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**Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum Presents Anti-Crime Initiative to North Florida Law Enforcement, Government Officials and Community Leaders**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (February 11, 2010) – Law enforcement agents, elected officials and community leaders gathered Tuesday, February 9 at an anti-crime symposium where Attorney General Bill McCollum and Senator Victor Crist, along with a team of experts, shared a pilot program to empower and organize communities to address issues which are often precursors to criminal activity. The symposium, *Strategies for Safe and Sustainable Communities*, was held in Tallahassee and brought together a broad spectrum of more than 100 community leaders from north central Florida.

“This is an excellent, comprehensive anti-crime model program in Florida that can be replicated and put into action in any neighborhood faced with the challenges of high crime,” said Attorney General McCollum, whose office supported the pilot program.

The anti-crime initiative brought together community stakeholders including local residents, businesses, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, community groups, government and academic institutions to address root causes of criminal activity such as unemployment, poor housing conditions and limited access to social services.

The pilot program was implemented in the University Area of Tampa/Hillsborough County, an urban, economically distressed, culturally diverse neighborhood with the sixth highest crime rate in Florida.

“The symposium addresses key issues that all Florida counties are facing in these challenging economic times and identifies ways for community and government leaders to tap into resources and build partnerships creating an holistic approach to ultimately impacting criminal activity,” said Julian Garcia, Jr., executive director, University Area Community Development Corporation, Inc., whose office pioneered the pilot program.

“The strategies shared during the symposium provide an opportunity for communities to do more with less. Groups that in the past may have worked in silos can join together for collaborative partnerships in fighting crime utilizing the abilities, skills and resources of residents, business leaders, law enforcement and service providers,” said Senator Crist.

Because of the intense interest and feedback from the symposium attendees, smaller hands-on workshops have been developed providing additional training and tools to help communities launch their own transformation efforts. Representatives from the initiative have also been invited to give presentations to state agencies and county governments to share more information on processes and strategies implemented in the program.

The symposium was presented by the UACDC in partnership with the Jim Walter Partnership Center at the University of South Florida, The John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government at the University of South Florida, the Institute for Research, Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Policy and Planning Insights, and the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies at the University of Florida. Special assistance was provided by The John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government at Florida State University.

For more information, visit <http://symposium.uacdconline.org>

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Photo Cutline:

The *Strategies for Safe and Sustainable Communities* symposium in Tallahassee brought together more than 100 community leaders from north central Florida. Attorney General Bill McCollum and Senator Victor Crist, along with a team of experts, shared a pilot program to empower and organize communities to address issues related to root causes of crime. From left to right: Julian Garcia, Jr., Executive Director, University Area Community Development Corporation; Anna Robinson-Lindsey, Director of Grants and Programs, University Area Community Development Corporation; Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum; and State Senator Victor Crist.