SAFE HOMES – SAFE STREETS INITIATIVE FIELD PLACEMENT

The Safe Homes – Safe Streets Initiative rebuilds local inner city communities by transforming the relationship between local government and its citizens including tenants, local property owners, and landlords. It explicitly acknowledges that a tremendous untapped resource in inner cities is the group of individuals who have invested their money in property in these neighborhoods. Many of these landlords have traditionally had an adversarial relationship with local governments. However, we have taken a partnership approach in which we support strong landlords, train weak landlords, and hold bad landlords accountable.

By establishing two way communications between home owners, landlords, tenants, and law enforcement, the Safe Homes – Safe Streets Initiative directly addresses the lack of trust between those who are most vulnerable to violent crime and those tasked with protecting them. This lack of trust is widely acknowledged to be the single greatest obstacle to law and order in our inner city communities, since it makes the investigation of crime more difficult and undermines effective prosecution through witness intimidation.

The Safe Homes – Safe Streets Initiative uses the Narcotics Eviction program to shut down illegal drug houses through a provision of the NYS Real Property Law that allows law enforcement to demand an eviction of those tenants who permit their premises to be used for illegal operations. But we have acknowledged that an eviction is a one-time event whose value can quickly pass. The strength of the Safe Homes – Safe Streets Initiative is that it works with property owners and landlords by providing Landlord Trainings to create institutional buffers against the reoccurrence of the problem. By regarding landlords as investors, by appealing to their profit motive, and by providing them with the tools and support they need, the Safe Homes – Safe Streets Initiative revitalizes communities by empowering landlords to act as the gate keepers of their communities.

This empowerment is strengthened further with the Trespass Affidavit Program. By posting No Trespassing signs and registering properties, this program provides a tool which synchronizes the interests of property owners with local law enforcement by giving property owners the right to prevent the abuse of their properties by loiterers and local law enforcement the legal right to question and, when appropriate, arrest loiterers for illegal trespass.

The unique aspect of a Field Placement at the District Attorney’s Office that focuses on the Initiative will provide law students an opportunity to combine aspects of criminal law with real property law. Students will take part in civil proceedings that have been commenced based on criminal activity. This will require students to engage in case review and investigatory functions to determine applicable cases. Students will be expected to meet with members of police agencies; compile information for various civil proceedings; create documents for court proceedings; and provide support to the Assistant District Attorney assigned to the Safe Homes – Safe Streets Initiative.