

A Safe and Secure Tallahassee: A Unified First Responder Strategy

Policy Paper

Executive Summary

Daryl Parks has outlined a bold and intentional vision to transition Tallahassee into a city where public safety is rooted in accountability, operational excellence, and community trust. Operating under the core belief that public safety works best when every resident feels secure, this strategy integrates police, fire, EMS, and emergency management into a cohesive, neighborhood-focused framework. As Mayor, Daryl Parks will work hand-in-hand with fellow city commissioners to sponsor, advance, and pass meaningful legislation that fully supports law enforcement and first responders. This strategy respects Tallahassee's governing structure while demonstrating the active leadership needed to replace political division with structured, neighborhood-centered collaboration.

The Daryl Parks for Tallahassee Mayor Campaign recognizes that The City of Tallahassee and other key stakeholders have taken meaningful steps in this area. At the same time, Tallahassee's residents deserve an honest acknowledgment that the work is not finished and there remains a lot more work to do. The challenges facing our neighborhoods and our families require more than incremental steps; they demand the kind of sustained, creative leadership that matches the scale of the need. Progress made is progress worth building on, but it cannot be mistaken for progress complete.

The policy solutions presented in this brief reflect exactly the kind of innovative, community-centered approaches that Daryl Parks will champion as mayor of Tallahassee. Several of the initiatives presented are not new ideas, and some have already started. As mayor, Daryl Parks will not only support and advocate for policies like these but also lead their implementation with urgency, accountability, and an unwavering commitment to every resident in every neighborhood across this city. Tallahassee's best days are ahead, and the path to them runs through bold, principled leadership that turns vision into action.

Unified Public Safety Strategy and Neighborhood-Centered Prevention

The Challenge

Tallahassee requires a fresh, unified approach to deliver tangible results, protect families, and maximize institutional transparency. To truly stop crime before it starts, the city needs active leadership that addresses root causes, remedies historical trust deficits, and expands positive opportunities for young people.

The Solution:

Integrate police, fire, EMS, and emergency management into a cohesive, neighborhood-focused framework that balances transparent accountability with advanced, data-backed protection.

Use our natural strengths to build community safety and trust. Our inherent strengths are:

- Dedicated and highly trained first responders
- Established infrastructure of the Capital Region Real-Time Crime Center
- Strong neighborhood associations ready to engage
- World-class research and academic institutions at FAMU, FSU, and TSC to help drive modern, data-backed safety strategies
- An active community willing to participate in a true neighborhood safety culture.

How to Implement:

- ★ **Prioritize basic infrastructure upgrades:** Improve and update neighborhood street lighting as a key foundational tool to deter crime and enhance community safety.
- ★ **Expand community watch networks:** Oversee the expansion of Neighborhood Watch programs throughout all sectors of the city.
- ★ **Increase community policing footprints:** Drive proactive community policing initiatives so that local families get to know their "Officer Friendly."
- ★ **Mobilize local safety assets:** Leverage our community assets, neighborhood associations, and established violence-interruption organizations to reverse trust deficits and ensure strict operational accountability.
- ★ **Focus on youth prevention programs:** Partner with local non-profits and athletic leagues to expand structured after-school mentorship programs to keep young people safe and engaged.
- ★ **Invest in safe recreational spaces:** Direct municipal resources into community centers and public parks, ensuring young residents have positive environments for growth and learning.

Technology, Modernization and Response Equity

The Challenge:

Tallahassee is geographically vast, and with a limited number of officers on duty at any given time, response equity is a major challenge. True safety requires lowering emergency response times across every single zip code, protecting officers in the field, and shifting from a reactive model to a proactive model of total community preservation.

The Solution

Fully commit to modern policing strategies by equipping law enforcement with next-generation public safety technology to anticipate trouble, dramatically lower response times, and clear cases faster.

How to Implement:

- ★ **Provide cutting-edge field tools:** Equip law enforcement with next-generation public safety technology, including proactive, intelligence-led policing tools and state-of-the-art surveillance capabilities.
- ★ **Expand real-time tracking arrays:** Continue to improve the Capital Region Real-Time Crime Center, and erect additional security cameras at key intersections so that evading criminals can be easily tracked through our city.
- ★ **Build opt-in networks:** Partner with neighborhoods to establish secure, voluntary camera networks to assist investigations while preserving consumer privacy.
- ★ **Deploy advanced productivity tools:** Use artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technology to improve emergency response times and anticipate trouble before it happens.
- ★ **Maximize inter-agency coordination:** Improve ongoing daily collaboration among the Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) and the Leon County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) to extend coverage and optimize field deployments.
- ★ **Foster proactive community participation:** Protect Tallahassee's outstanding "closed case" rate by shifting heavy focus toward crime prevention and cultivating a true neighborhood participation culture rooted in *"See something, Say something."*

First Responder Staffing, Compensation and Inter-Agency Alliances

The Challenge:

Severe personnel shortages among first responders and dispatch operators threaten the operational stability of the city's public safety networks. Emergency systems cannot maintain rapid response velocities if departments are left short-handed, underpaid, or facing high employee burnout.

The Solution

Prioritize workforce stabilization, competitive compensation packages, and structural recruitment incentives across all four public safety branches while deepening regional operational alliances.

How to Implement:

- ★ **Sustain a competitive edge:** Recognize that while TPD already pays the highest salaries in the region, the city must continuously prioritize recruitment, retention, continuous training, and top-tier crime-fighting equipment.
- ★ **Formulate a Fire and EMS pay and staffing plan:** Create a definitive, data-backed staffing blueprint for fire and EMS personnel that prioritizes competitive wage increases and structural recruitment incentives, modeled directly after the law enforcement recruitment plan, to ensure no department is left underpaid or short-handed.
- ★ **Deepen regional alliances:** Continually improve daily operational collaboration and strategic field positioning between TPD and the Leon County Sheriff's Department.
- ★ **Deploy targeted incentives:** Explore various specialized fiscal or housing incentives for frontline responders where justified and appropriate to resolve critical workforce shortages.
- ★ **Deepen specialized first responder training:** Increase comprehensive training for law enforcement officers to better engage with people who have mental health or substance abuse issues, autistic individuals, or senior citizens.

Consolidated Dispatch Agency (CDA) Infrastructure Support

The Challenge

The Consolidated Dispatch Agency (CDA), the centralized hub and first line of response for TPD, LCSO, the Tallahassee Fire Department, and Leon County EMS, is experiencing severe staffing shortages that threaten public safety communication channels.

The Solution

Deliver targeted municipal support and dedicated funding to stabilize the emergency operator workforce and modernize communication infrastructure.

How to Implement:

- ★ **Secure frontline funding:** Work directly with the City Commission to shield the CDA from discretionary budget cuts and allocate critical funds to stabilize its operator workforce.
- ★ **Implement workforce retention programs:** Introduce enhanced workplace wellness support, operational assistance, and competitive adjustments to combat employee burnout and high turnover.
- ★ **Modernize dispatch technology:** Upgrade computer-aided dispatch (CAD) mechanisms and core systems to maximize the efficiency of remaining personnel while staffing levels recover.