



Hamilton County Comprehensive Safety Plan

May 9, 2007

The Problem

The criminal justice system is simply not working, despite hundreds of millions spent each year by the county, the city of Cincinnati, and other municipalities and townships.

- Crime remains unacceptably high in Cincinnati and Hamilton County
- Over 70% of inmates return to a life of crime; the average Justice Center inmate today has been there seven times before
- There is no mechanism to coordinate treatment of inmates
- The County's corrections facilities are obsolete and too small
- There is no overall safety strategy for the County, and its jurisdictions
- Past efforts have been piecemeal at best, and over-politicized
- A January survey of 500 citizens found that citizens understand that we need solutions to safety:
 - by far the largest citizen concern is safety: 51% said crime and violence was their top concern; education and taxes were well behind (11% each);
 - these citizens favored the need to build a new jail 62%-23%;
 - they also supported having a broader comprehensive plan, that included a new jail, 76%-14%

The Solutions

As opposed to past, narrow efforts, the current County Commission is developing a comprehensive safety plan. Key elements include:

- Develop appropriate and sufficient corrections facilities for the long term
- Criminal justice system reforms to lower recidivism, increase prevention and establish mechanisms for consistent oversight, planning and reform
- Enhanced and more strategic law enforcement

Lowering Recidivism and Increasing Prevention

(i.e., Ensuring we spend criminal justice funding wisely)

Problem:

- Recidivism is 70% (i.e., the average inmate has been in the jail seven times before)
- There is no ongoing independent, comprehensive assessment of the criminal justice system
- There is very little coordination of programs for inmates, and no independent, ongoing assessment of effectiveness of intervention and the program mix
- There is insufficient preventative follow-up interaction with offenders

Lowering Recidivism and Increasing Prevention

(i.e., Ensuring we spend criminal justice funding wisely)

Solutions:

The Hamilton County Criminal Justice Commission

A unanimous County Commission created the 18-member bi-partisan Hamilton County Criminal Justice Commission (CJC). This independent body will assess and measure the effectiveness of all parts of the system, identify where reforms and changes are needed, and recommend best practices from across the country that need to be adopted in Hamilton County. Key focus areas for the CJC include, but are not limited to:

- Probation practices
- Inmate diversion and community reentry
- Substance abuse program effectiveness
- Mental health service coordination
- Initial inmate evaluations and processing
- Courthouse case management and sentencing practices

Lowering Recidivism and Increasing Prevention

(i.e., Ensuring we spend criminal justice funding wisely)

Solutions Continued:

Reentry Team Approach

The Reentry Team Approach establishes teams of substance abuse, mental health specialists, probation officers and others to assess up-front the needs of non-violent offenders in the Justice Center, then collectively create and implement a "reentry plan" from that moment until the point of release, monitoring the inmate and intervening throughout the term.

The goal is that on the day of release, everything that can be done has been already put in place to ease that inmate's reentry into society, and reduce the chances of the person reoffending.

A pilot program was recently authorized by the County Commission, and is already beginning its work. The Plan will fund this work permanently.

Lowering Recidivism and Increasing Prevention

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Solutions Continued:

Focused Substance Abuse and Mental Illness Treatment

Many of the repeat visitors to the justice system are there due to mental illness or substance abuse: shuffling them through the system time and again, without addressing the underlying problem, results in a monumental waste of money. Existing funding and facility limitations do not allow all those in need of services access to life changing treatment alternatives.

Short Term: Provide additional resources to expand substance abuse programs to all inmates (incarcerated and community released) and probationers. In concert with Reentry Teams ensure the mental health services are coordinated across the criminal justice system and social services agencies.

Long-term: Institute a permanent review mechanism within the Criminal Justice Commission to ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of substance abuse and mental health programs. The County currently spends \$19.5M annually on treatment programs.

Lowering Recidivism and Increasing Prevention

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Solutions Continued:

Probation Reform and Substations

The Criminal Justice Commission will explore reforms to probation policies and practices. As has been demonstrated nationally, reforming probation practices offers one of the best ways to lower recidivism and reduce demand on precious jail beds.

Building off of the success of the Over-the-Rhine, Walnut Hills, and Madisonville probation substations, the county will explore additional locations to provide intensive supervision of probationers within the community they live and work.

Existing and future probation substations will be integrated into the proposed Reentry Program to improve the likelihood that probationers will fully integrate into the community and develop life skills to avoid the justice system in the future.

Enhanced Local and County Law Enforcement

Problem:

- Numerous jurisdictions in the County are unable to fund adequate police services to enforce the laws
- There is no coordination of law enforcement data analysis across the county to focus police resources
- County law enforcement agencies cannot take advantage of federal prosecution of serious gun crime offenders

Enhanced County and Local Law Enforcement

Solutions:

- Short-term: building on the success in Over-the-Rhine, the County will add a team of Sheriff's Patrols who can strategically patrol those jurisdictions around the County who ask for and need the additional police presence
- Long-term: the County will absorb millions of dollars from the costs of emergency communications now paid for by local jurisdictions; this will allow local jurisdictions to redirect their own resources to added police officers and other public safety needs in their community
- The County's recent budget provides funding to explore creating a Countywide Comstat approach (Comstat is the successful data-driven crime fighting strategy that worked so well for NYC)

Enhanced County and Local Law Enforcement

Solutions Continued:

Federal prosecution of gun related crimes:

Federal gun laws provide one of the best tools to achieve maximum, mandatory sentences for violent, repeat offenders (while alleviating local jail demand by diverting the most serious offenders to the federal system).

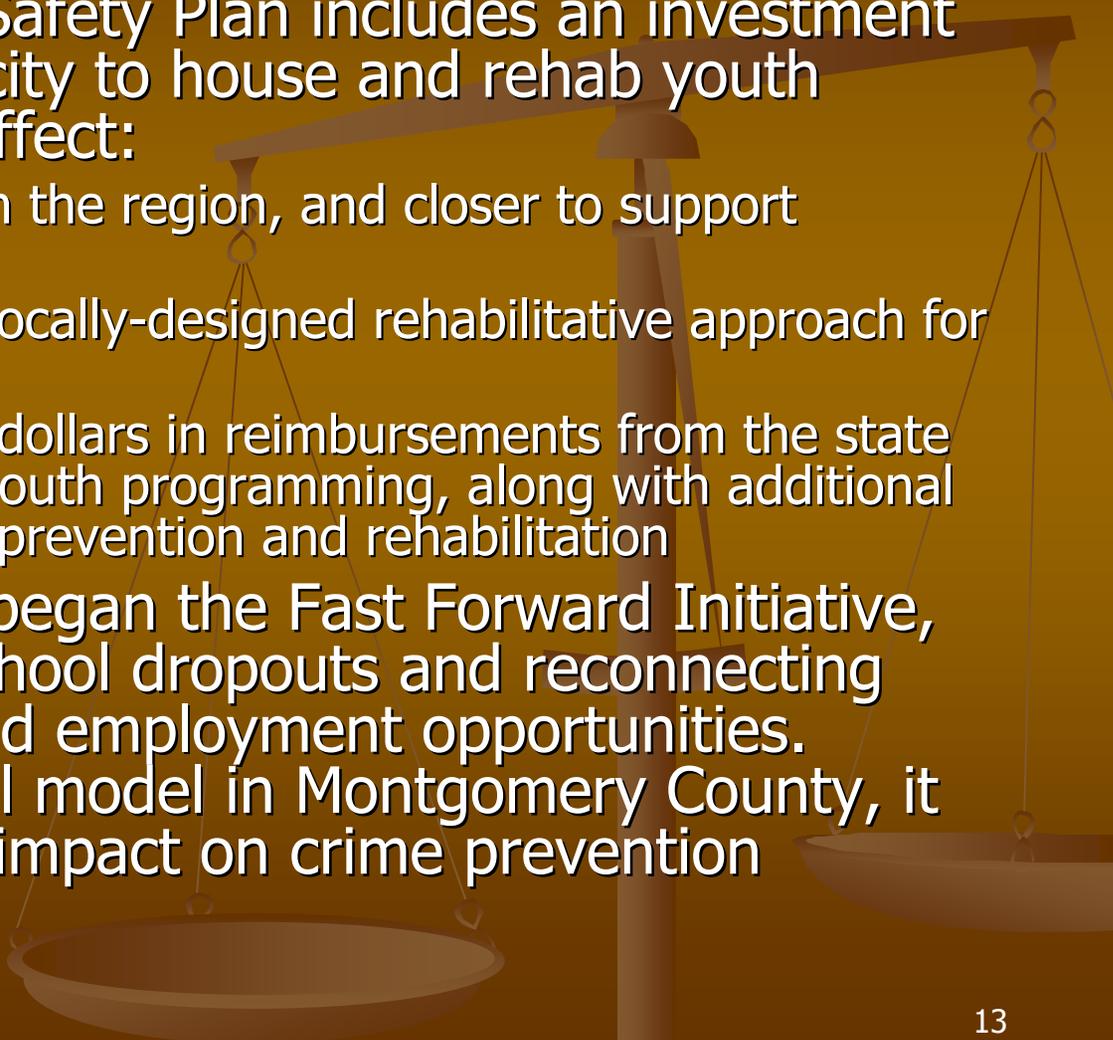
Unfortunately, resources at the federal level have been diverted from this type of prosecution and only 30 such prosecutions occurred last year, almost all in the City of Cincinnati.

The County Commission has approved the expansion of *Project Disarm* to add prosecutors to help law enforcement agencies across the county target the worst repeat violent offenders for federal prosecution. The Plan will fund this approach for 10 years.

Youth Crime: The Problem

- Youth violence is on the rise; far more young people are being convicted of crimes involving guns
- As a result, within the youth corrections system, far more juveniles are being sent to Columbus (State Department of Youth Services), returning to the region at the age of 18
- This trend means these youth are more disconnected from local support services as well as family, and return to our region more likely to “graduate” into the adult corrections system
- Through state reimbursement rules, this trend also drains our juvenile court system of millions of dollars that could otherwise be spent on rehabilitative programming for youth

Youth Crime: Solutions



- The Comprehensive Safety Plan includes an investment to expand local capacity to house and rehab youth offenders. The net effect:
 - More youth will stay in the region, and closer to support networks
 - More opportunity for locally-designed rehabilitative approach for these high-risk youth
 - Potentially millions of dollars in reimbursements from the state to pay for additional youth programming, along with additional County investment in prevention and rehabilitation
- The County recently began the Fast Forward Initiative, identifying all high school dropouts and reconnecting them to education and employment opportunities. Based on a successful model in Montgomery County, it should have a major impact on crime prevention

Appropriate and Sufficient Facilities

Problem:

- In addition to the 23 year-old Justice Center, the county uses a 107 year-old converted warehouse, a 70-year converted car dealership and 77 year-old converted private residence to house inmates
- Multiple facilities are inefficient to operate and result in less effective and uncoordinated inmate treatment programs
- At \$7M per year, the County is rapidly depleting onetime reserve funding to transport inmates 30-miles to Butler County
- Existing facilities are not of sufficient capacity to keep up with the current need or the projected future inmate population; their condition also does not lend itself to the type of processes and programs that will reduce recidivism and enhance prevention
- The mix of high, medium and minimum security beds does not meet the demand—leading to numerous situations of mixing inmates of different risk levels, and other problems

Appropriate and Sufficient Facilities

Solutions:

Develop and build a consolidated correctional facility

- The County will save approximately \$4.3 million annually by consolidating facilities...this cost stays if a new corrections facility is not built
- The new facility will allow inmate assessment and treatment programs to be better coordinated
- The facility will provide the appropriate mix of housing types for inmates to comply with state corrections facility standards, and to ensure the safe incarceration of inmates and the surrounding community
- Extend the useful life of the 23 year-old Justice Center

Appropriate and Sufficient Facilities

Solutions Continued:

Develop and build a consolidated correctional facility

- A new facility will allow the County to move away from the “warehouse approach” to one that is flexible to change program and treatment needs based on changing inmate populations and to allow for the implementation of proven approaches to improve the successful reentry of inmates into the community
- Use video arraignment and visitation technology to improve safety and lower costs
- Eliminate existing safety risks inherent to using old converted buildings and improve the safety of staff, inmates, and visitors

Appropriate and Sufficient Facilities

Solutions Continued:

Locate the new facility in Camp Washington

- A geographic centralized location to improve coordination of inmate treatment programs and reentry into the community
- Improve inmate processing by reducing processing times and centralized booking for the many law enforcement agencies that make arrests throughout the county
- In conjunction with the city of Cincinnati, kick-start redevelopment of the Camp Washington industrial area
- This building site has been obtained at no cost to the tax payers

Costs

■ Capital costs

- New 1,800 bed facility: \$198M
- Juvenile expansion: \$11.2M
- Justice Center upgrade: \$2M

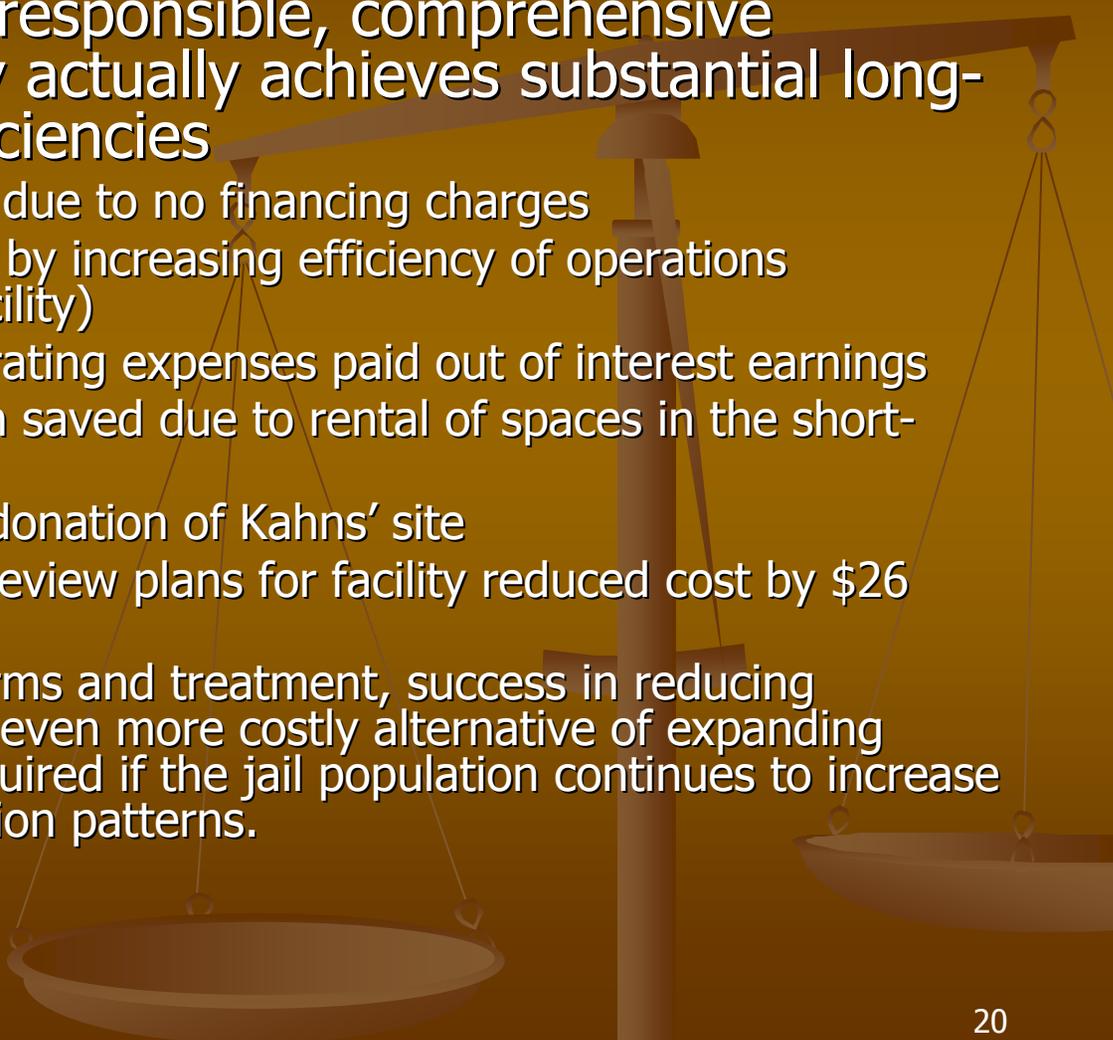
■ Operating costs (annual)

- Operation of new facility: \$13.7M
- Expanded Sheriff's Patrols: \$2.3M
- Federal prosecutions: \$280,000
- Greater local police presence: \$2M
- Treatment (both internal/external): \$1.9M
- Reentry Planning: \$450K/\$950K
- Juvenile operations: \$730K
- Ongoing oversight of programming/CJC: \$219K

Revenue Source

- To pay for the Comprehensive Plan, a *temporary sales tax increase* is necessary
- It would raise the sales tax $\frac{1}{2}$ cent for 8 years. The tax would then decrease by a $\frac{1}{4}$ cent for 7 years
- The tax would then end completely after 15 years
- Despite some assertions to the contrary, the simple truth is that there are no viable options to do this the right way that do not require a new tax source. The only "no tax" option proposed only builds another building; it contains no money to operate the building (which costs at least \$12 million per year), and no money for the type of reforms or treatment that will reduce the long-term jail population projections. And just adding another building simply continues all of the operational inefficiencies of using multiple buildings, while relying upon the continued use of a building housing 800 inmates that the Ohio Bureau of Adult Detention will not certify due to its deplorable conditions.

Long-term savings



- Moreover, through a responsible, comprehensive approach, the County actually achieves substantial long-term savings and efficiencies
 - Over \$200 Million saved due to no financing charges
 - Over \$212 million saved by increasing efficiency of operations (consolidating to one facility)
 - Over \$210 saved in operating expenses paid out of interest earnings
 - \$15 Million to \$58 Million saved due to rental of spaces in the short-term
 - \$7 Million saved due to donation of Kahns' site
 - Commissioners' careful review plans for facility reduced cost by \$26 Million
 - And by investing in reforms and treatment, success in reducing recidivism will avoid the even more costly alternative of expanding jailspace to the level required if the jail population continues to increase under current incarceration patterns.