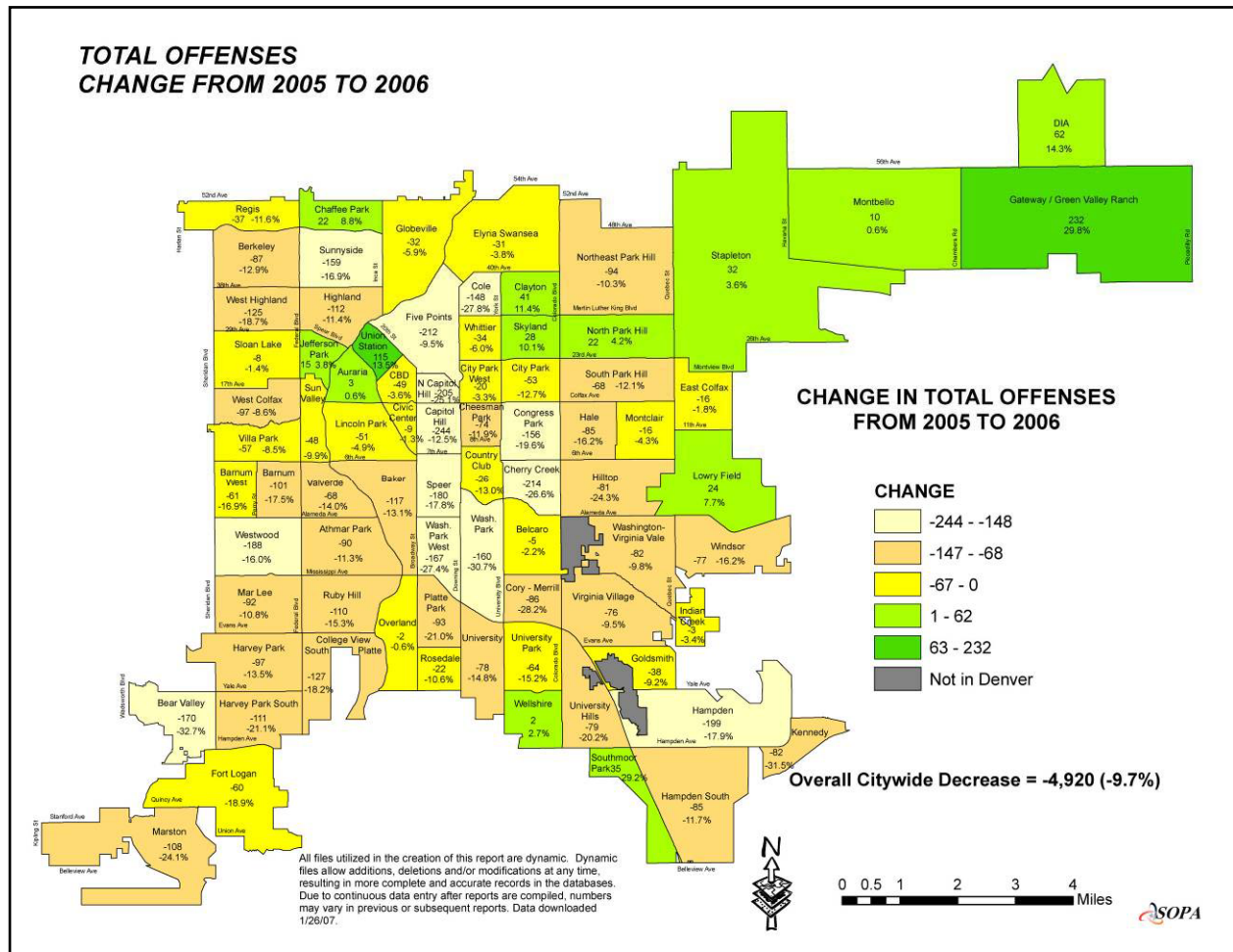
## **Broken Windows Policing**

Dr. Kelling wrote *Fixing Broken Windows* and piloted the book’s policing strategy in New York in the 1990s. Crime dropped precipitously during that time, and New York remains one of the safest big cities in America. Denver is experimenting with broken windows, which directs police to be more proactive, especially in neighborhoods with high levels of disorder and crime. *Broken windows policing is not zero tolerance* and does not suggest that every violation be cited. Instead, it requires that the community demand that a neighborhood standard of orderliness be maintained.

Any approach that increases officer discretion and requires increased police-citizen interaction may create risk of perceived racial profiling and the use of excessive force by police. The City is working closely with community partners to minimize these risks, look for evidence of unfair or abusive behavior, and engage residents in the development of neighborhood-specific policing strategies.

The six-month Westwood pilot in southwest Denver resulted in a 16% decline in crime, twice the citywide crime drop during that time. Projects are now underway in the





Mar Lee and Harvey Park, Capitol Hill, Cole and Whittier, East Colfax, and Montbello neighborhoods.

**Involving Neighbors:** Public safety is a community responsibility, not simply a police matter. Sustainable improvements require effective partnerships among residents, local institutions, police, and other government agencies. Police are increasingly engaging neighborhood groups and even going door-to-door to encourage residents to join efforts to identify priority safety issues and decide what strategies to use to resolve those issues.

### Civilianizing Denver 911

Perhaps the most important civilianization effort is taking place in the “Comm Center,” where police, fire, and EMS calls are received and dispatched. New director Carl Simpson has moved quickly to establish new customer service standards, enhance training and participation of the 911 agents, and modernize the facility to meet community expectations.

Denver 911 continues to free sworn officers for police operations as new supervisors are hired.

### Citywide Crime Reductions

Crime in Denver dropped by 10% in 2006, after several years of increases (see map above). Continued focus in some areas of northeast Denver is needed. New programs in the northeast police districts are intended to spur additional crime reduction.

Citywide crime continues its decline into 2007, down over 15% through March. Police and their community partners must remain vigilant in order to continue this progress.

### Commitment to Transparency

Transparent government means providing access to as much information as possible, whether it reflects positively or negatively on the institution furnishing the information. Mayor Hickenlooper has made a strong commitment to transparency and



continues to find new ways to equip Denver residents with more information about their government. Safety agencies have responded to the challenge, pushing new and better information out to the public.

**Crime Reports Online:** Monthly crime reports are posted on the Safety website, providing tables and maps for each Denver neighborhood (see [www.devergov.org/sopa](http://www.devergov.org/sopa)).

**Use of Force Reports:** The Manager's office prepares detailed public letters once use-of-force cases are resolved, so citizens can understand the circumstances leading to the specific resolutions. Some of these reports are still being written.

**Complaint Resolution:** The Office of the Independent Monitor publishes information about complaints that was either unavailable or very difficult to obtain.

**Open Records:** The Safety Department established the new Records Coordinator position, filled by Suzanne Staiert, to streamline and unify the processes by which safety agencies evaluate and respond to public requests for information.

## Comprehensive Gang Strategy

Despite millions spent on various suppression, intervention and prevention programs, Denver's gang problem continues to cause pain and fear in our community and shows no sign of abating. There are over 8,000 known gang members in Denver, but that count includes only those individuals law enforcement has identified as being gang members. Gang crime is hard to quantify, because it often goes unreported, and because the gang connection is often unknown to law enforcement. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that gang activity is on the rise in Denver.

The Denver Police Department and the District Attorney's Office are increasing their enforcement efforts with regard to gangs.

The Metro Denver Gang Coalition, active in the 1990s, has been re-formed and re-energized under Department of Safety leadership. The Coalition, comprising nearly 100 individuals representing dozens of public and private organizations, has adopted the Comprehensive

Gang Model to guide its approach. The key tenets of the model are described below.

**Mobilization:** Integrate the efforts of parents, neighbors, faith-based institutions, schools, nonprofits, and government agencies.

**Opportunities:** Recognize that part of the draw gangs offer is the vacuum of alternatives and fill those with after-school programs, job services, and other positive choices.

**Intervention:** Reach out to at-risk and gang-involved individuals with messages that deter gang activity and steer them to better options.

**Suppression:** Leverage the community to apply criminal justice and non-government pressure that confronts and inhibits gang activity. Suppression includes – and transcends – traditional arrest and prosecution strategies.

**Change:** Adapt institutions, laws, and policies to make them more relevant to the gang issue and to people who are at risk of gang involvement. These changes build the foundation for sustainable change.

## Crime Prevention and Control

When Denver voters approved the new Downtown Justice Center, which will open in 2010, Mayor Hickenlooper established the Crime Prevention and Control Commission, under Executive Director Regina Huerter. The Commission is charged with developing programs and systemic changes to help ensure that the new Justice Center does not experience the same overcrowding as the facilities it will replace.

The jail population is down in 2007, although crowding and living conditions remain issues of concern for the Commission. Some of the Commission's specific accomplishments are described below.

**Drug Court:** The social and financial impact of cycling people through the criminal justice system who are suffering with addictions and receiving no treatment for them is being addressed by a new drug court mechanism in Denver. Offenders commit to treatment and testing in exchange for suspended sentences.

**Re-entry:** Recidivism rates can be reduced by easing the transition from incarceration to community participation. The Commission has invested in a new re-entry



center to boost the services and support provided to re-entrants. The new female work-release program at the jail will also facilitate more effective re-entry for its participants.

**Mental Health:** The Commission is also supporting efforts to expand mental health treatment in the jail and review mental health issues as part of the criminal justice evaluation of defendants.

**Other programs:** The Commission is also leading citywide efforts on gangs and graffiti that are described elsewhere in this document.

## Community Corrections

Community Corrections aids the community by providing an important alternative to jail incarceration, managing its clients through a variety of facilities and technologies, ranging from half-way houses to ankle bracelets and GPS devices.

Community Corrections has proposed to amend zoning provisions to allow community correctional facilities under contract with the City and located in I1 or I2 industrial zones an operational capacity of 120, versus the current limit of 60.

If these changes are approved, expansion will occur over time as additional funding is received from the State of Colorado.

Historically, Denver funding increases by about 30 beds each year, meaning full capacity would be reached in five-to-seven years. The following four current facilities would be eligible to increase in size:

- Dahlia, 4511 East 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue (male)
- Fox, 570 West 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue (male)
- Ulster, 3955 Ulster Street (male)
- Tooley Hall, 4280 Kearney Street (female)

## Equal Employment

The Manager of Safety created a new position in 2006 to create uniform equal employment opportunity standards and training across the safety agencies. Emily Lauck leads this effort, working to improve the work environment through two primary strategies:

- Prevent discrimination through effective training, greater cross-cultural communication and understanding, and awareness of consequences for negative behaviors.
- Quickly respond to discrimination when it occurs, through programs to encourage reporting, resolve issues through mediation where possible, and drive for a speedy conclusion whenever possible.