

NEW YORK, Jan. 20, 2014 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The following is being released by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC):

Bringing down crime in America's toughest neighborhoods is not a job for police alone. That explains why U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan – the nation's top crime fighter and its guru of housing – shared the same stage recently for a national conversation on how to reduce crime and make neighborhoods safer.

"We all recognize that the challenges facing our communities are connected to each other," Donovan said, conceding the HUD Secretary's presence at a safety conference might seem odd to some, but noting the connection is on display in poor communities every day. "Distressed and abandoned housing units are often havens for crime—and contribute to public safety concerns. In turn, no housing can succeed if surrounded by unsafe streets."

The call for collaboration resounded at "[Safe Streets, Strong Communities](#)," a half-day symposium that brought together some of the nation's top law enforcement leaders and policymakers – Holder, Donovan, and NYPD Commissioner William J. Bratton among them – to think beyond traditional approaches that emphasize arrests and incarceration as routes out of rampant crime.

As Holder put it, "We must act on the recognition that all of us are in this together."

The Attorney General spoke of the imperative of bringing together the right partners as a force for change. Referring to LISC, he said, "Organizations like this one, and the groups and individuals taking part in today's event, speak to the principle that built this nation—that we are strongest when we stand united."

The January 15<sup>th</sup> forum, hosted by the [Local Initiatives Support Corporation](#) (LISC) and the [Police Foundation](#) and sponsored by the MetLife Foundation, made it clear that the way a community is built is as important as a well-trained police force when it comes to reducing crime. That means replacing crime hot spots with quality housing, bustling businesses, and safe spaces for families to grow up and thrive.

"Cities and neighborhoods across America need new tools in the fight against crime," said Michael Rubinger, president and CEO of LISC. "Our approach trains the police and local community organizations to partner and find solutions not only through arrests, but also by changing the built environment. Doing so changes neighborhoods as well as the culture of how law enforcement, community groups, and residents interact."

The audience was treated to a compelling vision of the challenges facing low-income neighborhoods across the country and the imaginative tactics used to attack problems that threaten public safety.

The day's first panel, "Tales from Two Cities: Reducing Crime with Untraditional Allies," highlighted the recent renovation of the Dunbar Hotel and the Historic 28<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA sandwiched between downtown Los Angeles and Watts. Both projects are today prized community centerpieces.

"Using community development as a strategy to improve public safety actually works," said Mark Wilson, executive director of the Coalition for Responsible Community Development, which was among a coalition of partners that LISC worked with in the renovation.

In the same panel, Captain Michael Cram of the Philadelphia Police Department recounted how his officers struggled for years in vain to control gang and youth crime in the city's 26<sup>th</sup>

District because they "had no relationships in the area." Then they joined forces with local community developers at Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM). A community fair helped police forge relationships with neighbors, and identify the "10 percent of the people responsible for 50 percent of the crime."

Working together, police helped neighbors take back Rainbow de Colores Park.

"This had been a problem area for decades, traditionally violent and drug infested," Cram said. "I would not have been as successful there if not for the men and women we have in the street who believe in this work...We are not the enemy anymore. Residents took ownership of their community."

The second panel, "Collaboration to Build Resilient and Healthy Communities," explored the nature of violence and its adverse health effects,

Elizabeth Griffith, of the Justice Department, noted that even though crime is at a 30-year low nationally, that drop is not reflected in many low-income communities around the country. Recidivism is one important reason—the hopeless cycle of people caught in a revolving door of arrest, imprisonment and release.

"We have to think of ways to help residents of these areas who want to turn their lives around," Griffith said.

Todd Clear, dean of Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice, agreed, pointing out that most people sent to prison in New York return to their communities in less than two and a half years.

"If arresting and imprisoning people are all we do, then we miss the point," he said. "Starting with the police, we have begun to completely rethink how we make those investments."

Edward Flynn, Milwaukee's Police chief since 2008, explained that as the nation has aggressively cut funds for most social services for the past 30 years, police have become "the social agency of first resort for the poor. "

He urged participants to begin to frame poverty and other social issues as crime problems in order to drum up public support, because reducing poverty does indeed lead to safer streets. Flynn suggested that police be point persons in those discussions with politicians.

Closing the conference, Bratton endorsed LISC's approach to improving communities because it aligns with his commitment to "collaborative policing."

"LISC's Community Safety Initiative offers a proven, resource-efficient and replicable model for improving safety and quality of life in low-income communities," he said.

Other speakers included Dean Esserman, chief of police, New Haven, Conn., and a LISC board member;

Edward Spivak

, director, Division of Violence Prevention, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention;

Anne Tremblay

, assistant city attorney,

Los Angeles

City Attorney's Office

;

Rose Gray

,

senior vice president, Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha,

Philadelphia

; and

Marangeli Mejia-Rabell

, manager of Community Engagement Programs, also with Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha in

Philadelphia

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## Collaboration Reduces Crime, Say Two Obama Cabinet Members NYPD Commissioner Bratton

Written by Australian Business

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**LISC** is a national nonprofit that invests more than \$1 billion each year to revitalize hundreds of disadvantaged neighborhoods nationwide by helping residents transform them into healthy and sustainable communities of choice and opportunity.

**The Police Foundation** is a nonprofit that seeks to improve policing through innovation and science.

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