

## Crime and Grime

Litter is a "gateway" problem that leads to the deterioration of urban neighborhoods. This concept, first put forth 25 years ago as the "Broken Windows" theory, asserts the connection between neglect of the "small things" like litter on the streets and broken windows, and the decline of a city. This theory has shaped policy and programs behind some of the most noteworthy city revitalization projects, including New York City's.

Litter is being targeted again and again as a means to fight urban blight. According to the Urban Litter Partnership, a group composed of members of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) and Keep America Beautiful (KAB), litter attracts crime and repels economic development in urban areas. Programs to clean up and "beautify" other major cities, similar to Baltimore, have proven successful at reducing crime.

- The "Keep Indianapolis Beautiful" (KIB) Program from 1995 to 1998 helped reduce crime and create safer neighborhoods. In one area of the city, drug activity was virtually eliminated and other criminal activity was reduced by as much as 13.5 percent.<sup>1</sup>
- In Columbus, Ohio a program called the "Neighborhood Quality Interaction Team" resulted in a measured decline in the neighborhood crime since the team was established. Robberies in the community declined by nearly 16 percent.<sup>1</sup>
- In Denver, the Denver Business Improvement District significantly enhanced the cleanliness of the downtown district. Afterwards they reported an 11.3 percent decrease in reported crimes in the district.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) and Keep America Beautiful (KAB), Best Practices Database: *Urban Litter Partnership*, 1999.