



The Danville City Council has established the “*Coalition for a Safe Danville*” as a means of uniting community stakeholders, sharing information, developing strategies, engaging and informing the public, and undertaking coordinated, results-oriented crime prevention activities that will combat crime and earn

public confidence that Danville is a safe community in which to live, visit, and conduct business. Instituting the Coalition builds on the City’s longstanding commitment to community oriented policing and proactive crime fighting.

The Challenge: Danville’s favorable quality of life is being undermined by crime and public perceptions of diminished personal safety. That Danville’s crime rate is actually lower than that of most cities of comparable size and character is of little comfort to citizens worried about their safety. A community’s reputation for public safety heavily influences its appeal as a place to raise a family, visit, or in which to invest or open a business. The crucially important transition of Danville’s economy cannot succeed if the community is not, or is not perceived to be, a safe place.

Ensuring public safety is among local government’s most fundamental obligations. However, crime is a complex problem that defies simple solutions or the solitary effort of the Danville Police Department. It cannot be eradicated simply by apprehending and incarcerating perpetrators if their places are readily filled by others. While responsibility for criminal behavior should be assigned to the perpetrator, criminal activity is enabled by such societal factors as poverty, joblessness, low educational attainment, dysfunctional households, and racism. Preventing and combating crime consequently requires a holistic, coordinated, sustained community effort.

The Response: The Danville City Council has established the *Coalition for a Safe Danville* as a special municipal commission. Coalition membership is not by City Council appointment, as with other municipal boards and commissions, but is open to any organization responsible for or interested in combating and preventing crime in Danville. Representatives from a wide range of associations are encouraged to join, including but not limited to:

- Community organizations, including non-profits and places of worship
- News media
- Commonwealth’s Attorney
- U.S. Attorney
- Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
- Virginia Department of Corrections
- Danville Sheriff’s Office
- Danville-Pittsylvania Community Services
- Danville Public Schools
- Westover Christian Academy, Sacred Heart, and other private schools
- Parent Teacher Associations
- Danville Community College
- Averett University

- Danville Redevelopment & Housing Authority
- United Way of Danville Pittsylvania County
- Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce
- Danville Pittsylvania Health District
- Danville Regional Medical Center
- Pittsylvania County Community Action
- Danville Regional Foundation
- Corporate and business communities
- State and federal House and Senate offices

The entire City Council actively participates in the Coalition. So, too, do the following municipal departments and offices:

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| ▪ Police Department | ▪ Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department |
| ▪ City Manager's Office | ▪ Public Works Department |
| ▪ City Attorney's Office | ▪ Transportation Department |
| ▪ Community Development Department | ▪ Human Services Department |

The Coalition's primary purpose is to provide opportunities for networking, information sharing, and strategy development among members. Its hands-on work is carried out by cooperative task groups drawn from member organizations.

Organization & Operation: The Coalition's initial term is through December 31, 2013, but will be extended as warranted by City Council. Coalition members elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson. The City Manager acts as its coordinator and is assisted by personnel drawn from the Manager's Office and municipal departments. As a Council-established municipal commission, the Coalition is subject to open meetings and transparency requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

The Coalition neither oversees the Danville Police Department, nor attempts to direct activities of member organizations. Each maintains its own identity, autonomy, program responsibilities, staff, and budget. The Coalition functions in accordance with written by-laws. Its decision making is generally based on consensus rather than through formal votes.

The Coalition catalogues and disseminates information on crime response and prevention activities being undertaken by itself and member agencies. It sponsors periodic public forums, conferences, and town hall meetings. The Coalition disseminates information through multiple venues, including a dedicated internet website, social media outlets, e-mails and e-newsletters, River City TV, printed materials and articles, and radio and television public service announcements. It issues periodic "report cards" on crime levels and progress being made.

Task groups are sanctioned by the Coalition to focus efforts in combating and preventing crime; for example, to maintain safety in and around schools, encourage reporting of suspicious or criminal behavior, rein in gangs, close illicit drug markets, control underage alcohol use, prevent burglaries, or maintain safe neighborhoods. Care is taken to avoid duplication of effort or improper assumption of duties already being successfully performed. Task group programs provide the means for public engagement at the interest group and neighborhood level.

The mission, size, membership, and length of assignment for each task group depend on the issue being addressed. In some cases, task groups are primarily drawn from municipal departments. Others include many Coalition organizations. For example, a task group assigned to address school safety might involve the School District, Parent Teacher Associations, the Police, Parks, Recreation & Tourism, Community Development, and Public Works Departments, as well churches and such community youth serving agencies as the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, YWCA, and Boy and Girl Scouts. Activities would likely encompass design and operation of school buildings and grounds, in-school monitoring of student conduct, policies on student attendance and off-campus privileges, on and off-campus after-school activities, security of surrounding neighborhoods, and traffic control.

The municipal government and member organizations share responsibility for dealing with multifaceted, deep rooted societal problems afflicting Danville. However, the Coalition primarily focuses on the immediate causes of crime and disorder that can be most effectively addressed in the near term. In so doing, the Coalition and its task groups employ a pragmatic problem-oriented approach using the following steps:

1. Identify and describe the problem;
2. Analyze causes and contributing factors;
3. Review crime control and prevention literature on which techniques are likely to be most effective in Danville's circumstances;
4. Evaluate current responses and determine strengths and limitations;
5. Consider best practices and proven strategies employed elsewhere;
6. Design and implement an improved response strategy;
7. Measure results and make appropriate refinements.

Commitment of City Departments: In addition to the Police Department, other municipal departments and offices are redoubling efforts to effectively combat and prevent crime. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- Civil and municipal law enforcement and refinement of City Code to effectively thwart crime and disorder (City Attorney's Office);
- Building inspection and code enforcement to ensure that owners are responsibly maintaining their properties and supporting safe neighborhoods and business districts (Community Development Department);
- Planning and regulating land use and environmental design in ways that discourage crime (Community Development Department);
- Properly designing, maintaining, and securing parks, public parking lots, and municipal facilities (Parks, Recreation & Tourism, Human Services, and Public Works Departments);

- Designing and managing roads and speed limits to maintain safe traffic flow and reduce negative impacts on residential neighborhoods (Public Works Department);
- Providing street lighting to minimize the risk of nighttime crimes (Utilities Department);
- Providing leisure and recreational programs that fill needs for at-risk segments of the population (Parks, Recreation & Tourism and Human Services Departments);
- Undertaking City-sponsored public events in ways that minimize opportunities for disorder and criminal behavior (Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department);
- Regulating passenger conduct in municipal transit vehicles and properly designing, maintaining, and securing transit stations (Transportation Department);
- Providing crisis intervention and assistance to vulnerable individuals at risk of becoming criminal offenders or victims (Human Services Department); and
- Enabling Police Department use of technology and information in a way that maximizes its ability to combat and prevent crime (Information Technology, Public Works, and Utilities Departments).

How to Join: Organizations and individuals interested in being a part of the *Coalition for a Safe Danville* need only call the City Manager's Office at 799-5100 or go on-line at <http://www.danville-va.gov/index.aspx?NID=1164> to join.

Prepared by the City Manager's Office
 Revised September 2010
 Contact Joe King, City Manager
 kingjc@ci.danville.va.us 434-799-5100



Reference: "Effective Policing and Crime Prevention: A Problem-Oriented Guide for Mayors, City Managers, and County Executives," July 2009, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Available at

<http://www.popcenter.org/library/reading/pdfs/MayorsGuide.pdf>