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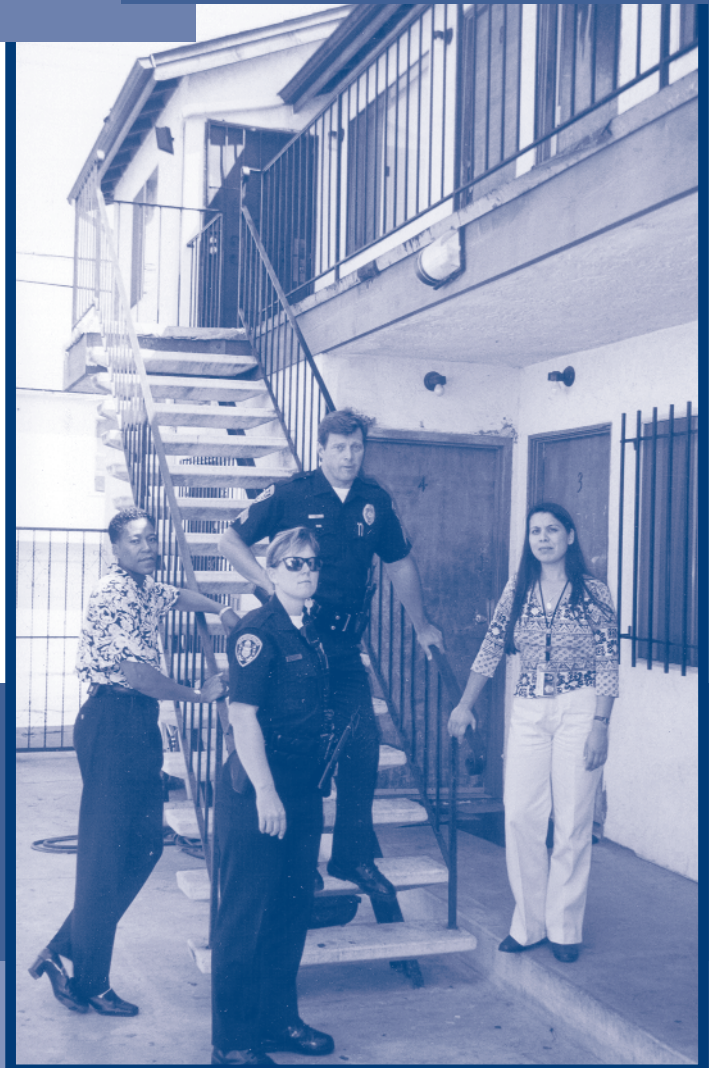
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Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems:

CASE STUDIES IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

By:

Rana Sampson and
Michael S. Scott



Burglary
Robbery
Drug Dealing
False Alarms
College-Related Crime
Graffiti

Cruising
Group Homes
Gangs
Prostitution
Park Crime
and more ...

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving

Authors

Rana Sampson and Michael S. Scott

This project was supported through grant #94-IJ-CX-K008 from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The views expressed herein are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Front cover photograph: (clockwise, starting from the left) Social Worker Recheal Stewart Brown, San Diego Sergeant Andy Mills, Community Mobilizer Monica Flores, and San Diego Officer Corinne Hard stand in front of a known drug dealing location undergoing abatement.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Sampson, Rana and Michael S. Scott. *Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1999.

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Introduction

Police and citizens around the country have devised thousands of creative solutions to a wide range of crime problems. However, these thoughtful, often novel problem-solving approaches to improving public safety remain unknown to most police agencies and communities, because no comprehensive compilation exists. The authors and editors have developed this collection of case studies, a compilation of the results of police efforts to engage in problem-oriented policing, to address this critical unmet need. These case studies will be useful to those new to the practice of problem-oriented policing (POP), and to those more skilled. The case studies will illustrate for newcomers POP methodology and provide veteran problem-solvers with a body of high-quality efforts to draw upon in their work.

Problem-oriented policing evolved from 20 years of research, study and evaluation of police practices. The seeds for POP can be found in studies measuring the effectiveness of preventive patrol, rapid response and follow-up criminal investigation. Information gained from studies of community-police partnerships and of specific problems (e.g., domestic violence and police treatment of the mentally ill), along with the acknowledgment of police discretion and the increased move toward participatory police management, also contributed to POP's development.¹

Herman Goldstein first articulated the concept in a 1979 article in which he argued that the most commonly proposed improvements to policing fall far short of the mark. Most improvements focus on the means of policing (staffing, equipment, structure) rather than the ends of policing (the effectiveness of police response to crime and disorder problems).² Goldstein later more carefully and fully laid out what has become the basis for this new approach to policing.³ Summarizing, he states that "efforts to improve policing should extend to and focus on the end product of policing – on the effectiveness and fairness of the police in dealing with the substantive problems that the public looks to the police to handle."⁴

The focus on substantive problems is the essence of problem-oriented policing. This shift in focus from means to ends requires wholesale change in police organizations, and a move away from a command-and-control model. It requires a rethinking of recruitment, training, hiring, assignment, transfer, evaluation, promotion, and resource-allocation practices. But more importantly, it requires patrol officers to shift from a reactive, incident-driven model of policing to a proactive, problem-solving approach, an approach that focuses on substantive policing problems – alarms, assault, burglary, domestic violence, drug dealing, graffiti, homicide, larceny, noise complaints, prostitution, rape, and robbery.

¹For a thorough review of the research leading up to problem-oriented policing, see Eck, John E., and William Spelman. 1987. *Problem Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.

²Goldstein, Herman. 1979. "Improving Policing: A Problem-Oriented Approach." *Crime and Delinquency* 25:236-258.

³Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*. New York: McGraw Hill.

⁴Ibid, p. 1.

Problem-solving projects, or problem-oriented policing projects, are officers' work product under this new approach. As well, in addition to line level personnel in the organization, sergeants, lieutenants, captains and others in a police agency are asked to engage in problem-solving to address the substantive problems in policing. The *results* of these projects are what is important, rather than the *number* of projects initiated. This is a shift away from traditional numerical measures of police success, e.g., the number of arrests made or summonses (citations) issued.

Problem-solving involves grouping like incidents, and understanding and treating these incidents differently than is done traditionally. For example, complaints of continued drug dealing on a street corner often lead to a police response, but traditionally, the response is limited to warning or arresting the offenders. In a problem-oriented approach, responding officers analyze the problem and apply a long-term, tailored solution. Arrest is only one of many tools they can use. Effectiveness is the main criterion for picking a tool. Outcome — the "what happened" in policing — is even more important.

A parallel movement to problem-oriented policing is community policing. Some suggest the two approaches are the same, disguised in different names. Others see them as disparate. Some proponents assert that their approach, whether it be problem-oriented or community-oriented policing, represents a philosophy, not a program.⁵ On the other hand, more narrowly, some see POP as merely a strategy, without recognizing its accompanying complexities. In this limited view, problem-solving is seen as the approach's sole component. Many experts in the field agree, however, that for community policing to succeed, officers must engage in problem-solving. Regardless of the conceptual framework, it is important that the police field begin to document and share the better problem-solving efforts of officers and communities.

A few attempts have been made to document problem-solving efforts, most detailing a single police agency's projects. Examples come from Baltimore County, Md.; Colorado Springs, Colo.; Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; New York City, N.Y.; Newport News, Va.; and Portland, Ore. A few police agencies have, at times, chronicled their problem-solving initiatives in departmental newsletters. Among such agencies are those in Chicago, Ill.; Fresno, Calif.; Hayward, Calif.; St. Louis, Mo.; St. Petersburg, Fla.; San Diego, Calif.; and Stockholm, Sweden. Some nonprofit organizations involved in crime-fighting have done the same. They include the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety and the Citizens Committee for New York City. Since 1988, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has published and distributed *Problem-Solving Quarterly*, a newsletter that documents innovative problem-solving efforts by police and community members and recently PERF established an internet web site devoted to problem-solving. One particularly helpful parallel line of development to problem-oriented policing in the literature has been the *Crime Prevention Studies* series, edited by Ronald V. Clarke, an architect of the situational crime-prevention movement. In it, an international body of researchers document their efforts to understand and tackle specific crime problems, including fare evasion, auto theft and retail theft.

⁵It should be noted that Herman Goldstein does not see problem-oriented policing as a philosophy. In his view, problem-oriented policing represents a more concrete and potentially scientific approach to finding effective solutions to the pieces of police business.

What is Problem-Solving?

Problem-solving has specific meaning in the context of problem-oriented policing — a meaning that is quite different from its use in the corporate world. In *Problem-Oriented Policing*, Goldstein describes problem-solving this way:

The primary work unit in a police agency today for the officer assigned to general patrol is the incident. In the course of a typical day, a police officer will usually handle several incidents, such as the theft of a car, a barking dog, a dispute among neighbors, a robbery, a request for information, a report of suspicious circumstances, or a traffic accident . . . [Problem-solving] calls for recognizing that incidents are often merely overt symptoms of problems. This pushes the police in two directions: (1) It requires that they recognize the relationships between the incidents (similarities of behavior, location, [people] involved, etc.); and (2) it requires that they take a more in-depth interest in incidents by acquainting themselves with some of the conditions and factors that give rise to them.⁶

A proactive, problem-solving approach is markedly different from the traditional approach to addressing crime and fear in our communities. It involves tailoring solutions to unique neighborhood problems, based on thoughtful, in-depth analysis. It involves moving away from generic crime-control models or off-the-shelf solutions, because each community's crime problems are unique. If old solutions prove ineffective, the police seek new ones (e.g., when prostitution does not stop after the police shoo prostitutes off a corner once a week, the police try new solutions based on a thorough analysis of that problem's specific aspects). After implementing solutions, the police evaluate them. If the solutions are ineffective, they try other solutions.

The most difficult aspect of problem-oriented policing for police officers to grasp is carefully analyzing problems. Goldstein suggests the following:

[Analysis] means an in-depth probe of all of the characteristics of a problem and the factors that contribute to it – acquiring detailed information about, for example, offenders, victims and others who may be involved; the time of occurrence, locations and other particulars about the physical environment; the history of the problem; the motivations, gains and losses of all involved parties; the apparent (and not so apparent) causes and competing interests; and the results of current responses.⁷

Too often officers skip the analysis stage when targeting a crime problem. If they fail to analyze the problem, they cannot tailor the solution to the problem, and the prob-

lem will, in all likelihood, persist. If they are either unskilled in or impatient with analysis, the solutions they develop tend to be generic, and ineffective in the long term. For instance, if there is a high incidence of burglaries in a residential area, officers might immediately ask to have the trees trimmed and street lighting improved – a rather costly endeavor – instead of analyzing the problem carefully and comparing it with similar burglary problems, or comparing the area with areas where no burglaries occur. If officers' analytical skills are not supported by training and technical assistance, they likely will devise solutions that are not tailored to a given problem's exact parameters. Without analytical skills, officers are troubleshooters, not problem-solvers. Good problem-solving skills allow officers to seek solutions beyond the traditional. In other words, rather than assign an officer to a problem corner, police determine why the corner is a problem, and tailor specific solutions to the problem.

Police problem-solving is a process of continually looking at crime and disorder problems, analytically understanding those problems, drawing from a range of solutions, and assessing and reassessing over time the solutions' effectiveness. Doing problem-solving well requires training, skill and some research tools.⁸ Even in those agencies that purport to do problem-solving on an agency-wide basis, very often only *some* officers have received training in problem-solving. Most have not. Some of the efforts police personnel engage in which they refer to as problem-solving is of high quality, but much is not, and merely takes the form of more generic programs or targeted traditional responses. There are varying levels of sophistication, depending on the problem's complexity and the problem-solver's skill level.

Problem-oriented policing is still in its very early stages and so the projects that arise under this relatively new approach are not ones from which one can pronounce the success or failure of problem-oriented policing. As more agencies and police personnel develop experience with this approach it is likely that more rigorous projects will emerge. These early projects provide insight into the state of this approach and its potential for tackling public safety problems in communities.

Project Background

Beginning in 1995, and through most of 1997, through a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) fellowship, Rana Sampson collected information on high-quality problem-solving projects from around the United States and elsewhere. A former New York City police officer, Sampson worked in the early 1990s for PERF as problem-oriented policing coordinator and editor of *Problem-Solving Quarterly*. Since 1990, she has visited with more than 100 police agencies, assisting in their problem-oriented policing efforts and learning from their experiences. She is a frequent presenter at the International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference, has written curricula, and has served as a consultant to police agencies and communities on the subject.

⁸For problem-solving to occur on a department-wide basis, a police agency should, at the very least, encourage officers to take time to understand crime and disorder problems and to go beyond traditional responses. In addition, departments must support officers' efforts, provide assistance as needed, help carve out blocks of time for officers to problem-solve, and find ways to encourage problem-solving attempts.

To obtain material on problem-solving projects, Sampson sent police forces with 100 or more sworn officers a letter of invitation to submit information on their three highest-quality problem-solving efforts.⁹ Because so much work had been done in the area of drug abatement, she asked the agencies to send information on no more than one drug problem-solving effort. She wanted a wide range of crime, disorder and other public-safety problems. She received information on several hundred problem-solving efforts in response. She deferred to each agency as to what constituted their highest quality effort.

In addition, she culled project information she had collected from her own files, and solicited particular departments by phone to ensure that they sent information on high-quality efforts. She called departments with the strongest reputations for good problem-solving. Some agencies shared information on 40 or 50 projects.

In April 1997, Sampson enlisted the aid of Mike Scott, a former Madison, Wis., police officer who had assisted Herman Goldstein in the early formulation of the problem-oriented policing concept. Scott has been nationally recognized for his work in problem-oriented policing and has had opportunities to work on its implementation while he was at PERF as well as the New York City, N.Y.; Fort Pierce, Fla.; St. Louis, Mo.; and Lauderhill, Fla. police departments.

As editors of this effort, Rana Sampson and Mike Scott also looked at project information submitted to Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government for its Innovations in State and Local Government Award, information submitted to the International Association of Chiefs of Police for its Webber-Seavey Award, information submitted to PERF for its Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, and the products of research from Great Britain's Home Office Police Research Group on topics such as auto theft, repeat victimization, and shoplifting. All proved good sources.

The editors also attended the annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego, and followed up with officers, agencies and researchers. One editor contacted nonprofit organizations known for their anti-crime work and solicited submissions. These organizations provided information on several high-quality efforts.

The editors reviewed information on approximately 1,000 projects for quality. The editors looked for solid analyses, highly tailored and thorough or creative solutions, and valid impact assessments. They followed up by phone and letter on the most promising efforts in each of the subject categories. The editors ultimately settled upon 70 projects fitting these criteria. Of the 70, the editors chose approximately 50 to highlight for this publication because of the diversity of problem types these 50 projects represent. While trying to retain much of the original project descriptions' language and intent, the editors followed up with those involved in the projects, amending and adding to the material in the interest of clarity and completeness.

⁹Because the agencies enlisted in this effort represent the larger organizations in the police profession, there certainly are some smaller agencies whose work has gone unrecognized. The COPS Office is compiling some of those efforts now.

The efforts described here represent a broad range of crime, disorder and other public-safety problems, including burglary, domestic violence, drugs, false alarms, graffiti, neighborhood disorder, prostitution, robbery, and theft from vehicles. These efforts represent the best in problem-oriented policing uncovered through this particular collection process. While there are still gaps in some of the efforts, their strengths wholly outweigh their weaknesses, and as such, are extremely valuable case studies for anyone engaged or interested in problem-oriented policing to review.

Expected Benefits

These case studies will contribute to a body of knowledge from which police departments and community groups can learn. While problem-oriented policing is still in its formative stages, these early efforts present a strong foundation on which to build the profession's understanding and experience with problem-oriented policing. Police departments can use this compilation to develop a case-study approach to teaching problem-solving in police academies. In-service trainers can cite examples from this publication to explain problem-solving and problem-oriented policing. Practitioners can develop advanced problem-solving training around the efforts.

This collection of case studies will also be of great help to community groups. Communities are starting to redefine their role in crime-fighting and crime prevention, and recognize that their participation is an important factor in obtaining long-lasting solutions. The more sophisticated communities have started to rethink the role of block watches in crime-fighting and crime prevention, recognizing that certain skills are essential to tackling crime and disorder problems. These case studies will be a useful tool for community groups to learn how to more successfully address such problems.

The editors found that the body of knowledge in problem-solving is still very limited and highly experimental, but even at this early stage of its development, patterns are emerging in various communities in response to problems. This is evidence that departments are learning from one another, through either personal contact, training, conferences, or the literature. The editors saw many similarities in the submitted efforts, as was the case for a Fremont, Calif., sergeant tackling a domestic violence problem. In his problem analysis, he looked to research that a team of researchers and police did in Huddersfield, England, for insight into revictimization. While the Huddersfield effort was not a problem-oriented policing project, as a joint researcher-practitioner effort, it is certainly the kind of work to which problem-oriented policing should connect. The connections now being made, as in the case of the Fremont, Calif. sergeant, portend well for the field. The editors hope this collection of case studies, reporting on quality efforts from different communities, will help provide further information and inspiration for those concerned with tackling public-safety problems.

Chapter 1

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Apartment Complex and Other
Rental-Property Crime

Apartment Complex and Other Rental-Property Crime

Apartment Complex Crime in San Diego, Calif.

San Diego police officers Tim Hall and Cindy Brady surveyed their community for crime problems. Consistently, neighborhood residents complained about what they thought was disproportionate crime at a nearby apartment complex, informally known as "Blue Roofs" for its distinctive shingles. Some residents said gang activity in and around the complex made them fearful of going out, even during the day. Complaints focused on drug dealing, assaults and drive-by shootings.

Brady and Hall, working with the department's crime analysis unit, analyzed police data to see if in-house statistical information confirmed or refuted the community's perceptions of Blue Roofs activity. The officers asked the unit to look at a 0.4-mile radius around the complex for calls for service, comparing per-capita call rates. Blue Roofs had considerably more calls than both the nearby apartment complexes and the surrounding area, in general. The officers then asked the crime analysis unit to look at arrest records for area crimes, and found a lot of arrestees were Blue Roofs tenants or guests.

Seeking additional information, Hall and Brady talked with senior division officers, who told them the complex had been a problem for 20 years. In fact, senior officers warned the two that Blue Roofs was "a lost cause," according to Hall. One officer told them the Blue Roofs problems reminded him of those at a large complex called The Gardens, located in the division from which he had just transferred. Brady and Hall learned that Blue Roofs and The Gardens had much in common — the same owner, the same property manager, and nearly the same percentage of Section 8 (HUD-sponsored) units (almost 50%). Blue Roofs' 17 buildings had 312 units. The Gardens' 39 buildings had 504 units. The owner lived in Florida, leaving the property-management company to run the show at both complexes. Due to the differences in police call rates to these complexes compared with neighboring ones, the correlation of arrest rates to the complexes, and the similarities between the properties, the officers surmised that property-management styles accounted for the disproportionate crime at the properties. They aimed to improve management practices, believing this would have significant impact on both complexes (even though one of them was not even in their division).

Brady and Hall tried to discern what HUD knew about the problems at the properties, and what its investment was in them. They found that HUD, in an effort to keep Blue Roofs open to Section 8-vouchered tenants, offered the landlord an inducement in the form of a below-market-interest-rate loan, allowing the owner to take nearly \$17 million in cash equity from the properties. In exchange, HUD required \$2 million in phys-



ical improvements to the properties. The officers were confident that HUD, if fully apprised of the problems at the properties, would seek changes in property-management practices.

Hall and Brady contacted the San Diego Housing Commission and learned about property-management practices that correlated with well-run, safe apartment complexes. They also cultivated informants in the property-management company; this helped them assess the "truthfulness" of what the company told them, according to Hall.

The officers asked to meet with the company, seeking cooperation in improving the properties through changes in management practices, such as tenant screening, house rules, strict rental agreements, and consistent eviction practices. At the meeting, company officials said they were as concerned about the problems at the properties as the police, but HUD had their hands tied on such practices as tenant screening and rule setting. The officers caught the company in the first of a series of lies. Local HUD officials, officers learned, "encourage tenant screening, strict rental agreements and house rules because they help to provide safer living conditions for the residents," according to Hall. The officers asked HUD and the management company to meet with them to clarify policies and practices. The company admitted that the problem was not HUD; rather, it was the company's practices.

Brady and Hall asked the Blue Roofs tenant advisory council for support in improving the properties, but they got the impression that problem tenants populated the council, and did not represent the majority of law-abiding residents. The officers, over the course of the project, encouraged "credible" tenants to get involved with the advisory council, but each refused due to disinterest in working with the management company, according to Hall.

The officers invited the management company and HUD to the police department's landlord training class (inspired by and modeled after the one John Campbell created for the Portland, Ore., Police Bureau). With HUD's support, they asked the management company to replace its on-site manager, implement nondiscriminatory tenant screening, create house rules, tighten up rental agreements, post for private property, and track problem tenants, maintaining documentation if evictions resulted. In addition, they asked the company to hire competent on-site security. Hall and Brady had discovered that the current security guard had a criminal record and had fathered at least three children with three different complex residents.

The management company agreed to make these changes. Over time, the officers monitored the properties and found that the management company had not made any of the recommended changes. The company blamed implementation delays on HUD, and as a result, the officers arranged another meeting with HUD and the company. They arranged yet a third meeting with HUD and the company when they learned that the company had not replaced the on-site manager.

The company finally did arrange for a new manager, one they said had a lot of experience improving crime-ridden apartment complexes. When the officers checked out the complex this new manager had "single-handedly turned around," they learned it was "actually a very quiet retirement complex, with no history of problems," according to Hall. The management company quickly went through three more on-site managers, none of whom had the experience to handle the problems at Blue Roofs.

The management company finally retained a new security company, but failed to give the security officers any guidance on what to do at the complex. The officers felt ill-equipped to handle the problems there. On their first day of patrol, teenagers threw rocks at their cars. Brady and Hall learned that the management company had not distributed security-company brochures informing tenants of their responsibilities. The in-house informants told the officers that the management company was simply stalling on implementing changes, waiting for the officers to tire of the complex's problems and move on.

Hall and Brady developed alternative plans; voluntary compliance had proved infeasible. They would seek HUD's assistance with the owner in replacing the management company. If that strategy failed, they would look at abating the property, based on owner/management-company facilitation of nuisance activity there. As a last resort, they would ask the California Board of Realtors to revoke the management company's business license.

Brady and Hall met with HUD officials. Some thought the management company was completely incompetent, while others suggested giving the company more time. The officers asked to see HUD's management audit of the property, but HUD refused. The officers, through the police department's legal advisor, obtained the audit through a Freedom-of-Information-Act request. HUD had rated the management company as substandard in many important categories; however, HUD would not proceed against the company.

Having failed with less-coercive measures, Hall and Brady looked to nuisance laws for relief. The police abatement unit phoned the management company. Hall described the company's reaction: "The word *abatement* sent shock waves through the . . . management company, [and] within 24 hours, the owner's lawyer was calling . . . wanting to know what the owner could do to eliminate any problems at his properties."

HUD officials, Brady and Hall, the abatement team, the owner, and his lawyer agreed to meet. In advance, the officers, with other division officers' help, surveyed the complex to find out if the authorized tenants matched those actually living there. At the same time, they asked tenants about serious problems at the complex, so that they could inform the owner. The most shocking discovery came from several female tenants, who claimed that the only way they could get the maintenance men to do repairs was to have sex with or buy drugs from them.



During the meeting, Hall and Brady presented evidence of the management company's mismanagement, as shown by the disproportionate calls for service, arrest statistics, tenant surveys, and HUD audit. Knowing that the company had committed to screening tenants, the officers had done a background check on the four most recent tenants. All had criminal records or histories of problem tenancies that should have made them ineligible to live in the complex.

Finally, Brady and Hall showed a picture of the laundry-room lock, one the management company should have changed months before to reduce complaints from women who felt unsafe in the room. The officers said, "If . . . the management is incapable of changing a simple lock in a year's time, then they are incapable of managing these apartment complexes." The owner agreed. HUD fined the owner \$300,000 for outstanding repairs. At the owner's request, the officers gave him a list of unresolved problems and repairs.

Hall and Brady used several measures of success for this project. One was how long it took the management company to do repairs. The owner hired a HUD-recommended company that did more repairs in the first month than the previous company had done in the past year. The new on-site manager is no-nonsense, and is not afraid to walk the property grounds. Problem tenants are evicted, and gang and drug activity has lessened. Calls for service are down. Finally, anonymous reporting of crime has decreased.

After the initial project, other officers, guided by Lt. Guy Swanger, got involved. Interested in ensuring long-term success at Blue Roofs, Swanger kept an eye on the complex. After the gang and drug activity subsided, many of the complex's 500 children felt safe enough to meet and play outside. The complex had a lot of working parents, so many children went unsupervised after school and in the summer. Police were concerned that these children would get into trouble.

Wes Albers, the police community relations officer, noted that the police had provided much of the impetus and resources for restoring peace at the complex, but they "could not continue to be in charge of making sure that things [ran] well. That task was the responsibility of the company that managed the apartments, and the residents . . . It was now up to the community to stand up and become involved."

Lt. Swanger contacted the management, and they agreed to help. They donated an apartment as a community center. Several neighborhood groups and city agencies provided staff, lent or donated equipment, supervised athletic activities, and tutored the children, offering them alternatives to hanging out and getting involved in unproductive or illegal activity.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several respects. The sheer size of the complexes, housing nearly 1,000 families, may have discouraged even the most determined of officers. It would have been easy for them to simply continue reactively fielding police calls there, without committing to a proactive response. The periodic setbacks in this case never dissuaded the officers from continuing to

*Sources: "The Blue Roofs," project description submitted in support of nomination for 1994 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; personal communication with Detective Cindy Brady, October 1997; written material from Officer Wes Albers.



take the more-difficult proactive approach. The officers were very methodical, developing backup or contingency plans for each part of this one-year effort (e.g., if the management company would not turn itself around, they would convince HUD to help; if they could not convince HUD, they would test an abatement approach; if that did not work, they would bring in the California Board of Realtors). Also notable are the officers' efforts to shore up the management company's guardianship capacity. The officers exhausted every angle trying to get the company to change its practices, before resorting to more-coercive measures such as abatement.

Apartment and Rental Property Crime in Portland, Ore.

John Campbell, a resident of a quiet Portland, Ore., neighborhood, woke up one morning to a crack house on his block. He and his neighbors turned to the police, but police efforts to tackle the problem were not enough. They made arrests, but new dealers appeared. Campbell's frustration with the ongoing drug problem on his block led him to investigate how landlords and neighbors could better detect and stem crime at Portland's rental properties.

With the Portland Police Bureau's support, Campbell eventually developed an eight-hour training course for landlords and property managers to help them prevent crime (e.g., drug dealing, prostitution, etc.) at rental properties. For the course, Campbell conducted intense research on local and state laws and interviewed more than 40 people, including landlords, property-management staff, legal-aid attorneys, tenant advocates, narcotics detectives, district police officers, housing authority personnel, and others. After studying the problem, Campbell came to a series of conclusions about current practices and approaches to dealing with crime at rental properties. First, "the traditional policing approach of waiting for enough evidence to serve a search warrant often results in a solution that is too late to preserve community livability." Second, "most landlords are not skilled in the prevention of illegal activity on rental property, but are willing to learn." Underpinning his approach is the belief that most landlords "prefer to act responsibly, but lack the tools to do so."

According to Campbell, the landlord training program delivers two important messages: Effective property management can have a major impact on a community's health; and there are simple, legal and fair techniques for stopping the spread of crime at residential properties. The program is also designed to build a sense of community among police, landlords and tenants to ensure more effective cooperation and timely solutions. Since 1989, about 6,000 Portland-area landlords and property managers have received training, affecting over 100,000 rental units in Portland and surrounding communities.

Each course provides information on deterring crime at rental properties by using crime-prevention-through-environmental-design principles; using fair and nondiscriminatory applicant-screening approaches to weed out dishonest applicants; tightening rental agreements so that these deter crime; designing effective, ongoing management strategies; building a sense of community in multi-family housing; recogniz-



ing the warning signs of drug activity; and effectively intervening against drug activity (shifting the focus from criminal laws to civil laws as remedies). Finally, part of the course is devoted to discussing how landlords and property managers can effectively work with the police.

Campbell uses follow-up surveys to determine the course's effectiveness. In the 1989, 1990 and 1991 follow-up surveys, given six months after the course, 90 percent of the landlords said they had changed how they manage their rentals. Of those who had dealt with drug activity since taking the course, 95 percent said course information helped them solve the problem. Campbell has helped other communities around the country develop similar training, and he has developed a landlord training manual for general use.

Campbell believes that "to bring about a fundamental shift in approach to property management, a large number of landlords in a community must take the course." Many of the Portland trainees were prompted to attend by a letter from the police chief. In a number of communities, if police receive a complaint about drug activity at a rental property, they send a letter from the police chief to the owner, alerting the owner to the problem and inviting him or her to the next landlord training course.

Over the years since Campbell's training began, communities have modified his approach to meet their particular needs. For instance, Mesa, Ariz., police, taking some basics from Campbell's work, developed a "Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program," because most problem properties there are multi-unit, involving a different set of problems and dynamics. Mesa draws heavily on crime-prevention-through-environmental-design principles, as well as on apartment-watch efforts.*

Editors' note: This effort clearly has had national impact. The notion that "most landlords are not skilled in the prevention of illegal activity on rental property, but are willing to learn" has spread to many cities throughout the country. Landlord training gives officers and landlords a productive, collaborative, non-adversarial approach to stopping crime on rental property.

Apartment Complex Crime in Santa Barbara, Calif.

In mid-1994, Santa Barbara, Calif., police officer Kim Fryslie looked into problems at a local apartment complex. People had complained about disturbances, an allegedly illegal auto-repairs shop, littering, and illegally built dwellings. Fryslie contacted the owner, who resisted taking corrective action. Another officer, Michael Aspland, teamed up with Fryslie to work on the project. The officers learned that the owner had 34 other properties in the city – many of them apartment complexes, almost all in disrepair and draining a disproportionate amount of police resources.

*Sources: Project description submitted by Portland Police Bureau to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; "Keeping Drug Activity out of Rental Property," draft monograph, 1995, by John Campbell; "The Landlord Training Program: 1990 Performance Evaluation," January 1991, by Campbell Resources Inc.; correspondence from Campbell to Rana Sampson; conversations with Campbell and Portland Police Bureau personnel.

First, Fryslie and Aspland tried to learn more about living conditions at the properties. The owner had never hired a property manager, and tenant health-and-safety issues were ignored – many apartments were infested with cockroaches and rats. Apartments were illegally subdivided; as many as 10 people lived in two-bedroom units. Said one officer: "It was not uncommon to find three refrigerators in one kitchen, to accommodate various renters." Fire and building codes were ignored, many apartments had no smoke detectors, and little or no tenant screening occurred. Neighbors suffered due to excessive noise and litter coming from the complexes, and the officers found that the complexes' children "used abandoned vehicles left in [the] parking lots as [their] playgrounds." Tenants often complained to the owner; the officers said the owner "would promise the world, but . . . never deliver." Due to the problems at his complexes, the owner had a reputation as one of Santa Barbara's most notorious slumlords.

The officers reviewed old files to see how the city had responded to complaints about these properties. Both the fire and community development departments had spent thousands of dollars over the years seeking the owner's compliance for code infractions. On occasion, the owner would make repairs; for instance, illegal conversions would be undone, only to "reappear" months later. Police department records for the prior year showed arrests, high numbers of calls and criminal investigations, undercover operations, and raids. For instance, the officers found that 758 arrestees (on 1,185 charges) listed the owner's properties as their residence. Only 105 of the charges occurred before the owner bought the properties. In addition, tenants accounted for 121 outstanding misdemeanor bench warrants, compared with five before the new owner took over. Police had made no arrests of some properties' tenants in over 10 years; however, after the current owner took over, they made dozens.

Police records also indicated that neighbors and residents complained of a disproportionate amount of crime at this owner's properties, compared with similar properties. Community development records indicated "an extensive pattern of illegal dwellings . . . [and] other building-code violations."

Aspland and Fryslie asked the owner to accompany them on a "tour" of a "well-managed complex owned by another [landlord]." The owner agreed and, afterward, promised repairs and changes in management practices. However, nothing changed at his complexes.

The officers asked neighbors to keep logs of the problems at the worst properties for two months. The officers photographed the properties' deteriorating physical conditions. The photos also documented "rubble, construction materials and large household appliances," indicating the owner "was utilizing his properties as industrial storage sites." The photos documented running sewage, as well.



Table 1. Comparisons of Arrestees at 30 Properties

Property	Year Purchased by Owner	Number of Arrestees Who Listed Property as Their Residence Before Owner's Purchase	Number of Arrestees Who Listed Property as Their Residence After Owner's Purchase
#1	1975	0	42
#2	1975	0	0
#3	1977	0	24
#4	1979	0	12
#5	1982	0	178
#6	1983	0	22
#7	1984	0	49
#8	1985	0	9
#9	1985	1	55
#10	1986	3	235
#11	1986	0	34
#12	1986	0	58
#13	1986	2	9
#14	1987	0	60
#15	1987	0	6
#16	1987	2	87
#17	1988	4	53
#18	1989	2	12
#19	1990	0	0



Property	Year Purchased by Owner	Number of Arrestees Who Listed Property as Their Residence Before Owner's Purchase	Number of Arrestees Who Listed Property as Their Residence After Owner's Purchase
#20	1991	4	30
#21	1991	49	58
#22	1991	0	4
#23	1992	0	4
#24	1992	3	0
#25	1992	5	29
#26	1992	0	1
#27	1992	0	2
#28	1992	24	2
#29	1992	0	0
#30	1994	2	0

The officers shared the photos with other city and county agencies and suggested prosecuting the slumlord with an "unfair competition" charge, as his unlawful neglect of the properties gave him an illegal financial advantage over competitors running legitimate multi-family properties. The officers enlisted a deputy district attorney from the district attorney's fraud unit, who agreed to take on the case. (They later learned that the city attorney's office had tried to persuade the district attorney's office to prosecute on the same charge several years earlier, with no success.) The officers worked hard to put together a persuasive case for the district attorney's office.

The officers organized a task force that included representatives from the district attorney's office, city attorney's office, fire department, community development department, and public works department. The first step was to obtain additional documentation. Two officers were assigned to inspection teams armed with film, cameras



and camcorders. The teams took 600 photos. Officers prepared and had distributed bilingual notices to tenants advising them that the teams were there to improve their living conditions. The teams documented 750 code violations. One building had no stucco facade; rather, it had exposed and decayed wood-slat framing. The officers said, "The inspector told the press the only thing holding the building together [was] 'termites holding hands.'" Building tenants were relocated.

Media coverage fostered public awareness and support for the improvement of the properties. The *Santa Barbara News-Press* led off a key story about the properties and the task force's work with, "The mummified remains of a cat, its jaws frozen in an eternal meo-o-w-w-w, greeted Santa Barbara police officers Monday as they toured a termite-infested apartment owned by one of the city's most notorious landlords." The owner later said that his properties were in fine shape, and that he would live in any one of them.

Fryslie said, "A recent criminal-court ruling ordered management by a management company." Some properties have been renovated, and resident complaints at these properties have declined. The officers said improving the properties benefited both the police department and the community. They now have interagency "tools" more effective than the ones used before for dealing with slumlords and their problem properties.

However, this effort is ongoing. As a condition of the owner's probation, he must comply with all building codes and regulations. He continues to appear in court on probation violations, and recently, a judge ordered that he appear in court monthly to detail his progress in correcting violations.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several respects. First, the officers, upon discovering one problem complex, took the extra step and inquired into the quality of management at the owner's other properties. Second, they looked at a range of data in assessing effective management: arrests, charges, calls for service, and building-code violations at more than 30 properties. Third, they compared past and current problems at the complexes, concluding that the new owner managed his properties in a way that made them criminal havens. Fourth, they used an unfair-competition charge, which perhaps more accurately captured the owner's unethical practices than other charges could; the owner reaped illegal profits by violating building codes, cramming tenants into properties, and creating a haven for criminals. As mentioned earlier, the officers used arrest data to analyze the problems at the complexes. While arrests usually are more an indicator of police targeting than of links between sites, the number of arrestees living at the properties was certainly disproportionate.

*Sources: "Slumlord Prosecution," project description submitted by Santa Barbara Police Department to Rana Sampson as part of NJ-sponsored problem-solving project; personal and written communications with Detective Kim Fryslie, September and October 1997.

Additional Editors' Comments on Apartment Complex Crime

For a number of reasons, apartment complexes and other rental properties, both public and private, present unique challenges to police. High density, design flaws, lax management practices, absentee owners, inadequate tenant screening, and declining maintenance all contribute to crime and disorder at these properties. The efforts in this section include approaches designed to address underlying conditions, as well as the problem itself.

Several other notable approaches surfaced in the research. The Glendale, Ariz., Police Department created an apartment complex unit specifically to address multi-family problem residences. A Madison, Wis., officer compared calls for service by apartment over a series of apartment complexes to get a more detailed understanding of hot spots and poor apartment- management practices. A Mesa, Ariz., police captain drew upon elements of the city's crime-free multi-housing program and tailored programs for crime-free mini-storage facilities, malls and mobile-home parks. A San Diego officer's effort led to state and federal changes for Section 8 properties, facilitating evictions of drug dealers.



Chapter 2

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Drugs

Drugs

A Drug Problem in Delray Beach, Fla.

Mario's Market, a convenience store in Delray Beach, Fla., generated numerous calls for service for robberies and drug dealing. It was also the site for a lot of loitering and open-container violations. From April 1993 to April 1994, there were 55 calls to police. Hundreds of additional calls attributable to the store came in from the area immediately surrounding it. Many of the robberies at and in front of the store were committed against unsuspecting tourists who had stopped to use the store's pay phones. At any given time, there were 30 to 40 drug dealers, users, loiterers, and robbers outside the store.

Mario's Market rests on the main redevelopment strip in Delray Beach (recently designated an all-American city). The store had been a problem for 20 years, despite the redevelopment of many of the other blocks on the strip. Mario, the store's namesake, rented the property from private owners. Over the years, Delray Beach police officer Jimmy Horrell said, "Officers would respond to calls at the store, take reports from the victims, then leave the area without looking at what the real problems were."

Officers Horrell and Javaro Sims noticed that Mario's Market was open on all sides. No fencing surrounded the property. A drug house behind the store contributed to the problem. The tenants, relatively recent move-ins, would sell drugs in front of and, sometimes, *in* the store; they would run back to their house if officers were active in the area. The T-shaped alley behind the store provided easy ingress and egress for buyers, both on foot and in cars. A shady tree grew in front of the store, providing cover, and a trash receptacle under it provided a place to rest alcoholic beverages. The lighting was poor, the phones out front were a home-away-from-home for dealers, and the indoor video games provided night-and-day entertainment for those engaged in crime.

The officers started a walking beat in the area, concentrating some of their effort on reducing the dealing and robberies at Mario's Market and the surrounding properties. To document the extent of the activity, officers made videos of the dealing, did jump-outs and made arrests. Within the first month of the walking beat, Mario claimed he lost \$10,000 in beer sales. He was displeased with the officers, believing they were unfairly targeting him. In addition, Mario's son had been arrested several years prior for drug trafficking, and was serving time. As a result, Mario held no great affection for the police.

The police made three drug buys in Mario's Market. Although the officers could, based on these buys, bring a nuisance suit against the property owners, they held off in hopes of turning the store into a legitimate business.



Officers called the pay phones' owner, a businessman in a neighboring community, and asked that he remove the phones because they contributed to the drug dealing and loitering. The owner refused, saying he was making \$1,200 a month from the phones. The officers then asked for both Mario's and the property owners' assistance. They wrote a letter to the phones' owner, asking for their removal. The owner again said no, and added that he would sue the store for breach of contract.

The officers looked up the laws regarding pay-phone installation, and found that a wiring permit had to be obtained from the city to install one. In this case, there were no permits. So it would not appear like selective enforcement, the officers checked whether other pay phones along the strip had permits. None did, so they sent letters to the owners, informing them of the permit process and warning them that the phones would be removed unless a permit was issued.

The officers contacted the owner of the drug house behind Mario's Market, but she did not seem to care about the problem. Police made drug buys in the house, but the owner still did not act, even after multiple requests for her assistance. Having no success with the owner, the officers initiated a nuisance-abatement suit against the house. They knew the suit would take approximately one year; thus, they decided to try other tactics to make the property around Mario's inhospitable to drug dealers, users, loiterers, and robbers.

The officers notified the property owners of all the crime occurring there. They hoped this would encourage the owners, whether out of genuine concern or concern for their own liability, to improve conditions there. They gave the owners a list of all the calls for service on the property. Perhaps as a result, the officers got the store and property owners to agree to the installation of no-trespassing signs. To speed up the installation, the officers worked with the city sign department. They began making trespassing arrests, but some did not hold up in court because Mario excluded some of the trespassers only occasionally, not consistently. The officers then explained to the store's owners that consistency was necessary for the tactic to work.

The officers asked Florida Power and Light to install security lights around Mario's Market and behind it, near the house where some of the more entrenched dealers lived. The lights, called "Liberty City Lights," are bullet-proof; they were developed after the Miami riots and are designed to resist vandalism. Each light costs property owners \$18 per month.

The officers decided to put up barriers to stop cars from entering and exiting through the alleys. The alleys had become choice routes for consummating drug deals because they were not visible to passing patrol cars. With Chief Rick Overman's aid, the officers secured the fire chief's approval to block off part of the alley. On the officers' behalf, Overman wrote a letter to the transportation department, requesting that barriers be installed. Within a week, they were. The barriers cut off car access to the less

visible part of the property, and removed a substantial vehicle escape route. Buyers could still access the rear of the property by foot, so the officers next addressed that problem.

The officers got Mario and the property owners to agree to put up a chain-link fence behind the property. Although the owners agreed, they dragged their feet on installation, so the officers asked for the fencing company's name and followed up on their order, expediting the city permit the owners needed to install the fence.

Due to the officers' work, the drug dealing decreased. Some dealers began serving time, and others moved on because the location was no longer convenient. The officers began focusing on the remaining hard-core dealers, to whom the property still offered some "amenities."

The officers borrowed a hand truck to move the heavy trash receptacle (a meeting place for the dealers) out from under the shady tree to the other side of the lot. Those who wanted to lean or sit would now have to do so exposed to the hot Florida sun.

When the fence the officers installed started showing wear from dealers' scaling it, the officers repaired it themselves. When dealers continued to scale the fence, officers smeared axle grease on it. Officer Horrell said, "Even drug dealers don't want to get their clothes dirty." Drug activity slowed further as a result of these efforts.

Business appeared to be picking up at Mario's Market. New customers were asking for items not usually stocked. Beer had been the store's biggest seller in the past, but other items now needed to be stocked in greater quantity.

The officers wanted to secure Mario's continued cooperation, and they genuinely wanted the store to succeed. As a result, they offered to paint the store. The owners bought the paint, and the officers, with the help of probationers obligated to do community service, painted the store. Mario was quite enthused about the officers' work, and has since helped to ensure that the paint job withstands vandalism.

To scare off any remaining dealers, the officers installed a fake video camera (donated by a local TV-repair company), focused on the entryway. They constructed a protective box for the camera, and painted it to add to its realism. Mario agreed to disconnect the video games, eliminating an alibi for the loiterers. The phones were moved to the front of the parking lot, and now are for outgoing calls only, eliminating the attraction for dealers.

The officers wanted to ensure that traffic patterns in the large parking lot around Mario's Market no longer contributed to drug dealing. With the property owners' approval, they worked with probationers on community-service details to seal the gravel in the lot. They painted yellow lines delineating parking to force people to park,



eliminating the drive-through nature of this drug market. They put several handicap-parking spots in front of the store to keep drug dealers away, as the front tended to be the most vulnerable area for dealing. Thus, if someone bought drugs in front of the store, he or she was subject to a \$240 fine for parking in a handicap space. The officers also installed bike racks in the parking lot to block off a preferred route and stopping point for dealers and buyers. A local artist painted murals on the sides of the building and put up a new store sign, transforming Mario's Market from an eyesore to an attractive commercial establishment.

The officers went a step further and checked to see if Mario's Market had been an attractive drug and loitering hot spot due to a larger neighborhood problem. They worried that too many stores in the immediate area sold liquor, and that this contributed to loitering. The officers did a survey of the 12-block-long strip on either side of Mario's Market, and found that in this quite poor area, 1.5 million beers were sold each year, at an average cost of \$1 each. They turned that information over to the city's community development agency for further review, to see if zoning changes were needed for the effort's long-term success.

The officers ended the project with the property owners' and Mario's support. The dealers living behind Mario's Market were evicted as part of the nuisance-abatement process. The officers' work contributed to a reduction in calls for service on the block from 100-plus in 1994, to fewer than 10 in 1995. There were no robberies in 1995, and the 30-plus people who used to hang around the store no longer do so. At the close of this project, the officers were thinking about giving classes on ridding property of crime, and on owners' property-management rights and responsibilities, to the other businesses along the strip.*

Editors' note: This effort is significant in several respects. The officers looked at the problem differently than had been done before, finding that some of the physical conditions at the market contributed to the establishment of a high-activity drug market there. They worked creatively and persistently to change some of the "amenities" that supported the dealers. They also went to great lengths to turn the market's owners into capable guardians over the location, ensuring this effort's long-term success.

A Drug Problem in New York City, N.Y.

In an old section of Brooklyn, New York City, the Clinton Hill neighborhood had tremendous assets: landmark-worthy brownstone houses, an attractive park, nearby commercial strips, and a hardworking, racially diverse population. A local college added a dependable stream of young consumers to the community's economy. Public signs and well-tended gardens indicated the existence of many block associations and of other civic activism.

The residents' commitment to the community was strong, despite the abandoned and poorly kept rental buildings, and high levels of car thefts and break-ins, muggings,

*Sources: Project description submitted by Delray Beach Police Department to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; additional supporting materials sent by Officer Jimmy Horrell, including newspaper articles; conversations with Horrell, Officer Javaro Sims, Chief Rick Overman, and Mario; on-site visit to Mario's Market.



and drug activity. As drug dealing increased along a commercial corridor, resident anger at apparent police inaction grew. It took a tragedy to catalyze change.

A local convenience-store owner was murdered in his store, and neighborhood block leaders organized a mass meeting to find out what the police were doing. Unfortunately, residents did not think the police were prepared, and the meeting went poorly. As patrol officers stood in the back of the meeting hall, a yelling match ensued between residents and police department spokespeople. Relations between the two groups were at their worst.

Block leaders reached out to the Neighborhood Anti-crime Center of the Citizens Committee for New York City, due to its reputation for helping citizens and police get together to take back their neighborhoods. The Citizens Committee dedicated a staff organizer's time to helping the community go through a collaborative problem-solving process. A problem-analysis meeting was scheduled.

Block leaders prepared for the meeting by discreetly inviting a small, core group of concerned residents and identifying specific problem locations, offensive conditions and past efforts to solve the problems. Due to the rancor between residents and police, residents were urged to conduct this first meeting with limited police presence, so that issues could be aired and strategies developed to improve relations.

The meeting itself was the first positive outcome. Residents invited a couple of trusted community-oriented patrol officers, who helped to discern the nature of the problem. The meeting revealed that there were multiple privately owned, and a few city-owned, problem properties housing drug operations and/or addicts. One multi-family structure was identified as a major drug-dealing center, impervious to enforcement action for over two decades. It was a fortified drug house. However, much necessary information remained unknown.

The Citizens Committee helped everyone understand that there were key stakeholders, or guardians, of the locations whose input would be helpful. A list was generated, and the community leaders undertook a course of follow-up.

The Citizens Committee trained the residents to conduct property research (identifying landlords), and then linked them up with key guardians: the district attorney's narcotics eviction unit; legal technical assistance; the city's housing agency representative, who could work on drug-infested property; and trusted police narcotics investigators, who had good information about specific locations. The Citizens Committee also designed an inside-building survey form, and introduced the resident leaders to a Muslim patrol organization, which was invited to visit problem locations in an effort to get more accurate information about the narcotics trade and landlord-tenant issues.

The resident leaders asked these guardians to join them in a collaborative planning meeting, which the Citizens Committee organizer facilitated. The pieces of the puzzle



were now assembled, revealing that the police had never been able to get into the significant locations, especially the fortified one, because the landlords either colluded with the dealers or were unresponsive to police department contacts. A combined enforcement and legal strategy was hatched, and subsequent meetings kept everyone informed and on target with follow-up.

The block leaders committed to continued outreach and pressure on those landlords, such as the city itself, who were poorly managing their buildings but not allied with the dealers. And residents continued to provide information.

District Attorney Charles Hynes' office committed to pressing civil charges against landlords if they failed to secure their property appropriately after notification of problems and/or criminal activity. In addition, the community activists recruited a law firm (pro bono) to discuss whether, if criminal enforcement did not pan out, bringing a civil lawsuit for money damages was the best approach – similar to the Oakland Drug Abatement Institute strategy.

As a direct result of the collaborative analysis and meetings, the police received help from other city code-enforcement agencies to execute a new warrant at the most egregious location. Coordination continued between all parties after the search warrant revealed how extensive the drug-dealing operation was at the vacant, privately owned building.

Community members and police attended a housing court hearing and alerted the judge that the landlord's track record of failing to maintain the building warranted a case disposition that would serve community interests. The Clinton Hills neighborhood won. The judge legally bound the landlord to secure the property and maintain it crime-free, and authorized the police to have keys to the premises and check up on the landlord.

The landlord agreed to comply in court, but failed to do so. Residents, the police, and the district attorney took the landlord back to court, where the judge ruled against the landlord and granted the police permanent access to the premises for safety inspections. Illegal activity has never resumed at this vacant, and formerly fortified, building.

The community sought to build on this victory to publicize the value of working with the police and others, and to encourage efforts to clean up remaining problem locations. A media event was organized, celebrating everyone's hard work. The first court win proved to be just the beginning, as more buildings were successfully targeted, and block leaders and police communicated more openly and consistently.*

Editors' note: The Neighborhood Anti-crime Center of the Citizens Committee for New York City builds community capacity to tackle neighborhood crime problems. In this case, they helped the community collect information from the police, residents and government agencies, and helped the community through a civil-court process. Closing the property made a huge difference in building the com-

*Source: Narrative prepared by Felice Kirby of the Citizens Committee for New York City, submitted to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project, and reprinted – with minor editorial changes – with Kirby's permission.



munity's capacity to take on other problem buildings. This project offers insight into the citizen's perspective on neighborhood crime problems. Citizens sometimes think that if a highly visible crime problem exists in the neighborhood, the police must be allowing it to grow and fester. They may misconstrue police inability to solve a crime problem as collusion in it. This distrust in police must be addressed and worked through for collaborative work between the community and the police to proceed. Oftentimes, in the initial meeting between the community and the police concerning a particular problem, time must be devoted to airing and discussing the community's distrust.

A Drug Problem in Portland, Ore.

Portland, Ore., Police Department Officer Kelly Krohn knew from his first days on patrol in the North Precinct that the corner of Mississippi and Shaver was Portland's drug capital. He was told that the problem had existed "for decades," and that if an officer was looking for a local fugitive or a fleeing felon, that corner was the spot to search first. Krohn and his partner arranged with a local landlord to have access to one of the nearby buildings, so they could get a better handle on how the drug dealing worked. The officers made several dozen arrests, but the impact was fleeting: The dealers found out the officers' shift and arranged their dealing for when they were off duty. As a result, the officers altered their shifts, but "soon realized that [they] were just spinning [their] wheels."

The landlord who helped them with building access wanted to open a restaurant at the corner, but the drug problem was a sure obstacle to attracting customers. The landlord complained to both City Hall and the media, which jumped at the chance to report on such a blatant drug market. The corner soon attracted national attention when it was shown in an ABC "World News Tonight" story. After the media attention, the mayor's office offered its support, and city agencies united to address the problem. Community residents pitched in, as well.

In one of the corner buildings, addicts used the second floor — ostensibly abandoned — to shoot up. The owner put a pit bull inside, ending the addicts' use of the floor. The first floor housed a restaurant and pool hall where drug sales were common. The establishments catered to life on the corner. The buildings department went in and documented many serious violations, and the restaurant was out of compliance with health department regulations. Within the year, the building was condemned and leveled.

Near the corner was a vacant lot that buyers and dealers used as an escape route. The lot's vegetation was high and dense. One day, after an overdosed addict was discovered in front of the lot, officers traced nearby drag marks into the lot, ultimately finding a carpeted shack hidden by 15-foot-high berry bushes. City crews leveled the shack and cut down the vegetation.

Several other features made Mississippi-and-Shaver a good drug-dealing location. Abandoned vehicles littered area streets and alleys, providing cozy and convenient



shooting galleries for addicts. The corner also sported a water fountain. Police surveillance determined that it was used exclusively by dealers for "refreshment," and by buyers to cook their drugs. Dealers used a couch outside one of the corner buildings as a place to "kick back" between transactions, allowing them to remain visible to would-be buyers. Officers tagged and towed the vehicles as hazards, and shut the fountain off. Neighborhood residents removed the couch during a community cleanup day.

Prosecutions became more focused, as well. The district attorney's office agreed to target corner offenders, and the state police crime lab instituted a quick processing procedure for all evidence seized at the corner, to reduce the possibility that delayed evidence processing would result in offenders' pretrial release.

Red traffic lights provided convenient stops for buyers, making it unnecessary for them to get out of their cars. The transportation office proposed changing the lights to flashing-red one way and flashing-yellow the other. However, the other solutions proved effective, and this one was put on hold.

According to officer reports, for the two years following the project, the corner remained relatively clean; dealers were no longer comfortably ensconced there. Calls for service, which had previously averaged nearly 100 a year, dropped to the low-to-mid-teens. Officer Krohn worried about the project's impact beyond the initial two years of success; some stronger area redevelopment efforts had not gone through, which he feared might leave local buildings unused, once again attracting drug dealers and buyers.*

Editors' note: This interagency effort highlights some of the physical factors that can make locations more suitable, and thus more attractive, to drug dealers. Running water is a necessity for addicts who shoot up, and its presence was a plus to those driven to use their purchases right away. The abandoned cars also allowed addicts to use drugs without delay. Dealer visibility helped to maintain a customer base; customers did not have to sneak into dark and dangerous alleys to buy drugs. The corner location allowed dealers to see oncoming police, and gave buyers a good view of the market. The couch provided comfort during down times, and the vacant lot offered a secure and unreachable escape route and hideaway. Taking away the physical amenities made the location less attractive to buyers and dealers, and they faced increased risk of apprehension.

Additional Editors' Comments on Drug Problems

During the mid- and late 1980s and early 1990s, police looked for innovative ways to tackle emerging and entrenched drug markets. Arrests did not stop buyers' interest and dealers' investment in drugs. Prison overcrowding made it unlikely that courts would impose significant jail time on offenders, unless for the most sophisticated trafficking. Police sought other means to control, disrupt, reduce, and/or eliminate drug

*Sources: Write-up of Mississippi-and-Shaver project, by Officer Kelly Krohn; Portland Police Bureau training videotape containing information on the project.

markets. Officers learned that some sites became drug hot spots for environmental reasons (e.g., vacant, open houses), and some due to an absence of capable guardians (e.g., properties with absentee landlords). During these years, certain strategies became almost standard in addressing the problem's different aspects. They included landlord training, tenant screening, eviction, knock-and-talk, eliminating or restricting dealers' access to and use of pay phones, enlisting other licensing or regulatory powers, using building- and other code violations, increasing lighting, diverting traffic, and applying public-nuisance, abatement, and other civil codes.

The efforts documented in this section addressed different types of drug markets and involved different strategies for closing them. In Portland, the market existed due to the environmental conditions, and police focused on removing those conditions. In Delray Beach, police transformed a disinterested guardian into a capable guardian. And in New York, the Citizens Committee galvanized the community (those the problem most affected), turning victims into neighborhood-change agents.

The editors found several other approaches worth noting. The Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, a nonprofit umbrella organization of neighborhood anti-crime groups, trains community groups in problem-solving and publishes a newsletter documenting sophisticated neighborhood anti-crime work; it has made significant contributions to addressing specific neighborhood drug problems. Gaston County, N.C., police took on drug dealing in mobile-home parks and, with the city attorney's blessing, hired a private attorney to bring a civil abatement and forfeiture case against the owner, who had turned a blind eye to the dealing.

A New York City police officer enlisted citizen informants living around a drug-infested park to watch and reveal where dealers stashed their drugs. Officers then seized the drugs, leaving the dealers accountable to their suppliers for the cost of the confiscated contraband. Portland police encouraged legitimate activities in a drug-infested park, to replace the illegal ones. A neighborhood-based Portland district attorney seeks search warrants based on detailed information from citizens. Portland and San Diego police send owners of problem drug properties a letter notifying them of the illegal activity, their responsibility in stopping it, the legal consequences if it continues, and the availability of assistance. In the vast majority of cases, owner notification is all that is needed, and no further drug complaints are registered.

St. Paul, Minn., police team up with health inspectors on drug raids to shore up or close drug houses. In St. Petersburg, Fla., in one effort, police used traffic counters to determine the drug market's activity level. After implementing strategies, they used the traffic counters again to determine if the market had shrunk. In Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, police published the addresses of fortified drug houses in newspapers and aired them on television to inspire action by absentee landlords. And in Philadelphia, Penn., one fearless group of community women bang pots and pans in the middle of a local drug market to disrupt illegal activity.



Chapter **3**

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

In 1989 and 1990, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, a city of over 600,000, began to take a closer look at its domestic violence problem. Domestic violence calls accounted for a significant portion of the police department's workload. Staff Sgt. Bruce Billings and Detective Jack Tetz identified domestic violence as a pressing social and police issue, and they wondered if more could be done. They found that nearly 40 percent of all domestic violence calls in Edmonton came from one police division (which gave it 66% more domestic violence calls than the next closest division), and that the police charging rate in this division was between 28 and 29 percent. Women were the victims in over 90 percent of the cases.

They also found that 21 percent of the domestic violence calls were repeat calls for service. In 13 percent of these households, there were three calls in a six-month period; in 6 percent, four calls; and in 2 percent, more than six calls. Police brought the vast majority of charges against batterers on weekends; most calls where police brought no charges also occurred on weekends. Analysis further showed that on weekends, women were most vulnerable late at night – police brought 52 percent of all criminal charges after midnight. Finally, Billings and Tetz found that in the vast majority of domestic violence calls – about 70 percent – constables were not filing any charges at all.

Billings and Tetz also looked into more than 20 domestic violence studies. One researcher suggested that women are assaulted multiple times (often more than 20) before they contact the police. Another suggested that children of physically abusive parents were at significantly higher risk of becoming abusive themselves. One study noted that women accounted for 40 percent of all homicide victims in Canada. Others examined the current police approach to domestic violence calls, and police reticence in charging offenders when assaults occur.

Tetz then conducted a detailed review of 700 domestic violence reports, finding gaps in reporting, insufficient information on prior violence in each household, misunderstandings of the law on the part of constables, and the need for greater follow-up on chronic repeats. Pulling together what they learned from the reports, the national and local research, and the patterns they discovered in reviewing individual cases, Billings and Tetz suggested several responses to the problem.

First, they proposed education and training for officers on the complexity and dynamics of family violence, and on what is needed to pursue prosecution. They found that many constables were not charging because they thought the complainant had to be willing to pursue the charges. Second, they recommended supervisory training on report approval, family violence investigations, and problem-solving approaches to domestic violence incidents. Third, they initiated a system to alert constables to repeat domestic violence locations and offenders.



Billings and Tetz also suggested changes to the recruit and field training officer curriculum. In addition, for purposes of dispatching, they recommended coding domestic violence calls as criminal (rather than as family disputes), elevating the perceived seriousness of the calls. Also, they recommended that dispatchers use the term "family violence" rather than "family dispute," because the latter tended to downplay the call's importance. In addition, they suggested that constables change how they write up domestic violence reports — providing more accurate descriptions of the criminal behavior and the victim's and offender's relationship — and that constables try to determine if prior violence has occurred. Finally, they recommended that an Edmonton police detective conduct intensive follow-up with repeat domestic violence households.

In 1991, a therapeutic approach was included in the response. A social worker was teamed with the detective for follow-up with repeat domestic violence households. Together, they tailored specific strategies for each case. This approach grew out of prior successful problem-solving interventions in domestic violence cases. "Case-tailored plans of action were devised to stop the violence, ensure victims' safety and connect both victim and perpetrator with the resources they required," states the 1994 *Research and Findings Report*.

In 1992, and again in 1994, the strategies were evaluated. The 1994 evaluation found that the collaborative team provided both a control and a support function for victims and offenders. In 1992, the evaluation found that 97 percent of victims who worked with the collaborative team made "positive changes in their lives, compared [with] 63 percent in a comparison group." Forty-seven percent left their abusive relationships, compared with 26 percent in the comparison group. By 1994, of the victims interviewed who were served by the collaborative team, 87 percent reported taking positive steps to change their situation. In 1994, evaluators interviewed victims who were served by the original collaborative team in 1992. Of the 24 interviewed, 15 said they were no longer in the abusive relationship.

Finally, the police charge rate has increased from just under 30 percent to 70 percent. In addition, the work done appears to have increased the confidence battered women's shelters have in the police. The shelters' clients now have higher reporting rates to the police than before.

The Edmonton police are doing additional work to further reduce instances of repeat family violence. Four collaborative teams work chronic cases. Due to the connection Tetz found in the research between physically abusive parents and children who grow up to be abusive, the police department established a collaborative experimental approach for investigating complaints of children at risk, teaming a constable with a child-welfare investigator. The initial results are promising: improved information exchange between police and child-welfare agencies, increased effectiveness in addressing abused children's needs, and reduced demands for follow-up services.*

*Sources: Project description submitted by Edmonton Police Service to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; conversations with Detective Jack Tetz; additional supporting material, including the 1992 and 1994 *Research and Findings Report*, by Edmonton Police Service and Community and Family Services, and 1989 report, *Family Violence: How Effective Are We?* by Jack Tetz.

Editors' note: This project is notable for the scope of the research put together by a detective and a staff sergeant. They looked at call data and individual cases, worked with advocates, and reviewed dozens of national studies on the problem before making recommendations for an improved response. In addition, the formal evaluations give credence to the response's impact. The vastly higher charge rate is certainly one measure of success. However, Billings and Tetz recognize that a more substantial measure is the changed behavior of offenders.

Domestic Violence in Fremont, Calif.

During an analysis of city addresses that generated repeat calls for service, the Fremont, Calif., Police Department staff was surprised to note how many of the repeat calls were attributable to domestic violence. In the initial analysis, the staff could also see how the incidents' seriousness increased over time — from arguments to batteries to assaults with weapons, and so forth. Some calls resulted from homicide. The staff could not readily detect any geographic or demographic pattern other than that women were the victims in 98 percent of the incidents. Responding officers most typically tried to mediate the immediate conflict, without resorting to arrest. Beyond preparing a case for prosecution, the police department did not follow up on the vast majority of the calls. Many officers admitted they were frustrated by their seeming inability to effect any lasting peace, and they felt these calls were both time-consuming and dangerous. They seemed eager for a better response.

Sgt. Mike Eads took on the domestic violence problem in hopes of developing a more effective police strategy. He was familiar with some of the research findings on revictimization in England, specifically the way the Huddersfield police responded to repeat burglaries (see "Burglary" section). Eads began to explore the possibility of developing a similar response to repeat domestic violence. He reasoned that officers might more effectively convey information to both offenders and victims if they recontacted them several days after the precipitating incident, when emotions were less likely to be running high. Victims might be more amenable to getting help, and offenders might be more amenable to counseling, or at least to appreciating the threat of arrest.

By January 1996, Eads had developed a new repeat domestic violence protocol. He piloted the protocol with a team of officers who constituted one-sixth of the patrol force. The protocol required the officers to file a complete police report on every domestic violence incident, and then to recontact the victim in person within seven days of the precipitating call. They were then required to contact the victim a second time within 28 days of the initial call. During each follow-up visit, the officer was to determine if the victim had suffered any violence since the last police contact. The officer was also to provide the victim and the offender with specific information about counseling services, and to reaffirm the police department's intention to support the victim and stop the violence. A local agency, the Shelter Against Violent Environments, provided services for both victims and offenders, and was prepared to work closely with the police officers. The victim was the primary focus, but officers were encouraged to reach out to the offender, as well. They were to be candid with the victims and



offenders and state their intention to keep checking in on the situation. They were also to document each contact. Each officer was responsible for tracking his or her own cases and coordinating activities with fellow team members to avoid duplication of effort.

Eads talked to the pilot officers weekly during the first year the protocol was implemented. The officers told him that, to their surprise, they were generally receiving favorable reactions from the victims. They had been concerned that many victims might find the follow-up visits too intrusive; however, no complaints were filed with the department regarding the protocol during the first year. The pilot ran through 1996 before being evaluated.

There were approximately 22 percent fewer calls for service in 1996 than in 1995 at locations that had generated three or more domestic violence calls. There were about one-third fewer locations generating three or more calls. Eads and the pilot officers thought these results were encouraging. The new protocol seemed more effective than the traditional police response.

With support from the Fremont Police Department, the Shelter Against Violent Environments received grant funding that allowed it to hire additional advocates and develop community education programs. Domestic violence advocates then worked out of the police department, supplementing victim outreach and teaching officers new intervention skills. The department gave them copies of all domestic violence reports filed.

In 1997, the pilot program was expanded to the entire patrol and investigative force, with training provided to all officers. Computerized dispatch records allowed dispatchers to advise patrol officers if the address to which they were responding was a repeat domestic violence location. Dispatchers also provided the name of the officer handling the follow-up. Officers intensified their intervention efforts at locations where calls were becoming chronic. In a few instances, they pursued prosecutions without the victim's cooperation, or secured restraining orders on both parties without either's consent. This approach will be expanded in the coming year.

An assessment of the first quarter of 1997 showed that calls for service to repeat-call locations (defined as those generating three or more calls in one year) declined 57 percent from the same period in 1996, and 66 percent from the same period in 1995. From January 1997 through Oct. 1, 1997, there was a 53 percent decrease in calls to repeat locations from the same period in 1996. Eads "recognize[s] that the decreases could be because the suspect and victim are no longer calling the police, or are moving out of the community." He concluded, "While this might be the case in some circumstances, it seems impossible for it to occur with enough regularity to result in a 53 percent decrease in repeat calls for service." The police department is working to develop yet more effective methods for responding to chronic locations.*

*Sources: "A Project Analysis: Domestic Violence Revictimization Prevention," Fremont Police Department, submitted in support of nomination for 1997 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, July 18, 1997.



Editors' note: This project is notable for replicating an intervention strategy that proved effective in reducing burglary in England. It is also notable that the Fremont police seek restraining orders against both parties in some instances, forcing a separation for the parties' benefit. The police's more proactive posture seems appropriate, especially given the complex reasons why domestic violence victims and offenders are so reluctant to seek help.

A Domestic Violence Problem in Port St. Lucie, Fla.

In November 1992, Eve Casey** bought a house in the affluent neighborhood of St. Lucie West Heatherwood Estates, in Port St. Lucie, Fla. On Nov. 17, 1992, the Port St. Lucie police responded to Casey's house for the first time. The caller had reported a disturbance created by the presence of a man named Bob Green. The responding officers learned that Green was Casey's boyfriend. Eight days later, on Nov. 25, the police were called to the house again. They took Green into custody and admitted him to a detoxification facility. On Dec. 12, officers again responded to the Casey house, this time because of a domestic disturbance that caused property damage. The responding officers learned that Casey's ex-husband, James Casey, had created a disturbance over her relationship with Green.

Over the next 22 months, the police responded to the Casey house 54 times. Each time, the call was due to a domestic disturbance involving two or all of the above-mentioned people. (Before the problem was finally resolved, the police would respond to the house nearly 100 times.)

The police department was greatly concerned about these disturbances, as each call required that at least two officers and, in most cases, a supervisor respond. Police noticed that most of the disturbances were alcohol-related. The level of violence increased, and the police reported beatings, stabbings and self-inflicted injuries. It seemed only a matter of time before an officer or one of the three people involved would be killed.

Not only were these disturbances a police problem, but they were also a problem for the neighbors. They were aware of each disturbance, and thus, their quality of life was affected. The neighborhood homeowners association initiated legal action against Casey, requesting that she leave the community.

Sgt. Jeff Harsh, the evening shift supervisor for the St. Lucie West area, realized that the routine response to the Casey house had not resolved the problem. He began to analyze the problem in hopes of finding a long-term solution. He reviewed both the written reports concerning the people involved and the records of all dispatched calls to Casey's house. He then developed a chart showing the service-call dates, the case numbers, the incident types, the suspects, the victims, the weapons used or injuries sustained, the subsequent incarcerations, and whether alcohol was a factor in the incidents.



The analysis indicated that 25 of the 54 police responses to Casey's house resulted in written offense reports. Of those 25 cases, 96 percent were related to domestic problems. Green was the suspect in 76 percent of the cases, and alcohol was a factor in 64 percent of them. Twenty-eight percent of the incidents resulted in injuries, and Eve Casey was the complainant or victim in 64 percent of the cases. Police made 16 arrests, 15 of which were of Green. The analysis indicated that most of the problems involved Green and Eve Casey, and that alcohol was a major factor in the disturbances.

Harsh also discovered that there were no calls for service to Casey's house from June 1992 through April 1994. Green had been in New York during that time, indicating that his presence was the main cause of disturbances.

The solution to the problem was to prevent contact between Green and Casey and to help Green get treatment for alcohol abuse. The most feasible way to accomplish this was to convince a judge that Green posed a threat to Casey and to anyone else at her house, and that he needed extensive treatment for alcohol abuse.

In October 1994, Harsh met with the judge who presided over all of Green's misdemeanor cases. Harsh gave the judge a copy of his report on the problems at the Casey house. The judge agreed that the situation was bad and would only get worse if nothing were done to address it. Green was incarcerated at the time; the judge agreed to revoke his current bond and place a "no bond" order. The judge told Harsh to meet with the assistant state's attorneys prosecuting the case against Green. The attorneys also reviewed Harsh's report, and they asked him to testify on the state's behalf.

On Nov. 21, 1994, Green appeared before the judge in county court. Green agreed to a plea and was sentenced to time served. He was also placed on probation for one year, with the stipulation that he receive treatment at an alcohol rehabilitation facility. Additionally, he was not to drink alcohol or to live in or visit Casey's house.

On Nov. 22, Green appeared before a different judge for a bond-reduction hearing. Harsh testified at this hearing, basing his testimony on his analysis of the police reports. The judge found Green to be a danger to society, and increased his bond from \$5,000 to \$100,000. Green was unable to post bond.

On Feb. 27, 1995, Green again appeared in court for sentencing on another charge. He was sentenced to time served and placed on 54 months' probation. His probation included six months in a state facility, and a 54-month restraining order prohibiting any contact with Eve or James Casey at the Casey house.

Since Green's release from the county jail on Feb. 27, the police department has responded to the Casey house only once. Green had called Casey, causing a disturbance between her and her current boyfriend.

The violent relationship has ended, and the risk of serious injury or death to anyone involved has greatly decreased. Police officers no longer have to respond to repeated disturbances at the house, and are thus no longer at risk for injury.

A judge ordered Green to get alcohol-abuse treatment, but according to police, Green violated this condition of his probation and was subsequently sentenced to jail. As of late 1997, Green had not returned to Port St. Lucie, and the Casey house was no longer the source of so many domestic violence calls.*

**The names of the citizens involved have been changed to protect their identities. This narrative was prepared by Sgt. Jeff Harsh, and is reprinted — with minor editorial changes and updated information — with the permission of Harsh and the Police Executive Research Forum.

Editors' note: This project is notable for the sergeant's careful documentation of the nature and cause of the ongoing problem. This documentation established the link between alcohol abuse and the problem, and it convinced a court that more drastic action was required than would likely have been taken in response to isolated incidents of domestic violence. Although this initiative was not undertaken in the context of a department-wide domestic violence protocol, it is a good example of how a proactive and specifically tailored response can successfully intervene in a violent domestic relationship.

Additional Editors' Comments on Domestic Violence

Many police agencies are rethinking their approach to handling domestic violence incidents. While many adopted a mandatory arrest policy based on early research, some agencies' implementation fell far short of the mark. More recent research suggests that police should try additional strategies more tailored to each incident's particulars, and that mandatory arrest is not a panacea for all domestic violence cases. Many agencies are doing vastly more thorough investigations of such cases, and the use of photos documenting an assault's physical effects and videotapes of witnesses and victims is not at all uncommon in many jurisdictions now.

The efforts showcased in this section document three distinct approaches to dealing with the problem. Edmonton represents a comprehensive approach, Fremont tests intensive follow-up with repeat victims, and Port St. Lucie documents an officer's use of problem-solving in addressing one household's history of domestic violence.

The editors found several other notable approaches. Nassau County, N.Y., police give high-risk victims of domestic violence a personal alarm to carry with them at all times. Victims activate the piercing, high-pitched alarm if threatened or harmed. The alarm scares the abuser and alerts neighbors and others to call the police.

In Kansas City, Mo., offenders arrested for domestic violence must stay in custody for 20 hours — enough time for victims to gather children and belongings and move to a safe place. In Los Angeles County, sheriff's office volunteers phone victims of domestic violence two to three days after an incident to determine if additional follow-up is needed. In Kenner, La., both the victim and the batterer are required by court to undergo counseling on the first offense; in the interim, sentencing is deferred. In San

*Sources: "Problem-Solving Effort Targets Chief Aggressor in Domestic Violence Incidents," by Sgt. Jeff Harsh, *Problem-Solving Quarterly*, Vol. 8, Nos. 3/4, Fall 1995, published by the Police Executive Research Forum; personal communication with Harsh and Port St. Lucie Officer Rod Dobler, Oct. 8, 1997.

Diego, police do thorough domestic violence investigations, officers are trained to distinguish between self-defense (by the victim) and mutual violence (when both are offenders), repeat victims receive special attention, a domestic violence court is up and running, and prosecutors bring cases even when the victim is unwilling. In the past, as was the case in many other jurisdictions, a victim's refusal to go forward in court was seen as an impediment to prosecution.

Chapter 4

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

False Alarms

False Alarms

False Alarms in Elgin, Ill.

Several years ago, at the annual International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) conference in Albuquerque, N.M., police administrators adopted a resolution to address the increasing number of false burglar-alarm dispatches in their communities. They formed a task force whose membership included police officials and alarm-industry representatives. They developed and approved a plan to field-test several approaches to false-alarm reduction. Elgin, Ill., was one of three cities selected nationwide to try some new approaches to this growing problem. In 1994, Elgin police responded to 4,655 false alarms, representing 7.7 percent of the department's total workload. As part of the pilot program, alarm companies were asked to visit their Elgin customers to reeducate them about proper alarm-system operation. The companies were also asked to thoroughly evaluate their customers' alarm systems for compliance with identified false-alarm-reduction standards and, in some cases, to recommend system modifications. The police asked the companies to follow up on all false alarms and tailor solutions to each problem's specifics.

Shortly before the pilot program began, Elgin implemented, by ordinance, a system for regulating false alarms that included fines assessed to those users with four or more false alarms in a year, and revocation of alarm permits for those with 10 or more. This revocation can be reversed if the alarm system is fixed.

In 1995, in the first few months of the effort, a 42 percent reduction in false alarms was noted. Since that time, some additional strategies have been implemented. Businesses have been asked to train employees on proper alarm-system use, alarm companies are ironing out mechanical and user problems, and police have met with employees of banks experiencing high false-alarm rates to tailor responses to their repeat problems. From the inception of the effort through May 1997, Elgin sustained a 50 percent reduction in false alarms, compared with the 1994 baseline false-alarm figures.

As part of the IACP effort, 15 Illinois cities are now testing Elgin's framework for alarm reduction, along with some enhancements. Each city has been asked to include a progressive-fine structure through an approved city council ordinance, and alarm users must have permits, for tracking purposes. This 15-city effort will test the viability of a restricted response – chronic abusers will be cut off from police response, although there will be an appeal process. In addition, ordinances designed under this effort must mandate that alarm companies verify the signal before notifying police; they must call the home or business first. In addition, police departments will be allowed to accept an alarm cancellation from the alarm company if the company contacts the owner and determines that no need for a police response exists.



Alarm-tracking software will be installed on police department computers, allowing the police to determine the locations of chronic alarm problems; a list of such locations will be generated and distributed to the alarm companies for follow-up. The alarm companies have verbally agreed to visit these locations and work to remedy user or mechanical error. According to Dan Petesch, Illinois alarm coordinator for this effort and former alarm-industry employee, the alarm companies are beginning to see it is in their best interest to reduce false alarms. He said the fines police impose have pushed the alarm industry to search for solutions. He noted that some police departments have moved to a system where alarm companies have to call a 900 number if they want the police to respond to an alarm, adding, "The police can charge anything they want for that call." He said one department is charging \$75, probably the cost of a police response to the call. A few other departments are requiring initial response by alarm companies or private security before they will respond. Petesch said that "this has woken up the alarm industry in some communities" and inspired them to look for joint police-alarm industry responses to the problem.

The program will be running in four additional states: Florida, Missouri, New York, and Washington. The alarm industry will fund the programs. Some alarm distributors are offering their alarm companies a check-off box for contributions to this effort. Other companies have pledged a flat amount of money to support the endeavor.*

Editors' note: This effort is notable in several ways. The magnitude of the problem prompted a national group of police administrators to conduct multi-site experiments testing a variety of responses, ensuring that many of the nation's communities would benefit. The effort is significant because the national group immediately enlisted the alarm industry's support, and the core of the strategy involves deploying alarm companies to work with their customers on false-alarm reduction. This represents an immediate and certain shift of the bulk of the responsibility for false-alarm management from police to alarm suppliers. This effort, because it is more national in scope, may provide a framework for other police agencies to allocate responsibility for addressing this expensive and time-consuming problem.

False Alarms in Phoenix, Ariz.

Nationwide, community residents are arming their homes against break-ins with expensive alarm systems. Alarm companies offer both products and services. The product — alarm equipment — belongs to them. The service — a quick police response if an alarm sounds — is provided and financed by the police. Officers around the country are dispatched, more and more, to alarm calls, each call ostensibly signaling a residential or commercial break-in. However, most alarms are false. Studies of cities in different parts of the country show that upwards of 97 percent of all burglar alarms are false. In Phoenix, alarm calls jumped from 19,000 in 1985, to 80,000 by 1989. In 1990, the Phoenix Police Department issued 10,000 alarm permits; in 1996, they issued 65,000. Each month sees the addition of 1,100 additional permits as new houses are built and sold pre-wired for alarm systems.

*Sources: Project description submitted by Elgin Police Department to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; personal communication with Renee Merrill, Elgin Police Department, and Dan Petesch.



By 1990, the police had discovered that each alarm system averaged two false alarms per year. Alarm calls vied with domestic dispute calls for the most-dispatched police service calls. A calculation of patrol officer time spent on false alarms showed that each call averaged two officers 33.1 minutes, costing \$74 per response. By 1996, false alarms were costing the department \$4 million a year. Besides the enormous cost to police, false alarms caused even greater harm by reducing the credibility of *all* alarm calls. This was particularly dangerous when it came to fire alarms.

To try to reduce the problem, the police department automated its alarm and permit system, enabling them to access alarm data from more than 25 databases. This gave them a better handle on the problem sources. They found that certain alarm companies were big false-alarm offenders. They also learned that many false alarms were triggered during a yearly three-month block when severe rainstorms hit the city. In addition, they learned that 60 percent of false alarms in Phoenix involved human error. Finally, by following up with alarm subscribers, they learned that most had little or no understanding of basic alarm functions or cancellation procedures.

Phoenix now requires a permit for having an alarm in a home or business. Police place flyers at the site of each false alarm, containing tips for reducing such alarms. After the second false alarm, the property owner receives a warning notice. If there are four false alarms in a year, both the individual *and* the alarm company are fined. The police also send out newsletters containing tips on reducing false alarms to households up for permit renewal. Finally, the police, in conjunction with the Arizona Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, offer a two-hour class on preventing false alarms. Police allow attendees one "free" false alarm. Since the class began, several thousand people have attended, 94 percent of whom have had no additional false alarms (through December 1996).

Over the past few years, the Arizona Burglar and Fire Alarm Association had agreed that they had some of the same concerns as the police in stemming false alarms. In addition, they had another concern. Phoenix Police Department Alarm Coordinator Patricia Rea said: "The alarm [association was] also worried because their customers were getting 'dinged' by the police on false-alarm calls, and their customers were complaining to them. So the association wanted to see if there was something they could do to help reduce the problem."

As a result of this coordinated effort, false alarms have decreased by 50 percent, producing a \$4.4 million savings per year for the Phoenix police. In addition, because of system automation, recovery costs are up from \$225,000 per year to over \$1 million per year. False alarms plummeted from two per device to 0.77 by 1995.

In the past year, Phoenix passed a new false-alarm ordinance to close some of the gaps in the previous one. Patricia Rea, the police department's alarm coordinator, suggests that alarm problems are not solved with one-time efforts; they have to be looked at over several years to monitor changes and assess whether new trends or patterns develop. In Phoenix, false alarms started rising again in 1996. They are still well below



the 1990 level, but they are up to 0.83 per device from the 1995 low of 0.77. As a result, in the revised ordinance, new responsibilities were added for alarm companies. Phoenix moved away from a punitive-fee system for its alarm fines to a cost-recovery system, in light of court challenges in Texas that overturned several punitive false-alarm assessments. Phoenix wanted to ensure the legal sustainability of its approach. Now, fines are in synch with actual costs, and criminal penalties are used only as a last resort for nonresponders.

Some additional approaches Phoenix has added include the deployment of neighborhood police officers. Each officer has a beat alarm report and is expected to help alarm subscribers who have repeat false alarms solve the problem. These officers received significant training and check for things like secured contacts and Mylar balloons. In addition, because of all the new construction in the city and the trend of pre-wiring homes for alarm systems, Patricia Rea will be starting a program with new developers, providing them with literature to distribute to new homebuyers on ways to choose a credible alarm company and system. New residents will be able to, as she says, "start off on the right foot."*

Editors' note: This problem-solving effort is significant in several respects. Many cities have moved toward a fining system to recoup costs and promote responsible alarm-system use by owners. This effort went further. The Phoenix Police Department enhanced its ability to analyze the problem (they developed a way to look at it from the vantage point of 25 databases). They studied their false-alarm rate, determined the reasons for the false alarms, and developed specific strategies to address them. With the alarm industry, the police crafted solutions that were mutually beneficial. Finally, although this effort addressed the false-alarm problem from a citywide perspective, it also incorporated beat-level approaches. Neighborhood police officers were trained to work with households with higher-than-average false-alarm rates on tailored alarm-reduction plans.

False Alarms in Portland, Ore.

In the late 1980s, the Portland, Ore., Police Bureau experienced an increasing number of calls for service. Although calls for service rose, the bureau's city-funded budget did not. Administrators looked internally for savings and examined their call load to see if they could achieve any cost reductions. They found that alarm calls represented more than 8 percent of all calls to the police, and of those, 97 percent were false. A permit system was already in place, as well as a progressive-fine structure. Over the years, alarm calls kept increasing, rising due to the number of new alarm installations around the city. The permit system and fine structure were no longer sufficient dampeners on the increasing number of alarm calls coming in to police dispatchers.

In 1989, an experienced street officer was appointed "alarm information officer." His job was to take a fresh look at the false-alarm problem. He was also asked to examine the alarm industry and citizens' concerns about the problem. He implemented a city/county intergovernmental agreement that allowed for the mailing of false-alarm

*Sources: False Alarm Reduction Plan, by the city of Phoenix; personal communication and correspondence with Patricia Rea; Phoenix city code on alarm systems.



notices within three days of the alarm (speeding up the process so that the user's memory of the false alarm was more vivid, and correction of the problem more likely). The agreement established a \$50 fine beginning on the second false alarm, suspended police response after four false alarms, and increased permit fees from \$8 to \$12 to cover the costs of an outreach effort.

The outreach effort involved training all officers in false-alarm response, and distributing to alarm owners brochures titled "Tips to Zero False Alarms" and "How to Select a Home Alarm System." Also, police phoned alarm owners after their first, third and fifth false alarms to develop a tailored strategy for the owners' false-alarm problems. In addition, police offered a class on preventing false alarms and choosing the right alarm system. Finally, police calculated false-alarm rates for the different alarm companies and distributed these, educating buyers about the effectiveness of the top 30 alarm companies competing for their business.

These efforts were successful by several different measures. Between 1988 and 1995, although alarm permits increased from 29,114 to 38,900, false alarms decreased from 33,208 to 18,606. The average number of false alarms per system dropped from 1.14 per year to 0.48, cutting the false-alarm rate in half by 1995. A rate of 0.48 equals one false alarm approximately every two years. This gave Portland one of the lowest false-alarm rates in the nation. Another measure of success was monetary savings. Officer hours devoted to false alarms (more than 7,800) translated into nearly \$500,000. The false-alarm reduction effort resulted in a time savings of 18.23 minutes per false alarm, a savings of \$53.60 per alarm.

Police administrators project that in 10 years, the number of alarms installed in the city will double to 70,000. However, voter initiatives in 1996 forced a 6 percent budget cut for the police bureau. Bureau staffing levels have decreased, requiring Portland to keep a close eye on the alarm numbers, false-alarm rates and reduction effort's success to see if other approaches might be even more fruitful. In 1995, false alarms represented 8 percent of the department's workload, and by 1996, they represented nearly 9 percent. Police took another look at their false-alarm efforts. From 1995 through May 1997, Portland experienced a slight increase in the false-alarm rate.

The police knew the lion's share of responsibility rested in false-alarm management, and they recommended that the city council shift greater responsibility to alarm companies and alarm owners. Capt. Dave Butzer said: "The alarm industry has marketed police response for many years. Our new proposal increases the alarm industry's service of their [own] product." Under the new proposal, pending in city council, police will respond to an alarm only if the owner has a permit for it. If the alarm is false, the permit is suspended, eliminating further police response until the cause of the false alarm has been corrected. If the cause is determined to be user error, the user must attend an alarm user's class presented or sponsored by the alarm company before re-permitting can occur. If equipment error is the cause, owner verification that repairs have been made is required. Police false-alarm notices issued to alarm



customers bluntly warn, "You will continue to have false alarms until the problem is fixed." If a second false alarm occurs during the one-year permit period, the police again stop responding. The alarm company becomes the first responder, unless a crime is verified; in that case, the police respond.

Capt. Butzer said the alarm industry participated in the development of the draft ordinance and "agreed to . . . the basic premise of the proposal. While [the alarm companies] would not prefer to make this transition, they understand Portland's need to reduce false alarms."*

Editors' note: This effort is significant in several respects. First, the Portland Police Bureau did an internal study of its percentage of false-alarm calls. Although confirming results from other cities, it gave Portland the ammunition needed to hold alarm companies accountable. Second, they recognized that alarm owners would not know what they did wrong in setting off their alarms unless false-alarm notices were timely, so they sped up the notice process. Third, they provided helpful information to alarm owners on false-alarm reduction (including a class). Fourth, as an incentive for alarm owners to take responsibility for false-alarm management, they suspended response after a certain number of false alarms. Fifth, they calculated different alarm companies' false-alarm rates and shared these with potential customers. Finally, they reevaluated their approach after achieving substantial success, and are arguing for shifting greater responsibility to alarm companies and users. However, they will still provide assistance as an incentive for better false-alarm management. The police will continue to make adjustments in handling false alarms.

Additional Editors' Comments on False Alarms

Most police jurisdictions experience false-alarm problems. The three approaches in this section represent comprehensive efforts to minimize the drain false alarms have on police resources. In all three cities, efforts evolved to keep up with the growing number of false alarms. In both Phoenix and Portland, police reexamined their initial approach after some substantial initial success. Both departments moved to shifting greater responsibility to alarm companies, consistent with Elgin's initial approach.

One other project from the research is worth mentioning. The Lauderhill, Fla., Police Department's study of 911 hang-up calls convinced the city to pass an ordinance that included 911 hang-ups in its definition of false alarms. The intent of the ordinance was to bill telephone owners for false 911 calls in the same way alarm owners are fined for false alarms, thus promoting more responsible practices in summoning the police. As in many communities, some 911 calls are the result of children playing on the phone, offenders seeking to divert the police, and people misdialing.

*Sources: Project description submitted by Portland Police Bureau to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; personal communication with then-Capt., now Assistant Chief, Dave Butzer; false-alarm chart prepared by Portland Police Bureau; Portland Police Bureau False-Alarm Courtesy Notification; "Tips to Zero False Alarms," by the Portland Police Bureau; chart of false-alarm rates of 30 largest residential alarm-installation companies.

Chapter **5**

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Alcohol-Related Crime

Alcohol-Related Crime

Alcohol-Related Crime in Barrow, Alaska

Before the arrival of non-natives, the Inupiat community of Alaska's North Slope was among the few in the world not to have a native alcohol brew. With the arrival of non-native whalers in the 1800s, and oil workers in the 1970s, alcohol consumption became a significant aspect of local culture. Two independent studies linked a good deal of Barrow's premature deaths, violence, disease, and social disorder to alcohol abuse. Various efforts to promote moderate drinking or to limit the alcohol supply predominated the official response to alcohol-related problems from the 1970s to 1990s. Between 1970 and 1980, there were at least seven local referenda alternately allowing and disallowing alcohol sales in Barrow. (Alaska state law provides for a local option on this issue.) Before the problem-solving effort was initiated, the law allowed the importation and consumption of alcohol in Barrow, banning its sale only within the city limits. Mere prohibitions on alcohol sales did not have much impact on reducing alcohol abuse, and the community's health and safety problems persisted.

In 1994, several things occurred to alter the community's response to alcohol. In March, the North Slope Borough Public Safety Department sponsored a training program for its employees in the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing. During the training session, the participants discussed how alcohol abuse related to a wide range of public-safety problems. Capt. Jim Wood began a thorough study of the problem, and meticulously documented the enormous amount of harm that was directly and indirectly attributable to alcohol abuse. In mid-year, the borough's mayor officially assigned the public safety department the task of leading a community-wide campaign to address the problem.

In this small community of approximately 5,000 residents (3,500 of whom live in Barrow), the public safety department documented 87 rapes by drunken men (26 of which victimized children), 675 drunken assaults (109 of which were felonies involving weapons), 503 disputes between drunken spouses, 388 arrests for drunken driving, 229 arrests of drunken children, and 2,057 incidents in which people were taken into protective custody due to alcohol-induced incapacitation. In addition, 22 of 36 deaths, eight of them suicides, were attributed to alcohol. Public health statistics were of similarly epidemic proportions. About 95 percent of these problems occurred in Barrow.

Before studying the problems in detail, many people assumed that most of them were attributable to a few chronic alcoholics drinking bootleg alcohol. This assumption proved wrong – most problems were related to alcohol legally imported and consumed by citizens who were binge drinkers. When public-safety officers interviewed inebriates, many said that if they had a bottle, they would drink a bottle; if they had a case, they would drink a case; and if they had none, they would drink none. It seemed



that most residents were not addicted to alcohol, but had difficulty controlling their consumption of it once they started drinking.

After carefully analyzing the problem and prior ineffective responses, Capt. Wood and his colleagues concluded that a total ban on the sale, importation, possession, and consumption of alcohol was the only remaining viable response. With the mayor's support, the public safety department began campaigning for a total ban. It formed a coalition with community leaders to educate the electorate – especially the 10 percent that opinion polls showed to be undecided about a ban – about the problem and the ban's purpose. On Oct. 4, 1994, Barrow's electorate narrowly voted for a total ban on alcohol in the community. Said Capt. Paul Carr, the operations commander: "We don't have any illusions about stopping all the alcohol coming in . . . But there won't be the planes bringing in case after case, and just that reduction in volume will have a real good impact."

The ban had the following effect: Fetal alcohol exposure in pregnant women dropped from 45 percent to less than 10 percent; reports of harm to children dropped by one-third; alcohol-related calls for service to the public safety department declined by 81 percent; injuries reported to emergency medical services fell by 43 percent; misdemeanor cases referred to the prosecutor dropped 46 percent; felonies dropped 43 percent; and removals of drunken people from public places declined by about 90 percent.

The results were both immediate and dramatic. Other qualitative indicators showed a community revitalization. According to then-Deputy Chief Ed Ward, "We've seen people at [community] events stone sober that I don't think I've ever seen sober." Said another resident: "Me and my wife, we sleep like polar bears now. We don't have to listen to all that commotion outside our window." And according to one patrol officer, "I've been here almost 18 years, and I don't think I've ever seen it this quiet."

In spite of the overwhelming positive impact, Barrow's experiences with the tragedies of alcohol abuse were not over. The story would take several more turns. The initial total ban on alcohol was in effect from Nov. 1, 1994, through October 1995. After another public referendum narrowly overturned the ban, the community not only allowed the importation of alcohol, but also legalized its sale, effective Nov. 1, 1995. This changed Barrow from a "dry" city to a "wet" one.

Immediately following the repeal of the alcohol ban, alcohol-related crimes and health problems returned to levels even higher than those preceding the initial ban. Capt. Wood described this "spike" in alcohol problems as dramatic and terrible. Only four days after the ban was lifted, the police handled yet another alcohol-related homicide. Then-Public Safety Director Dennis Packer said, "We are back to where we were in terms of domestic violence, driving while intoxicated, and assaults."

After a legal challenge to this most recent election, the community voted to reinstate the ban in February 1996, with a provision that no referendum could be held for at

least 18 months, to allow the ban's effects to be more fully realized. At the time of this writing, another petition drive was under way to force yet another referendum, to be held in October 1997, at the earliest.

According to Capt. Wood, once the ban was reinstated, the numbers of alcohol-related crimes, disturbances, commitments, etc., resumed the low levels experienced during the first ban. Some increases in bootlegging have resulted in additional crimes being recorded and arrests made. From 1993 to 1994, before the ban, the department made 140 arrests of minors possessing alcohol. During the first ban (in effect for one year), the department made only 27 such arrests. During the second ban (at the time of this writing, in effect for about 15 months), the department made only 17 such arrests. The nearby villages of Wainwright and Atkasuk experienced similar declines in police activity after Barrow's ban. Although these communities were already dry, they got most of their liquor via legal imports into Barrow.

In the wake of the initial ban's repeal, a pro-alcohol administration was elected into public office, leading to a change in public-safety administration, as well. Public safety department members were ordered not to officially support the alcohol ban or release information on alcohol-related problems. In a letter Capt. Wood wrote as a private citizen to *The Arctic Sounder* newspaper, he said the following:

The alcohol ban in Barrow has been a thousand times more effective at restoring social order and decency among Barrow's citizens than has all the education that has ever been done here . . . The alcohol ban is, as it always has been, a matter of health and life safety. It's about saving lives. It's about saving families. It's about saving culture. It's about saving children. It's about the common good. It works. What a shame some folks just don't get it . . . Anything said about how wonderful alcohol is pales next to the history of tragedies in Barrow's alcohol-drenched past."*

Editors' note: This problem-solving effort is notable for its comprehensive and detailed analysis of the harm alcohol caused. It is also remarkable for the ambitious response strategy, a response that might seem unthinkable in many jurisdictions. While the Arctic's environment and culture are unique, Barrow's experience serves as stark confirmation of alcohol abuse's effect on police responsibilities in nearly all jurisdictions. The police were leaders in a genuinely community-wide effort to address this huge problem.

An Alcohol-Related Crime Problem in Hayward, Calif.

In 1991, a Hayward, Calif., entrepreneur running a restaurant with an attached nightclub filed papers with the city to expand space so business could grow. The business had a mixed reputation in the community. Residents thought the restaurant's food

*Sources: "The Barrow Reclamation," by Capt. James B. Wood, submitted in support of application for the International Association of Chiefs of Police Webber-Seavey Award, May 1996; correspondence from Wood, June 1997; Akron Beacon Journal (Associated Press story); Anchorage Daily News, Oct. 9, 1994, and Dec. 24, 1994; North Slope Sentinel, Dec. 9, 1994; London Sunday Times, Dec. 31, 1995; personal communication with Wood, June 1997.

service was good; however, the nightclub, which offered alcohol, live music and dancing, also brought fights, litter problems, noise, parking problems, public sex, and public urination to the predominantly residential neighborhood.

Community residents heard of the rumored expansion and contacted the police, fearful that an increase in the already out-of-hand problems would result if the nightclub were enlarged. The police hoped to mediate the dispute. Officer Larry Bird and Lt. Paul Wallace of the Hayward police met with residents, along with restaurant/nightclub personnel. To prepare, Bird and Wallace analyzed the calls for service the police had responded to at the premises, and found an average of 20 calls per month for the past few years. Wallace said that "most calls concerned intoxicated individuals, fights, stabbings, and loud music." Much of the crime seemed alcohol-related. In addition, Wallace said, "Local residents complained of customers having sex in their vehicles and littering — beer bottles, condoms, garbage — left in front of their homes." One resident, Ken Coral, said the weekend activity was "unbearable." Further analysis showed that most of the calls came in on Friday and Saturday nights, coinciding with the live entertainment offered then.

As a result of the meetings between the police, residents and restaurant/nightclub personnel, the owner agreed to make physical changes to prevent some of the problems. He added more garbage cans, eliminating excuses for littering. He also posted no-loitering signs and chained the driveway after hours to eliminate cruising and sexual activity. Police asked the management to add more off-street parking to decrease congestion. They also asked that management keep the doors closed on weekends to reduce noise problems.

The police found that the restaurant employed security guards who were largely ineffective in handling the spillover problems from the nightclub. Lt. Wallace and Officer Bird developed a list of guidelines and rules for the guards to follow, and they trained each guard on arrest laws, patrol tactics, code enforcement, when to call the police, and how to detect fake IDs.

Wallace, Bird, and other officers worked with restaurant management for several months on these improvements. As a result, some of the problems abated. However, Wallace said, "The calls for service were still much higher than we thought reasonable." One reason seemed to be that the security guards were not using any of the guidelines and training given. Wallace said, "They seemed more concerned with having a good time and meeting young female customers than with patrolling the parking lot and deterring problems."

The city's board of adjustments met concerning the proposed restaurant expansion. The police, along with community residents, testified that not enough progress had been made. The application was denied, along with an appeal.

Problems persisted at the restaurant, and the community still hoped that something more could be done. The police suggested that residents pursue civil remedies. Lt.

Wallace said, "With our assistance, residents began gathering information and evidence, which included photographs, tape recordings and a diary of weekend activities." The residents presented the evidence in civil court in October 1993. The harm alleged included damage to nearby residential property and disturbance to the residents' peace. All eight of the complaining residents won a monetary judgment – \$50 each – against the restaurant. The financial impact on the owner was slight, and the problems continued.

As a last resort, the police department requested that the Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Board revoke the restaurant's liquor license. The police presented information on the calls for service for the past 20 months – 146 incidents – and shared the results of the neighborhood civil suit against the management. Lt. Wallace said, "As it turned out, the greatest benefit [of the civil suits] was that the judgments weighed heavily as evidence in the Alcohol Beverage Control Board's revocation hearing." The ABC informed restaurant management that it would recommend revocation to its executive board.

To prevent the proposed revocation, the restaurant offered to eliminate live music and dancing from its weekend fare. An agreement was negotiated between all parties. Complaints to the police are negligible now. Instead of 20 calls for service a month, the police now get one or two. The nature of these complaints has changed, as well. They used to come from residents tired of the alcohol-related nuisances; now, they no longer come from the community. Rather, a few calls a year trickle in from restaurant staff complaining that a diner stiffed them for a meal.

Neighborhood resident Ken Coral said the problem is "300 percent better than before . . . The rowdies are no longer a problem, and property values have appreciated." Coral said community residents are quite pleased with the outcome. His work on this effort inspired him to volunteer time teaching officers how to help community members use small-claims suits to tackle chronic neighborhood problems.*

Editors' note: This project is important for several reasons. It represents a solid effort to tackle alcohol-related problems at one location. The officers used a wide range of strategies to impact the problems. They requested the owner's compliance; they met with residents; they mediated between the owner and residents; they suggested creative strategies to reduce the problems; they trained the restaurant's security staff to better handle the problems at and around the establishment; and they educated residents about their civil-court options, and how to collect the information needed to proceed in civil court. Only after taking all these steps did they proceed to a more coercive approach involving the Alcohol Beverage Control Board.

Alcohol-Related Crime in Portland, Ore.

In late 1991 and early 1992, Portland, Ore., experienced increasing numbers of transients in its Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood. The by-product was the worsening of problems associated with street drinking: detoxification calls, disorderly conduct,

*Sources: Project description submitted to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; personal communication and correspondence with Lts. Paul Wallace and Suzanne Whalley.

fight, harassment, littering, panhandling, public urination and defecation, robbery, and theft. Many merchants felt that these problems were negatively impacting business, and residents complained of a decline in general quality of life. Several years prior, the city council had found that the area was saturated with liquor stores. The council designated it a "liquor impact area" and introduced a ban on fortified wine, the street-drinkers' drink of choice because it boosted their high. The impact was not long-lasting. Police officers noticed that many street-drinkers switched to oversized bottles of beer and malt liquor.

In 1992, four neighborhood convenience stores applied for liquor-license renewals. The police recommended that the city council not renew; the council then asked the police to explore options other than nonrenewal. Police estimated there were several hundred problem street-drinkers in the area, and they identified beer and malt liquor sold in 32- and 40-ounce containers as the biggest contributors to the problem. These products contained the alcohol equivalent of up to six drinks.

In past years, officers would respond to radio calls if street-drinkers engaged in problem behavior, using citations, arrests and detoxification holds as the main tools for remedying the problems. In 1992, the year the project started, police made more than 3,000 detoxification holds. One resident said that "falling-down drunks" were a common sight at the time. But citations, arrests and detoxification holds provided no long-term relief for the community. The police had to try something else. They believed that restricting the drinkers' access to mega-size beverages would reduce the problems. Two officers (a uniformed neighborhood-patrol officer and a drugs-and-vice investigator) took on the challenge to find alternative solutions, and they began what would become a four-year effort to reduce area street-drinking problems.

The officers asked the four convenience stores to voluntarily participate in a ban on the sale of oversized beverages; they refused. The stores claimed the police had unfairly singled them out and had failed to ask for participation from four large neighborhood chain stores. The officers did not believe the chain stores were part of the problem, but they decided to take a closer look. They found that each convenience store sold 60 cases of the problem beverages a week; each chain store sold 100 cases of the beverages a week. Armed with this information, the police and community residents convinced the chain stores to stop selling the beverages. In exchange, the police agreed to try to increase the number of participating retailers, so that more of them would share the business losses.

The police recontacted the four convenience stores initially targeted and asked for their participation; they still refused. Sgt. Greg Hendricks noted the following:

Retailers had consistently resisted accepting any responsibility on how the sale of alcoholic beverages could negatively impact a neighborhood. Lobbyists from the liquor and retail industry attempted to pressure the city council into not supporting the partnership. Their response had

always been much like residents' and the police's: "It's a police problem." But once the problem had outstripped police resources to where traditional enforcement was no longer a viable solution, two options remained: do nothing, or look to nontraditional solutions.

While several retailers agreed not to sell 32- and 40-ounce beverages, after the agreement was signed, the alcohol industry marketed 22-ounce beverages, circumventing the agreement's intent. A press conference with police, sheriffs, the district attorney, and the president's drug czar, Lee Brown, galvanized additional support. In August 1993, a second agreement was reached that included more than 40 retailers. Retailers agreed not to sell domestic beer and malt liquor in containers larger than 16 ounces. As a result, said Sgt. Hendricks, "The partnership agreement is now part of a standard package issued to anyone applying for a business license [or renewal] in Old Town and adjacent neighborhoods where alcohol beverages will be sold and dispensed."

Through August 1997, more than 100 retailers had volunteered to remove 16-ounce (or larger) beverages from their shelves. If tangible evidence links street-drinking problems to a specific retailer, the city council receives that information at a hearing, and forwards it to the Oregon Liquor Control Commission if action is recommended. As a result of this effort, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission revised its review procedures, and now includes neighborhood livability as a factor in license approval.

The Portland police have measured this effort's impact in several ways. Neighborhood residents and merchants tell officers that the neighborhood looks better and feels safer. Police data support this. Detoxification holds, indicators of severe overdrinking and intoxication, exceeded 3,000 from 1992 to 1993. They declined 20 percent, to fewer than 2,500, from 1993 to 1994. By 1996, there were fewer than 1,500 detoxification holds a year. The number of drinking-in-public incidents dropped from 236 in 1993, to 132 in 1994, almost a 50 percent decrease. In 1996, there were only 129 incidents. The number of disorderly conduct incidents dropped from 144 in 1992, to 106 in 1996, a decrease of over 25 percent.

This effort seems to have had long-term impact. In 1997, assessing the project's impact, Officer Tom Peavey said: "During the daytime, I don't see anyone in the downtown area with open containers anymore, not like I used to. It was so common before. Now, you don't see guys leaning against buildings with paper bags of liquor." Sgt. Hendricks noted: "The strategies used would not have been considered only a few years prior. They have become a standard for both the community and the police in Portland."*

Editors' note: This effort is significant because Portland police identified and focused on a specific type of beverage whose alcohol content contributed to problem street-drinking. The early response, a ban on fortified wine, had only limited impact because another beverage offered street drinkers similar results. Portland's second response closed the loophole in the first, leading to a sizable

*Sources: Project description submitted by Portland Police Bureau to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; material submitted by Portland Police Bureau in support of 1994 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; 1993 and 1994 Partnership Agreement Amendments; personal and written communications with Officer Tom Peavey and Sgt. Greg Hendricks.

reduction in the number of people whose street-drinking resulted in police calls for service or required removal to a detoxification center. This effort is also notable due to the substantial collaboration police forged with retailers, whose interests might have been, at first glance, at odds with theirs. The police recognized that retailers benefited from selling the alcohol, but were taking little responsibility for its aftereffects. The partnership agreement formalized a commitment by both to address sale and consumption of products contributing to chronic, costly and unhealthy street behavior.

Additional Editors' Comments on Alcohol-Related Crime

The editors recognize that alcohol is a factor in many public-safety problems, including sexual assaults, domestic violence and loitering. That is why, for this section, they tried to focus on efforts where alcohol was the problem's central feature. Due to the significance of this problem, and the impact alcohol abuse has on crime, many of the projects reviewed for this section entailed engaging people in more responsible drinking.

Several other notable approaches surfaced in the research and are worth mentioning. The Alexandria, Va., city attorney legally restricts chronically intoxicated people from buying or possessing liquor. Ocean City, Md., police, in an effort to reduce alcohol availability to minors, drafted a model lease agreement that cites underage drinking as cause for eviction from rental properties, hotels and motels. In San Diego, Calif., a store's alcohol permit may be revoked if it is cited three times for selling alcohol to minors. To deter such sales, a city 7-Eleven that caters to local college students offers employees a \$500 reward for spotting and confiscating fake IDs. This store is one of the highest-volume 7-Elevens in the country.

Hoboken, N.J., a small city with 115-plus bars, banned barhopping between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. to cut down on late-night disorder. Monroe County, N.Y., sheriff's deputies educate alcohol servers about liability from the state's dram-shop ordinance, and provide training on dealing with drunken patrons. In Peel, Ontario, Canada, constables track where impaired drivers last drank. Fresno, Calif., adopted conditional-use permits, many of which regulated how alcohol was displayed and served, to gain better control over alcohol-related problems in licensed premises. The conditional-use permits simplified the process by which authorities could revoke licenses and close non-compliant businesses.

In Portland, Ore., the police and a community consultant published and distributed a booklet to licensed premises educating owners and managers on their responsibilities concerning the service of alcohol. Salinas, Calif., police established voluntary checkpoints where they collect information on drivers' drinking-and-driving habits, to devise better ways to reduce drunken driving. And Redondo Beach, Calif., police require a monetary deposit (almost like a surety bond) from certain licensed premises and entertainment establishments to offset the cost of high demand for police service.

Chapter 6

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Gangs

Gangs

A Gang Problem in Boston, Mass.

One hundred fifty-five young people (21 and under) were either shot or stabbed in Boston homicides between 1990 and 1994. In late 1994, researchers from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government began collaborating with Boston Police Department officials on the problem of youth gun violence. Their goal was ambitious: to prevent youth violence. They convened an interagency working group that conducted its own research on the problem, developed a citywide problem-solving response strategy, and evaluated its progress and impact. The working group comprised local, state and federal law enforcement officers, researchers, probation officers, and gang-intervention streetworkers.

Boston's youth homicide problem is concentrated in three neighborhoods, and predominantly involves black males as both victims and offenders. Most victims and offenders are members of territorial gangs, and homicides are generally the result of disputes between rival gangs. Homicides often produce cycles of retaliatory violence in which revenge becomes a motive independent of the original dispute. By the working group's estimation, 60 percent of the 155 homicides were gang-related.

Because offenders used guns in so many of the killings, response strategies focused on both the supply of and demand for them among the gangs. The group's analysis showed that gang members could easily get guns. Contrary to expectations, gang members tended not to steal guns in burglaries or buy guns they suspected were stolen. This was because they preferred newer, more stylish semiautomatic pistols, and they wanted to avoid firearms that might be traceable to a previous homicide. The guns used in youth homicides were highly likely to have been manufactured less than two years before the crime. This suggested to the group a strategy for targeting enforcement efforts that might disrupt the gun supply. They developed a set of tactics to identify and arrest gun traffickers who were supplying guns to the gangs. Although this supply-side strategy did yield gun-trafficking arrests, it did not prove as effective as the demand-side strategy.

To get at the demand side of the problem (why young people carried guns and shot one another), the group identified 61 Boston gangs, along with their various alliances and antagonisms. Although there were an estimated 1,300 gang members, they represented only 3 percent of the youth in the affected neighborhoods. The statistical analysis revealed that a disproportionate amount of Boston's violent crime was occurring on and around known gang turfs. The group concluded that youth homicide was concentrated among a few gang members who committed many crimes. This was true for both offenders and victims. Many young people were carrying guns out of well-founded fear. The researchers concluded that "a relatively small number of very scary kids profoundly affected the nature of community life and the behavior of other kids." Evidently, if youth homicides were to be prevented, something would have to be done to change the behavior of this small group of people.



The group designed a strategy that focused not on the gangs themselves or on their turfs, but on members' violent behavior. They reasoned that because gang members committed so many crimes, there were ample opportunities to exert legal sanctions. The group also recognized that, like many criminals, gang members were largely ignorant of criminal justice policies and strategies; they had only a vague, and often mistaken, idea about why certain actions were taken against them. Deterrence theory holds that a sanction can have a specific deterrent effect only if the offender understands the sanction's relation to the crime. Officials' behavior can seem quite unpredictable to offenders, particularly young ones.

The essence of the demand-reduction strategy was, first, to orchestrate strongly enhanced penalties against gang members for any violent behavior, and second, to communicate the threat of these penalties in unmistakable terms. Enhanced penalties ranged from strict curfew checks by probation officers to federal prosecutions for street crimes. The orchestration of these penalties could come about only as a result of the mutual commitment of various local, state and federal police, prosecutors and corrections officials. The group communicated the threat in the most direct way possible: They met with the youth gangs personally and read them the riot act. The threats were ultimately made credible when very severe penalties were imposed on a gang that committed some violent crimes. Officials then met again with the gangs and explained what happened, and why. The crux of the message was that ordinary crimes would be punished ordinarily; extraordinary crimes (i.e., violent offenses) would be punished extraordinarily. This strategy became known as "Ceasefire."

As of March 1997, project staff reported the following impact: Homicides of people age 24 and under, and gun homicides of people 14 to 24, dropped 67 percent city-wide from the mean of the previous seven years. The researchers do not make categorical claims to have caused this decline, but they provide substantial evidence supporting such cause and effect.*

Editor's note: This problem-solving initiative is notable in many respects. It addresses a homicide problem that is often viewed as intractable. This project entailed the sort of problem-oriented, practitioner-researcher partnership Herman Goldstein advocates. The researchers had a sophisticated understanding of methodology and relevant literature on youth violence, which provided a theoretical foundation for the strategy. The strategy seems to have produced a dramatic decline in youth homicides. The researchers acknowledged that the gun-supply-reduction strategy proved relatively ineffective. Minneapolis officials, with help from the Harvard researchers and the Police Executive Research Forum, have replicated much of the Boston working group's approach in addressing their city's rising homicide problem.

*Sources: "Pulling Levers: Chronic Offenders, High-Crime Settings, and a Theory of Prevention," David M. Kennedy, in draft form, to be published in the Valparaiso University Law Review, Vol. 31, 1997; "Youth Violence in Boston: Gun Markets, Serious Youth Offenders, and a Use-Reduction Strategy," David M. Kennedy, Anne M. Piehl and Anthony A. Braga, Law and Contemporary Problems, Vol. 59, Duke University Law School, 1996; "The (Un)Known Universe: Mapping Gangs and Gang Violence in Boston," David M. Kennedy, Anthony A. Braga and Anne M. Piehl, in draft form, Harvard University, September 1996; notes from presentation by Kennedy and Lt. Gary French at 1996 International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference; "Taking a Hit Show on the Road: Boston's Homicide-Prevention Effort Gets Twin Cities Tryout," Law Enforcement News, Vol. 23, No. 470, June 30, 1997.

A Gang Problem in St. Petersburg, Fla.

In June 1991, rival groups** of young men began shooting at each other in the Jordan Park and Bethel Heights neighborhoods of St. Petersburg, Fla. The first victim, a 16-year-old, was shot and killed in the street during an end-of-school party. A year later, police suspected the boy's brother committed a drive-by shooting to avenge his brother's death.

A year later, police suspected the avenging boy of several more shootings, beatings and auto thefts. In turn, a boy from the rival group threatened to shoot the avenging boy's mother, and then did shoot at one of the boy's associates. The avenging boy was suspected of retaliating with three more drive-by shootings in one night. In the last of these shootings, a relative of the boy who threatened the mother was killed. The next day, the boy who threatened the mother was suspected of shooting at four associates of the avenging boy.

About a year later, in the summer of 1994, two of those associates fired shots at a rival. A month later, the groups had a shoot-out and fight in which a Bethel Heights group member was seriously beaten. In retaliation, members of the beaten boy's group stole a car and used it to commit three more drive-by shootings at rival group members.

A pattern had formed: three bursts of violence, with each burst occurring around the anniversary of the 1991 killing. J.M. Moseley and Kevin Pete, Jordan Park and Bethel Heights community police officers, recognized that these shootings were related. They formally initiated a problem-solving project to try to stop the violence. Sgt. A.L. White, the St. Petersburg Police Department's robbery squad supervisor, joined the officers to lead a task force looking into the problem. Three detectives, two more patrol officers and a prosecutor filled out the team.

By interviewing several members of both groups, the task force learned that hostile feelings still ran strong on both sides. Several group members talked freely about vengeance as their primary motive for the violence, and predicted that the shootings would continue. The task force identified 11 members of the Bethel Heights group, and 18 members of the Jordan Park group. They also learned the following facts about the young men: All were African Americans, ranging in age from 16 to 25. Some were high school dropouts, although some had gone to college. Some were very promising athletes. Some did not have criminal records. Most of them carried guns. Some sold drugs and stole cars used to commit robberies and drive-by shootings. And some had talked to the police about their associates' criminal activities.

There were 15 shooting incidents attributable to this ongoing feud. In addition, the Jordan Park group was responsible for at least two violent armed robberies that netted \$28,000. Its members were also stealing or breaking into as many as 10 vehicles a week. Of the two groups, it was the more organized criminal enterprise.



There was nothing particularly crime-conducive about the housing project and neighborhood that suggested changes that would curb the violence. Moreover, the social controls set by the boys' parents, neighbors and clergy seemed to have weakened to the point of being ineffective. So the task force concluded that focusing directly on the group members was the most promising approach.

The task force developed a three-pronged strategy: Confiscate the groups' guns; make solid criminal cases against violent group members, and incarcerate them; and negotiate a truce among the remaining group members and their families and associates. They kept the two groups under conspicuous surveillance. (Later, the task force learned that on one occasion, the surveillance caused one group to call off plans to kill rival group members.) The task force made many felony cases for aggravated assault, armed robbery, attempted murder, auto theft, and concealed weapons against nine young men, most from the Jordan Park group. The nine were arrested, convicted and sentenced to long prison terms. During the many arrests and detentions of the groups' members, the task force confiscated many assault and semiautomatic weapons. One arrestee told officers that the police had taken all their guns.

The task force officers met with community leaders, neighborhood residents and the young men's families to solicit their support in stopping the violence. All agreed to do what they could. Some young men with outstanding arrest warrants turned themselves in to the task force. A few mothers and other relatives of the young men thanked the task force for intervening. Some group members told the police that they, too, were weary and scared of the shootings, and that they were willing to try to talk with their adversaries. A few of these seemingly fearless young men broke down and cried during interviews, and hugged their relatives before being taken to jail. Young men in both groups asked the police during interviews to tell the other group that they wanted the shooting to stop. With the police as mediators, the Jordan Park and Bethel Heights groups called a truce.

After the arrests were made and the truce called in August 1994, the task force disbanded. They could attribute no recent robberies to these groups, and the shootings had stopped. Through the summer of 1997, the truce seems to have held, according to Sgt. White. Most of the arrested group members remain incarcerated, and the Jordan Park and Bethel Heights neighborhoods have not suffered a recurrence of the feud. The young men's relatives now express their gratitude to the police by providing them with ongoing tips about neighborhood crime.*

**The editors use the term "groups" rather than "gangs" because the young men described here, while demonstrating some gang characteristics, did not meet all the criteria the St. Petersburg Police Department uses to define gangs.

Editors' note: This problem-solving initiative is noteworthy because it successfully intervened in one of the most serious community problems: retaliatory gun violence. In certain respects, this is a more localized application of the principles that guided the Boston Youth Violence Project, though the strategy was developed

*Sources: St. Petersburg Police Department internal memorandum, August 1994; St. Petersburg Times news article (undated); personal communication with Sgt. A.L. White.

independently. In both cases, the task forces recognized revenge's power and persistence as a motivator in youth group violence. Both capitalized on group members' latent fear of incarceration and death by using targeted criminal law enforcement sanctions and eliminating group members' sense of anonymity.

A Gang Problem in San Mateo, Calif.

As a street-gang detective for the San Mateo, Calif., Police Department, Bob Szelenyi worked with some of the most violent city gangs. He made arrests and earned the respect of fellow officers and many gang members. Gang violence had become one of the city's major problems in recent years. Szelenyi remembered: "On several occasions, I was the first to arrive at a scene where a young man was down on the ground—bleeding from a gunshot or knife wound. Invariably, the victim was a teenager." He was discouraged by the violence and wondered whether more could be done to counter it. Szelenyi said that these "young men are willing to go down for the color they choose, the turf they claim, and the respect that others try to take from them." He added: "[E]verything I did as a street-gang detective never seemed to improve the quality of life in our community. We arrested people — they did their time, came out, and resumed with the same violent path. As a cop trying to make a difference, it was frustrating seeing the continuation of numerous young men getting permanently maimed, and even killed, as a result of gang violence."

In mid-1993, Szelenyi asked for and received a transfer to the department's community policing unit, where he received training in problem-oriented policing. He took on the gang violence problem. His supervisor "wanted to see long-term solutions to ongoing problems, and expected . . . [the use of] innovative and creative methods to tackling problems," Szelenyi said. Szelenyi wanted to bring two rival gangs together and "let them discuss their differences in a neutral environment." Ultimately, he hoped to achieve a gang truce. "We were looking for the long-term solution that a truce could deliver," Szelenyi said.

Szelenyi asked the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center, a local volunteer mediation agency, if they wanted to help. In explaining why the department turned to a mediation center, he said, "We were looking more at root causes than just Band-Aid approaches." Szelenyi enlisted the probation department due to its court-ordered guardianship over many of the more seasoned gang members. Probation staff agreed to ask their supervised gang members to attend a meeting where "the possibilities of peace between the two opposing gangs would be discussed." Szelenyi said there had been a "seven-year warfare between these two gangs, including stabbings, rivalry graffiti, car bombings, and murder." The police asked a juvenile-court judge to waive the nonassociation clause that was a term of most of the gang members' probation, so that they could meet without fear of court-ordered sanctions.

To start off, the mediation service set up separate meetings with the two rival gangs. The meetings were held in a neutral place. Szelenyi, in plain clothes, was the only police officer present. Three mediators and two probation officers also attended. One



of the gang's leaders was in county jail for a violent crime, so Szelenyi arranged with the sheriff to have him released for the meeting. During these meetings, the groups talked about respect, community racism, the police, "and the need to try something new." The idea of a truce was introduced at each of the separate sessions; the gangs' leaders laughed at the idea. Their interest was only in finding out how the rival gang reacted. The mediators asked for another meeting; both gangs agreed, mostly out of curiosity.

The mediators met individually with each gang four more times — eight meetings in total. Each gang remained curious about the other's commitment, and both seemed tired of the ongoing violence. The gangs finally agreed to meet together. Each gang selected five members as spokespeople. During the first hour, the mediators met separately with the gangs; then they all met together. Each gang brought a list of items to be addressed. Szelenyi said: "Respect was at the top of both lists . . . Each gang raised a lot of respect issues. They never [verbally] communicated with each other. They [communicated only] in warfare." Another item of agreement was "the need to put the past behind" them. Szelenyi remembered:

We brought them into the same room, and sat them at a large conference table. You could have heard a pin drop. With the assistance of the mediators, they began conversing about all the issues that had been discussed at previous meetings, and the priorities that were on their respective lists. They spoke respectfully for about two hours. At the conclusion of the meeting, an agreement for peace was reached, and handshakes were exchanged. As a former street-gang detective, it was the most amazing thing I have ever witnessed.

All agreed to a follow-up meeting, to which more of the gangs' members were invited. At the final meeting, 41 gang members agreed to a truce. They agreed there would be no more violent crime, and no more instigating disputes by such actions as crossing out the rival gang's graffiti. They agreed to respect each other, and if "a confrontation arose, they would try to talk it through as opposed to using weapons."

In the four years since this effort began, there have been no reports of violence between the two gangs. Szelenyi said, "Some of the members of the opposing gangs have become, not quite friends, but acquaintances." The truce is still in place, although sometimes one hears of isolated incidents between people in the two gangs. However, these incidents are one-on-one disagreements, not gang warfare. The two gangs still have rivalries with other San Mateo gangs, and the police department continues its efforts to stem those.*

Editors' note: This effort is notable more for its creative response than its analysis. Herman Goldstein has suggested that police need to explore a range of alternative responses in tackling public-safety problems, and must stop relying solely

on the criminal justice system, whose overcrowding has made it an uncertain and often unreliable remedy. Of course, not all public-safety problems lend themselves to mediation. However, for some people, mediation can be persuasive in changing behavior, and its role in preventing violence should be more fully explored. Szelenyi believes mediation was successful with these two gangs for several reasons. "The timing was right, we never gave up, [the gangs] ended up trusting us, and they ended up believing that all we wanted to do was stop the violence," he said.

Additional Editors' Comments on Gang Problems

Many large and midsized cities now report the presence of gangs. In some communities, gangs are simply a way for young men and women to bond, and they engage in little to no criminal activity. In others, gangs are responsible for assaults, drive-by shootings, graffiti, intimidation, and murders. In the efforts documented in this section, officers and researchers spent time trying to understand the motivation behind gang violence so they could devise long-term solutions. In some cases, violence erupted between rival gangs due to perceived disrespect or as retaliation. Economic gain from drug dealing and robberies also motivates some gangs. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the destructiveness of gang violence increased with the availability of guns. This makes these problem-solving efforts even more significant, because each successfully tackled perhaps the most serious violence a community can face: drive-by shootings and murder.

The editors uncovered other notable approaches in the research. In Colorado Springs, Colo., gang members at a local fast-food restaurant caused a sizable number of police calls for car accidents, disturbances, loitering, noise, shots fired, and traffic congestion. Rival gangs were encountering each other in the restaurant lobby, and fights were erupting. In addition, patrons were disregarding traffic-flow lanes, causing accidents, fights and traffic congestion. Police officers worked with the restaurant owner and recommended closing off the lobby to foot traffic, forcing more late-night drive-through service and decreasing face-to-face gang interaction. The restaurant also improved the lighting and curbed the drive-through lane all the way to the exit, so customers could not veer off and fight or get into or cause accidents. After implementation, calls to police dropped by over 50 percent, even during the normally busier summer months.

In Cook County, Ill., the sheriff's department helped develop a gang database storing criminal, demographic and geographic gang information, as well as images of gang graffiti, hand-signs and tattoos. More than 70 government agencies use the database.

Redondo Beach, Calif., police officers and prosecutors sought restraining orders against gang members who were criminally active in a local park. The officers painstakingly reviewed 1,800 calls for service at or near the park to determine which



ones involved gangs. The court orders prohibited more than a dozen gang members from certain activities in the park, which, analysis showed, was a central location for gang recruitment and criminal activity. It should be noted that some civil abatement strategies, including restraining orders, have run into First Amendment problems for prohibiting what would otherwise be legal activity, such as carrying baseball bats or bottles, climbing trees, making hand signals, sitting in parks, wearing large belts, and whistling.

Chapter 7

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Graffiti

Graffiti

Graffiti in Santa Ana, Calif.

In 1992, graffiti in Santa Ana, Calif., became more prevalent than ever. Police believed this was attributable not to gangs, but to a new phenomenon known as "tagging." Whereas gang graffiti exists to mark territory and convey threats, tagging exists to call attention to the individual or group. The markings are typically the taggers' nicknames, and tend not to be very artistic. Taggers often form crews and compete with one another, sometimes painting over one another's tags. Most of the competition is nonviolent, although there have been some instances of violence between rival crews, and at least one incident in which an innocent woman was shot and killed interrupting a crew. According to Santa Ana Police Department Lt. Mike Foote, tagging is popular with young people who have a hard time expressing their individuality in more conventional ways.

The police tried to reassure the public that the graffiti was not the work of gangs, but many citizens were understandably afraid that their neighborhoods were out of control. The graffiti had appeared suddenly and soon overwhelmed the public works department's ability to remove it. The city was forced to contract with private firms. Because city-paid crews are limited to cleaning public or quasi-public property, graffiti removal crews were hired or formed in each of the city's 54 neighborhoods to help clean private property. The city provided the paint for the private cleaning. The city had spent about \$200,000 to clean about 900,000 square feet of graffiti in fiscal year 1988 to 1989. Those figures skyrocketed to \$1.2 million to clean 4.5 million square feet in fiscal year 1992 to 1993. In November 1992 alone, cleaning crews removed over 691,000 square feet of graffiti.

In early 1993, the police department organized a graffiti-removal task force that included representatives from the chamber of commerce, city attorney's office, city manager's office, community development department, police department, public works department, recreation and community services department, and school district. Each task force participant had an equal voice in decision-making, and each had the authority to make resource commitments. This would prove crucial in minimizing the tendency to be slowed down or stalled by routine bureaucratic decision-making. The task force developed a three-pronged strategy emphasizing prevention, eradication and prosecution.

The police department assigned two full-time officers to coordinate anti-graffiti efforts. The officers coordinated investigations and prosecutions of offenders, and also developed a database to track incidents, offenders and cases. Seventy separate groups of taggers were identified throughout the area. The officers met with county, municipal and juvenile-court judges to encourage them to establish uniform sentencing guidelines for tagging and graffiti cases. The resultant sentences were harsher than they had been. The officers also held training sessions for assistant district attorneys



to create a common understanding of the problem and, consequently, a common prosecutorial policy. The city council authorized a \$500 reward for information resulting in a tagger's conviction, and required merchants to store spray paint and large marking pens in restricted display areas. This latter initiative was designed to reduce theft of these items by minors who were already prohibited by law from purchasing them.

A central component of the overall response to the problem was a juvenile diversion program. Working through the St. Vincent DePaul Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program, the police were able to bring together young taggers and the owners of the property they had defaced. In this setting, victims had the opportunity to confront offenders and to execute signed contracts providing that the offenders would pay restitution and perform community service. The city council granted the police department specific authority to execute these contracts. Criminal prosecutions and civil actions were held in abeyance. If offenders broke the contract, they were subject to prosecution and civil damages, under either tort or contract law. The parents of juvenile offenders actually signed the contracts, and they could be held liable for the restitution under this ordinance. Public-works and private cleaning crews photographed and measured graffiti and documented cleanup costs to aid investigations, measure the initiative's progress, and establish the true restitution and civil damage costs.

The police were so successful in making arrests that they had to recruit and train 18 volunteer mediators to supplement the diversion program. The scope of the problem later compelled the department to assign a second officer and clerical support staff. From March to mid-August 1993, the police made 637 graffiti- and tagging-related arrests. One hundred thirty-four cases were referred to the Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program, and 97 cases were criminally prosecuted. During the same period, the diversion program produced 78 mediated contracts, 61 of which were completed, netting over \$11,000 in victim restitution. Criminal prosecutions also generated some restitution, and police estimated that pending cases would yield over \$200,000. Offenders failed to honor their contracts in only 15 cases. Police took *every* member of 32 of the 70 tagging crews into custody. Offenders performed over 2,000 hours of community service, most of it cleaning graffiti. The program has since been expanded to include other misdemeanants. In 1996, the city received an estimated \$1.8 million benefit from the community-service labor, freeing up about 37,000 work hours for city employees. By December 1994, police had arrested more than 1,100 offenders.

The city's community development agency coordinated numerous neighborhood cleanup and graffiti-removal efforts. It sponsored an annual "Graffiti Paint-Out Day," recruiting volunteers from businesses, civic and service associations, community groups, and schools. The task force held a press conference for high school student journalists to educate them about the graffiti problem and consequences for offenders. As a result, all the school newspapers ran stories about graffiti and tagging. In addition, grade school teachers talked to their students about the problem. Student polls revealed that, prior to these educational campaigns, most students did not know

how big the problem was and how much it was costing to address it. The city's successful efforts were expanded countywide in mid-1993.

As a result of these efforts, the monthly square footage of city graffiti that had to be removed decreased from a high of 691,857 in November 1992, to a low of 193,089 in November 1993. By December 1994, the monthly average was about 240,000 square feet, about 40 percent less than what the city was averaging before the anti-graffiti effort was started in March 1993. Factoring in the work done by city, contract and neighborhood-association cleaning crews, Santa Ana police estimate there is 70 percent less graffiti in 1997 than there was in 1992. According to Lt. Foote: "You can come to Santa Ana, and you won't see graffiti. We get it down in 48 to 72 hours, tops."

While the city seems to have the problem under some control, officials are far from complacent. They have identified over 250 active tagging crews in the three-county region, ranging in size from five taggers to 1,500. In recent years, some of the tagging crews have gotten into more serious crime, such as auto theft and burglary, and have allied themselves with street gangs. Police refer to this as "tag-banging." Said Lt. Foote, "It's an ongoing battle."*

Editors' note: This project is noteworthy for the persistence the police, local government and community groups demonstrated in keeping this problem under control (graffiti problems are often neglected because the immediate harm is less severe than that caused by other crimes). Santa Ana has recognized that unchecked graffiti can undermine a community's ability to protect itself from more serious crime. This initiative also successfully used alternatives to arrest, such as mediation and restitution, that can actually have more tangible consequences than prosecution in an already burdened court system. The project addressed the problem from several perspectives, not just from a law enforcement perspective.

Graffiti in Santee, Calif.

Santee, Calif., in San Diego County, has a population of 58,000. Like many other communities around the country, it was besieged by a new form of graffiti known as "tagging." Tagging is graffiti put up to call attention to the individual tagger or group of taggers. Each tagger's graffiti is distinct, and while some might find it artistic, most property owners whose buildings, signs or cars are tagged find it a nuisance, an eyesore and a crime. Organized graffiti vandals can quickly blight a neighborhood and threaten property values. In 1992, the city of Santee contracted with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department for two special-purpose deputies who were to address the tagging problem.

Deputies Dave Myers and Scott Klein Hesselink formed an organized network that they called TAGNET (Tagging And Graffiti Network Enforcement Team). Its purpose was to improve communication and coordination with other jurisdictions and groups

*Sources: Executive summary of graffiti-removal task force report, city of Santa Ana, April 1994; personal communication with Lt. Mike Foote, Oct. 7, 1997.

addressing similar concerns. The network included all police agencies in the county, city and county prosecutors, civic groups, crime-prevention specialists, teachers associations, the school district, and the state transportation department. They began gathering intelligence on taggers' names, affiliations and signature markings. The deputies set up a uniform graffiti-and-tagging reporting-and-tracking system for all police agencies in the county.

The deputies wanted to learn more about the tagging subculture, so along with San Diego police officer Kevin French, they devised an ingenious scheme to infiltrate the taggers' network. With help from businesspeople and other law enforcement officials, they posed as a video production crew seeking to do a documentary on tagging, and they invited several known taggers to a "preproduction interview." The operation's objectives were threefold: to make an impact on the taggers, to promote improved anti-graffiti legislation, and to gather background intelligence on tagging. The deputies worked undercover for four months, during which they learned a lot about taggers' methods and motives. They learned that tagging crossed all ethnic and economic lines and involved both males and females, ranging in age from 10 to 25. This knowledge later helped them develop their education-and-awareness campaign, particularly that part of it targeting younger school children.

In addition to educating themselves, they developed criminal cases against 40 to 50 taggers, some of whom they were able to charge with criminal conspiracies. To their knowledge, this was the first time in the state of California that conspiracy cases had been made solely from misdemeanor offenses. The conviction rate for this operation was 100 percent. The deputies believed the courts finally had a thorough appreciation of tagging's destructiveness.

At the deputies' recommendations, state legislators introduced and passed a state law mandating parental participation in their children's community service if the children were convicted of criminal vandalism. Local legislators adopted a city ordinance offering rewards for information leading to taggers' arrest, and another ordinance requiring stores to keep spray paint secure from theft and prohibiting minors from carrying implements to be used for tagging.

The city set up a hot line to encourage citizens to report graffiti and tagging. After a report, sheriff's deputies would document the graffiti and start an investigation; city public-works crews would then remove the graffiti. Because taggers' markings are distinct, the deputies were generally able to solve all organized-graffiti cases and arrest the offenders. Most offenders were juveniles, and they were most often processed through a diversion program that required them to clean up graffiti throughout the city. The deputies also developed and delivered educational messages about tagging for business leaders, elected officials, parents, teachers, and school administrators.

When they began their work, the deputies identified about eight to 10 active tagging groups in Santee. Evaluating their progress in each of the two following years, they

noted that the number of organized-graffiti cases had declined by 75 percent, and all organized tagging groups in Santee had been disbanded. The deputies had actually expected the number of tagging cases to increase in the wake of the education-and-awareness campaign, so they were all the more convinced their efforts were succeeding. They interviewed many of the convicted taggers and believed most of them did not, and were not likely to, re-offend. They came to believe many of the taggers did not fully appreciate the harm their behavior was causing. Visually, the city of Santee was much improved. The most popular tagging sites were staying clean.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the creativity the deputies demonstrated in analyzing the tagging phenomenon. Their use of a decoy sting helped them identify and arrest offenders, but perhaps more importantly, they developed a fuller understanding of the problem. They used several tactics to address the problem that have proved effective in a number of communities in Southern California and around the country.

Additional Editors' Comments on Graffiti

In the 1980s and early 1990s, graffiti and tagging marked buses, businesses, freeway signs, private homes, public buildings, and subway cars across the nation. The New York City Transit Authority did some early anti-graffiti research because the problem there had reached crisis proportions. Vandals had completely covered the inside and outside of many of the system's subway cars with graffiti. Passengers could not see through subway-car windows, heightening fear and alarm. The transit authority found that quick removal decreased the chances of repeat occurrences. They limited access to places where tagging was chronic (e.g., the trainyards) and, among other things, experimented with different coatings for the trains, finding one from which graffiti was more easily removed.

Cities have responded to graffiti and tagging in different ways, many incorporating multiple strategies. Some cities limit access to vandals' tools (e.g., by locking up spray paint or banning sales of it). Some limit access to vandalized sites (e.g., New York City restricted access to subway yards, and on many California freeways, barbed wire restricts access to signs). Some incorporate aspects of restorative justice (e.g., the victim and offender are brought together so the offender better understands the harm caused). Some choose shaming (e.g., vandals are court-ordered to clean up their graffiti). Some encourage greater parental guardianship over children's activities. Some encourage increased community vigilance (e.g., through reward programs and hot lines). Some try educational efforts (e.g., developing programs to deter schoolchildren, and publicizing cleanup costs to deter potential vandals). Some offer more conventionally acceptable artistic endeavors. And some threaten to penalize victims to guarantee timely graffiti removal (e.g., building owners are fined if graffiti is not removed within a legislatively specified time).

The editors found several other noteworthy strategies. In Colorado Springs, Colo., city workers use an air-pressure tool that is environmentally safe and does a better job of graffiti removal on a wide range of hard-to-clean surfaces (including brick, stucco

*Sources: Project description submitted to Rana Sampson for NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; personal communication with San Diego County Sheriff's Department Sgt. Dave Myers, Oct. 8, 1997.

and wood). Lakewood, Colo., police enlisted postal carriers to report graffiti due to their wide access and daily ability to inspect. They carry reporting cards on their mail routes. Phoenix, Ariz., set up a graffiti reward hot line and encourages victims to file civil damage claims against offenders. In San Antonio, Texas, spray paint is classified as an inhalant and must be kept in a locked area. Businesses must have a health department permit to sell spray paint, and selling it to minors is a felony.

In San Mateo, Calif., some juvenile graffiti offenders are diverted to graffiti-cleanup programs. Upon completion, their arrest is expunged. As part of the diversion agreement, offenders' parents participate in one-day cleanups. In Philadelphia, Penn., spray paint sales to minors are illegal; an amnesty has encouraged more than 1,000 young people to turn in their spray paint; and a nonprofit anti-graffiti community organization helps police identify suspects, and gives promising young artists (some of whom are former taggers and graffiti vandals) opportunities to paint community murals with well-known artists.



Chapter 8

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Cruising

Cruising

Cruising in Santa Ana, Calif.

For about 25 years, Santa Ana, Calif., motorists have seen cruisers take to the streets Sunday nights. By 1994, people were cruising on Friday and Saturday nights, as well, and the typical cruising-related problems of disorder, noise and traffic gridlock were compounded by car jackings, felony assaults, hit-and-run accidents, and homicides. Citizen complaints and calls for service continued to rise, along with the corresponding costs of police service.

Santa Ana police estimated that 1,000 cruisers hit the city streets on winter nights, and many more on summer nights. (Using a "mark and recapture" technique common to ecologists estimating animal populations, Cpl. J.L. Armstrong estimated that over 22,000 vehicles were involved in cruising in Southern California.) A mile stretch of South Bristol Street had become the latest popular cruise. Cruisers told police that Santa Ana's cruise was the biggest in a five-county region, and that police presence actually made them feel safer. Gang members were joining the cruise, contributing to the associated crime. Area residents and merchants told police they were intimidated by the activity. The traffic trapped residents in their neighborhoods, and merchants were losing legitimate customers. Emergency medical services had to be rerouted because the traffic blocked access to a hospital emergency room.

According to Lt. Mike Foote, the cruising phenomenon, particularly among Southern California's large Hispanic youth population, has roots in rural Mexican social customs. In many Mexican towns, large groups of young people gather in public squares and move in organized fashion to promote intermingling of the sexes. This pattern of movement mirrors cruisers' driving patterns. From this observation, it became clear to Foote that the objective of a problem-solving initiative should be to interrupt the social motivation to cruise by changing the patterns of movement.

Before developing a new response, Foote took stock of the police response to the problem over the previous six years. He concluded that a lack of police intervention left the situation in chaos. Small-scale, directed patrol efforts had no impact. Multi-agency enforcement initiatives were but a temporary distraction to the cruisers. Completely closing the streets only diverted the cruisers to other major thoroughfares, and diverting the cruisers to side streets fostered gang conflict and compounded problems in residential neighborhoods. Diverting the cruisers onto nearby freeways was ineffective. Traffic-control points proved only a minor inconvenience to cruisers. A full-time cruising-enforcement detail alleviated violence, but only while deployed. Nothing seemed to effectively reduce or eliminate the problem. Because so many cruisers traveled around the regional circuit, the probability of police intervention for each cruiser was too low to have much deterrent effect.



Foote realized the department's previous responses to the problem, especially the big enforcement operations, were part of the problem. The police had become part of the "floor show" that made cruising more attractive. They provided an element of danger to the activity, without serious risk of harm, which appealed to young adults. Cruisers maintained a sense of anonymity that fostered irresponsible and reckless conduct.

With this knowledge and understanding, Foote and his colleagues developed an ambitious strategy intended to achieve 16 specific objectives. They were aiming for nothing less than full abatement of the problem. They consulted legal counsel at critical points in the planning. The goal of the first phase of the plan was to personally identify and discourage all cruisers. To do so, the police devised a traffic-control scheme more elaborate than previous ones. They used their legal authority to stop all traffic, identify drivers and provide information on cruising violations. Control-point officers were discouraged from taking formal enforcement actions that would unnecessarily impede traffic flow. It proved impractical to enforce the cruising ordinances, and the police later recommended revisions to them.

Police entered driver and vehicle information in a computer database at the traffic-control points. They sent follow-up letters to registered vehicle owners to reinforce their warnings and to ensure that parents were informed of young drivers' activities. They also erected warning signs along the roadway. The signs were deliberately vague, yet legally sufficient to discourage cruising without educating cruisers about loopholes in the laws. On the operation's first night, police stopped 70 percent of the cruising vehicles at checkpoints. They stopped 83 percent of the cruising vehicles over the next two nights. The number of returning cruisers had so diminished by the fourth night that the police suspended the checkpoints in favor of traffic stops and consensual encounters.

Cruiser traffic steadily decreased, while other traffic returned to the area. Average speeds along South Bristol Street climbed back up to normal levels. Within three months, cruising was under control, requiring only minimal police action. By the program's completion, the police had issued over 2,000 personal warnings and sent over 1,700 follow-up letters. The warning-and-education campaign turned out to be at least as effective as formal enforcement, and considerably more efficient. Ninety percent of cruisers warned on the first night did not return. In the year before the initiative, police handled 990 cruising-related calls for service (60% of the total calls-for-service workload), and 153 related crimes. During the two months of the anti-cruising initiative, there were only 28 cruising-related calls (13% of the total workload), and three related crimes. There have been no cruising-related calls in the past two years, and no homicides related to cruising. (In 1995, the city recorded 79 homicides. By mid-year 1997, the city had recorded only seven. Foote believes the cruising initiative and a disorderly party initiative to reduce gang violence are partly responsible for this dramatic decline.)

By 1997, the police felt sufficiently confident that the problem had been solved, and they took down the traffic-control chains and posts. Business in the former cruising

area is "booming," and businesses are no longer closing or relocating, as before. Since the project's completion in 1995, the cruisers have not returned to Santa Ana. The word is out throughout the cruising community that Santa Ana is no longer the place to go.*

Editors' note: This initiative is notable for its careful and comprehensive analysis, strategic and tactical planning, dramatic impact, and excellent documentation. By approaching the problem from a sociological perspective rather than a more narrow law enforcement perspective, the police could see their way to a new and effective solution to the problem. Interestingly, in response to the Boise, Idaho, Police Department's 1988 national survey on cruising problems, Santa Ana described only a moderate problem with cruisers parking on private property. In the 1995 initiative, the problem was determined to be more serious in 1988 than originally described. Apparently, officials did not recognize the full scope of the problem until it was more carefully scrutinized.

Cruising in Boise, Idaho

In July 1988, the Boise, Idaho, Police Department's planning unit began systematically analyzing the problem of cruising. Although cruising had been a Boise pastime dating back to the 1940s, by the late 1980s, the related problems of harassment, litter, public disorder, traffic congestion, underage drinking, and vandalism had become intolerable to the downtown business community.

The main feature of the planning unit's study was a nationwide mail survey of 435 police departments to learn how they addressed similar problems. The survey netted a remarkable 52 percent return rate. The Boise staff found that departments used such tactics as enforcement of trespassing, curfew and loitering laws; massive extra patrol; street barricading; and special anti-cruising ordinances that regulated the frequency with which a vehicle could be in an area in a specified time. A few cities tried the "If you can't beat them, join them" approach by sanctioning cruising in designated areas least likely to create spillover problems. Most cities that acknowledged a cruising problem dedicated additional police officers to control it.

The department planners simultaneously conducted field surveys of people involved in cruising. Not surprisingly, the cruisers tended to see cruising as a means of socializing, showing off their driving ability, and comparing cars. They enjoyed the relatively unsupervised atmosphere. From their point of view, the scarcity of public restrooms and trash receptacles was the main cause of the disorder and litter. Somewhat surprisingly, many teenage cruisers said their parents endorsed the activity, in part due to police presence. Police officials doubted that this was true generally.

By the fall of 1988, the mayor had appointed a task force to explore the problem and recommend responses. The task force members included businesspeople, cruisers, police, and probation officials. The task force examined the problem from multiple perspectives, before settling on eight major recommendations:

*Sources: Draft internal report and internal memoranda, Santa Ana Police Department, 1995; personal communication with Lts. Mike Foote and Bill Tegeler.

1. Open and staff a storefront police station in the cruise area.
2. Review existing noise ordinances and purchase decibel meters to allow for police enforcement.
3. Reestablish community-service sentencing for those convicted of cruising-related offenses.
4. Develop a juvenile citation to allow for quicker processing of young offenders.
5. Increase street lighting and lighting in a downtown park designated as a focal point for cruising.
6. Create alternative social events such as car shows or street dances.
7. Appoint a standing advisory committee to aid in implementing these strategies.
8. Sanction cruising in an area less disruptive to downtown businesses, and provide sufficient amenities to support cruising.

All but the last two recommendations were implemented to one degree or another. The final recommendation met with resistance from business owners who were adamant that cruising be stopped, as well as from cruisers who rejected the notion of government sanction. The storefront police station was opened and staffed. A consultant was hired to study the noise problem and the adequacy of the noise ordinances, and funds were earmarked for noise meters, pending the outcome of the study. A community-service sentencing program was developed under which offenders would do work to improve the downtown area. A private firm was contracted to supervise the program, with part of the expense paid for by the downtown business group. The juvenile citation was developed and implemented. Street lighting was improved, although lighting in the downtown park was not. Alternative youth activities were organized. Although these response strategies did not put a complete end to cruising-related problems, police department officials credited the process with developing a better and more comprehensive approach to the problem.*

Editors' note: The distinguishing features of this problem-solving initiative are the comprehensive survey of other communities' responses to cruising-related problems, and the inclusiveness of the task force's membership.

Additional Editors' Comments on Cruising

Cruising is a national pastime for some American teenagers. Some communities experience cruising-related problems, while others do not. It seems that some communities are more suited for cruising, with large teenage populations; long, wide avenues; and boulevards dotted with fast-food restaurants, diners and a wealth of unused parking lots that teenagers can take over on Friday and Saturday nights. In some communities, the effects of cruising have reached epidemic proportions, halting cross-traffic, littering main streets, and costing police departments thousands of dollars each weekend in extra personnel. As a result, some police agencies are searching for new solutions to the problem, resisting simply assigning additional patrols. The efforts in this section illustrate this new approach.

*Sources: "Downtown 'Cruising' in Major U.S. Cities, and One City's Response to the Problem," by James Carvino and Lt. R. Mike Worley, Boise Police Department, 1990; "'Cruising' in Major U.S. Cities, and One City's Response," by R. Mike Worley, Law and Order, September 1990; notes from Worley's presentation on cruising at First National Problem-Oriented Policing Conference, San Diego, November 1990.

During the research, the editors found several other projects of note. Portland, Ore., police used citizen patrols and street closures to control cruising. Santa Clara, Calif., police initially used traffic diverters, limitations on street parking, and ordinances restricting alcohol in closed parking lots, having some effect against their 20-year cruising problem. In addition, they used a computer program that tracked whether a vehicle passed by an established checkpoint more than once, allowing them to apply the city's anti-cruising ordinance.



Chapter 9

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

College-Related Crime

College-Related Crime

A College-Related Crime in La Crosse, Wis.

During the mid-1980s, the village of Coon Valley, Wis., hosted an annual canoe race down a Mississippi River tributary. The spring event attracted students from area colleges and from around the country. Following the canoe races, crowds of between 4,000 and 8,000 people gathered in the downtown area of nearby La Crosse. La Crosse has approximately 51,000 full-time residents, and another 15,000 college students.

By 1989, the crowds had become unruly, confronting authorities. Firefighters turned their hoses on the crowd to clear the streets that year. The next year was worse, as some crowd members broke concrete garbage containers and threw chunks of the concrete at police officers. Some people vandalized police cars, and four officers were injured. Again, firefighters used their hoses to disperse the crowd. During 1991's gathering, a police officer was hit with a thrown garbage can, and a squad car was overturned and set on fire. After the bars closed one night, police arrested 183 people and used tear gas to break up a hostile crowd.

In 1992, the police prepared for the crowd by suiting up in riot gear. They also requested the assistance of the state patrol and officers from neighboring communities. Again, they used tear gas, and they made about 150 arrests. By this time, the annual canoe race and ensuing disorder had attracted national media attention, and relations between the police and the local colleges had become strained.

In 1993, the La Crosse Police Department established a problem-solving team that focused its attention on the annual civil disorder. They began their work by convening several meetings with college administrators, and holding a public forum at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse before the general student body. They invited members of the Tavern League and student government to sit on the panel in this forum.

The team then interviewed a wide range of people affected by the disorder, including businesspeople and individuals arrested during past years' events. The problem-solving team surveyed the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse student population. They also reviewed news articles written about past years' events, and police reports filed during the events. They interviewed officers who had worked the events. It took the team several months to complete this research.

From their problem analysis, the team learned that although most people in the crowd were of college age, many were not college students. The worst of the disorder started at tavern closing time, when patrons joined others already mingling on the sidewalks. The size of the crowd forced people into the street, which, in turn, caused traffic problems. Cars parked curbside were frequently damaged, and people were



injured darting from between those cars into the street. These conditions inevitably compelled the police to intervene. Officers tried to keep the crowd out of the street, and took into custody those who failed to obey their directives.

The size of the crowd contributed to a sense of anonymity among its members, which, in turn, fostered irresponsible behavior. The problem-solving team also concluded that the presence of news cameras in recent years had only inspired disorderly conduct in some people. Some tavern operators even showed footage of past years' disorder to their patrons just before closing time. Most taverns served alcohol in either glass or aluminum containers. With these factors in mind, the team set about developing a new response to the problem. It set a goal to guide the response: to reduce confrontation and improve the community's perception of how authorities handled the crowds.

This, then, is how the La Crosse police handled the 1993 and 1994 events. As the event drew near, the problem-solving team wrote letters to all area newspapers and radio and television stations, soliciting their help in presenting a positive image of the event that played down confrontation with authorities. Team officers appeared on talk shows and gave interviews toward this end. They appealed to the students' interest in maintaining a positive reputation for their school.

The team brokered an arrangement by which the Tavern League paid for free bus transportation to and from the downtown area. Presumably, this would help reduce the number of parked vehicles in the downtown area and the incidence of drunken driving. The team helped arrange a campus dance at which no alcohol was served. The dance was well attended and reduced the number of people under the age of 21 on downtown streets. The university also sponsored a volleyball tournament as an alternate attraction.

Both plainclothes and uniformed officers videotaped the crowd, having first publicly promoted this tactic to ensure students' safety. Unlike television cameras, the conspicuous police cameras tended to inhibit, rather than inspire, disorderly conduct. They also provided evidence of criminal conduct.

The team asked for and received support from the local Heileman Brewing Co. to promote a theme they called "Fun at the Creek — Safe on the Street." With students' participation, Heileman produced a brochure on this theme that was handed out at the canoe race. The brochure offered safety tips, encouraged residents to be responsible for their out-of-town guests' behavior, advertised the police cameras, and listed the penalties for the most common charges against people arrested in past years. Additionally, patrolling police officers handed out lapel pins emblazoned with the theme. This helped them establish rapport with the crowd.

The team arranged to have the city's public-works crews conduct a special cleanup of the street both before and after the event. Before the event, the crews removed bottles and other debris that might injure or be used as weapons. Team officers personally encouraged each tavern operator to serve alcohol only in plastic cups.

The team also convinced the city council to prohibit parking downtown between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. for a few nights following the canoe race. This eliminated vehicle-damage reports, which freed officers to attend more directly to the crowd. The council also authorized the police to temporarily close certain streets to traffic, thereby creating more space for the pedestrians.

In 1993, police made only 27 arrests; in 1994, they made only 14 (compared with 183 in 1991, and 150 in 1992). According to then-Sgt. Dan Marcou, a member of the problem-solving team, "There was a 100 percent reduction in confrontation, which was our goal." News articles about the events had turned positive, as had the many letters to the newspaper editor and the police chief. The La Crosse police assigned a liaison officer to work in the university's student union. The police department assigned far fewer police officers to the event in subsequent years, and neither police nor firefighters had to use force to disperse the crowds. Coon Valley police also made fewer arrests in 1993, dropping from about 90 in past years to only 10.

Perhaps unfortunately, the Coon Valley canoe race was canceled in 1995, and it has not been held since. The crowds no longer come to La Crosse in the spring, but the city has several other events that draw similarly large crowds. The police department has adapted the tactics developed through this problem-solving initiative to all its crowd-control responses.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the police's fundamental shift from a confrontational to a nonconfrontational approach to the problem. They recognized the value in soliciting the support and participation of all groups affected by the problem. They combined tactics that addressed the physical opportunities for problems to occur (e.g., removing vehicles from the streets and eliminating glass bottles) with tactics that addressed the motivation for problems (e.g., marketing safety, videotaping the crowd, and providing alternate activities). While the improved response may have come too late to save the annual canoe race, it eliminated the civil disorder and led to more systematic improvements in police operations and police-university relations. This project received Honorable Mention for the 1994 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

A College-Related Crime in San Diego, Calif.

San Diego State University is one of California's largest educational institutions, with upwards of 25,000 students. It has its own sworn public-safety agency, but as an urban campus, it also relies heavily on the municipal police. Just *how* heavily was never assessed until a review was undertaken by San Diego Police Department Sgt. Caplan; Officers Napier, Didelot and Smith; Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol member Alter; and crime analyst Wartell.

*Sources: Project report submitted in support of nomination for 1994 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; news articles from the La Crosse Tribune and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse periodicals, The Racquet and The Campus Connection; "Civil Disturbance Is Put to Rest," by Chief Edward Kondracki, in Community Policing Strategies, published by the Community Policing Consortium; personal communication with Lt. Dan Marcou, Sept. 18, 1997.

Located in one of the city's busiest divisions, the university generated a disproportionately high number of police calls. Municipal police responded to more than 140 calls in 10 months for fights, illegal parking, large parties, littering, loud music, public urination and defecation, rapes, robberies, and traffic congestion. Call-load analysis captured only a portion of the services the municipal police provided to the university. For instance, campus events such as concerts and athletic competitions often required significant municipal police resources; one event required the deployment of 35 officers, adding up to more than 100 police hours. The city police's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system did not reveal this deployment. Often, university events requiring municipal police services were listed in the CAD system without a geographic designation. For instance, because university concerts were listed with a non-geographic designation, these events were essentially unattributable to the university. Thus, municipal police provided the university with several hundred hours a year of untracked services, in addition to the tracked response to calls for service.

The university's public safety department was also quite busy. Fraternities alone generated more than 50 substantiated problem calls in the 1994-to-1995 school year. This does not include calls to fraternities that, while requiring initial police response, do not require additional police follow-up (e.g., a neighbor complains of noise from a fraternity party, public safety personnel respond, and, by the time they arrive, the fraternity has already turned the music down).

The San Diego police team analyzing the problem realized that the university made money from many of the events for which it enlisted municipal police services. The university hosted a fair number of for-profit events on campus, including concerts and athletic competitions drawing "crowds in the thousands," according to Sgt. Caplan. The team also learned that relations between their department and the campus public safety department were strained. "Much of [it] was caused by confusion over jurisdiction and responsibilities," Caplan said, adding that each department felt problems were "dumped from one agency to the other." The team located a mutual-aid agreement the chiefs of each agency had signed years before. By the terms of the agreement, the university had clear jurisdiction for call response, investigation and patrol for all university property, both on and off campus, including all fraternities and sororities. In total, more than 40 buildings fell under the public safety department's jurisdiction. Having collected basic information about the problem, the police team decided to focus on solutions that were within their jurisdiction to implement. They also forwarded suggestions to the campus public safety department for their review, giving them the "flexibility [to devise] solutions within their own jurisdiction," according to Caplan.

The community had previously formed the College Area Community Council (CACC) to meet with university officials about problems the college and its students generated. The team consulted the CACC and felt that the best approach would be one that "empowered the CACC to devise solutions and obtain cooperation from the university," Caplan said. The CACC preferred that the campus public safety department handle police response to university-generated problems, as municipal police took much

longer to respond to calls about noise and out-of-control parties. In addition, the CACC knew that the public safety department could file administrative disciplinary sanctions against students. Such sanctions often have more sway than criminal violations of noise ordinances, for instance, which fail in the competition for court time due to homicides, drive-by shootings and the like.

The police team looked at dispatch policies again and found that the communications division routinely dispatched city officers to university locations, sometimes "as a courtesy," according to Caplan, and sometimes due to the mistaken belief that civil liability would attach if city police did not respond. The team also found that the city contributed to the college-area noise problems by routinely granting variances for fraternity events, without a substantial review. They also found that some university events commanded audiences of 10,000. The university's public safety department staffed adequately for the impact on campus. However, municipal police were required, without reimbursement, to control traffic around the university; for some events, traffic was congested as far as three miles from campus.

The police team adopted and implemented several responses to these problems. They trained supervisors and officers in the jurisdictional response boundaries, so that it was clear which department would respond. They also notified the communications division, listing specific addresses within the university's jurisdiction. They put a marker in the CAD system identifying all university addresses, prompting dispatchers to tell callers that the campus public safety department is the appropriate responding agency. Municipal police still respond to high-priority emergency calls, but the public safety department is responsible for all reporting and investigating. Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol officers distributed a letter to college-area residents (including fraternity and sorority members), notifying them that the public safety department has jurisdiction over university property. University addresses were listed, and campus phone numbers were provided for follow-up.

As for the noise problems, the police team asked the city's noise abatement unit to provide greater input on college-area noise variance permits, to which they agreed. The team scheduled meetings with the Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC) and the CACC to negotiate standards for noise permits that would lessen the impact on the surrounding community. As a result, the IFC agreed to a limit on the number of people who can attend IFC parties (there were also occupancy issues involving fire and building codes). The university agreed to sponsor more events on campus, rather than "in the outlying IFC houses," Caplan said. The university also agreed that additional security personnel would staff IFC events, to curb the need for municipal police response. The team recommended that its own police administration bill the university for event-related services, and that the police special events unit help the university plan upcoming events, at least those big enough to impact both university and city jurisdictions.

As a result, by April 1995, in the two months following full implementation of the responses, the San Diego Police Department handled only three university-related



calls. Noise and party calls dropped dramatically, and the CACC is pleased with its new agreements with the fraternities. The special events unit now provides the university with event-management expertise. Finally, relations between the campus public safety department and the municipal police have improved, because jurisdictional disputes have been resolved.*

Editors' note: This effort is significant on several fronts. Many cities with college campuses have agreements with local police defining jurisdictional arrangements between different public-safety authorities. This effort takes a fresh look at the problem, from a patrol perspective. In addition, in this case, city police listened to and represented the surrounding community's interests, and they mediated reasonable solutions with university affiliates, such as the IFC, regarding noise problems. Lastly, this effort evidences a thoroughness that is the hallmark of higher-quality problem-solving projects: the police team reviewed CAD data and, if there were gaps in the data, searched for additional information about the problem; they consulted the surrounding community and the campus public safety department; they involved those prompting the calls for service (fraternities and sororities) in devising solutions; and they used creative approaches (e.g., training, CAD-system markers and mediation).

Additional Editors' Comments on College-Related Crime

College campuses may be hot spots for crime for a variety of reasons, including the high number of young people attending or visiting who are of crime-prone years. The most reported campus crime is theft, but off-campus parties, sexual assaults, underage drinking, etc., also generate concern for campuses and their surrounding communities. The efforts in this section represent two types of problems colleges experience: civil unrest stemming from an event that has gotten out of control, and noise and traffic resulting from an event.

The editors uncovered several other notable approaches aimed at tackling campus public-safety problems. To deal with student party houses in residential neighborhoods surrounding the local university, Evanston, Ill., police worked with the city council to strengthen the noise ordinance. The University of Wisconsin-Madison police examined problems at football games. At each game, they made 70 to 100 arrests for drunken conduct, sexual assaults of cheerleaders, and assaults with flying objects. Analysis showed that most of the problems occurred in the student section. In response, the police started a peer education process, discontinued sales of plastic cups (which were filled with ice and flung by some students to the sections below), and increased the speaker volume to keep students more engaged in the game (students were creating their own entertainment because they could not hear the announcer). The police also challenged Greek organizations to develop alternatives to alcohol tailgates. The state legislature passed laws restricting body-passing. Staff from the dean of students' office, as well as student observers, started sitting in the student section. In addition, some general-admission seats were changed to reserved seats.

*Sources: San Diego Police Department write-up submitted to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ- sponsored problem-solving project; personal and written communication with Sgt. Caplan.



Chapter 10

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Group Homes

Group Homes

A Group Home Problem in Fresno, Calif.

California has the highest per-capita incarceration rate in the United States, and as juvenile crime increased in the early 1990s, alternative detention facilities for the young were in demand. One alternative – community-based juvenile group homes – sprang up around the state, and large cities like Fresno found an increasing number of them spread throughout their neighborhoods. Fresno patrol officers often complained that group homes accounted for a disproportionate number of calls for service. Officers felt they were repeatedly returning to group homes to deal with public-safety issues. Officers Don Gross and Eric Eide decided to take a deeper look at the problem, in hopes of reducing calls at these locations.

Gross and Eide found that by 1994, Fresno had 40 juvenile group homes. The probation department and other court divisions, such as family court, would place young people in local group homes, for a variety of reasons. Some of these young people were convicted of crimes, while others were removed from severely dysfunctional households for a prescribed period of sheltering and recovery.

In 1994, the 40 group homes generated more than 1,000 calls for service about problems ranging from assaults to runaways. Officers complained that they were becoming "supplemental staff" to the group homes; whenever group-home staff encountered a difficult problem, they asked the police to step in. Sometimes they called the police simply to scare difficult juveniles into compliance. City council members were aware of the problem, and proposed a change in the municipal code that would allow the police to charge group homes for repetitive calls.

Gross and Eide found that some group homes never came to police attention. However, others frequently used police services. Five of the 40 group homes accounted for 50 percent of the group-home calls to police, and eight accounted for 75 percent of the calls. Further analysis showed that four group homes accounted for slightly more than 50 percent of all group-home runaways; four homes accounted for 77 percent of all group-home mental illness-related calls; four homes accounted for slightly more than 50 percent of all group-home assaults; and four homes accounted for nearly 60 percent of all group-home disturbances. Gross and Eide believed these homes accounted for the poor reputation such homes had among police and other community members, fostering the general impression that group-home residents were out of control, and that management could not control them.

Gross and Eide contacted city and state agencies involved with group homes to learn more about their interaction with and authority over the homes. They found that although a number of agencies had contact, none was exercising guardianship. For instance, the social services department's group licensing agency relied on group-home self-reporting of crime problems and police calls in granting license renewals. Some group homes were underreporting calls for police service by as much as 50



percent. Other agencies (e.g., probation and mental health) played a distinct role, but they rarely communicated with each other about problems they had with group homes.

The officers looked at past attempts to tackle group-home problems, and found they had failed for several reasons. Regulating a group home's location did not work; over 95 percent of the homes housed six or fewer clients, so federal law exempted them from many local and state regulations. The officers also looked at why repeated police response was not remedying problems at the homes. They found that, "by responding repeatedly to a group home, law enforcement actually becomes a supplemental form of staff to the problem home . . . [allowing] the home to put off dealing with specific internal issues." They also found that regulatory enforcement over the homes was too fragmented for regulatory sanctions to work. The problem, they reasoned, demanded a more comprehensive response because more than one problem home was involved.

Gross and Eide looked at the problem from an economic point of view. Group-home providers were paid for running a home, and the police and probation departments (those providing the clients) were necessary consumers. The officers decided to look for the most cost-effective way to turn group homes around, since they provided a needed community service. They came up with the following plan:

1. Bring together all those engaged in regulating group homes (i.e., the community-care licensing, county mental health, probation, and social services departments), so that they are made aware of the problems experienced by the homes and can uniformly respond. (These agencies agreed to provide "agency-specific assistance" to those homes having problems, and to apply uniform sanctions if problems persisted.)
2. Arrange regular meetings of all group-home providers so that those who run homes without problems (the vast majority) can guide and assist those who run homes with problems (the few).
3. Provide education and training to the group-home industry so that the young clients are better served.

The forum of group homes and regulators, put together by Gross and Eide, "made the group-home industry aware that there would be uniform accountability," and created more effective guardianship over the homes' management practices by making the problem operators "accountable to the forum, not just the police."

Since the officers implemented this initiative, "the distribution of calls for service [has flattened] out . . . no longer do only five homes [account for] 50 percent of calls for service." Calls in the first year after the project dropped by 300 from the year before. In addition, in the first six months, the forum was so successful in mentoring the problem homes that regulatory agencies did not have to resort to disciplinary sanctions to gain compliance. Gross and Eide estimate that, over the course of this one-year effort, they spent only 40 hours studying the problem, implementing the initiative, and assessing the impact.*

*Sources: "Group Home Problem-Oriented Policing Project," write-up prepared by Officers Don Gross and Eric Eide; conversations with Gross and Eide; pie chart prepared by Gross and Eide; information gained from panel presentation by Gross and Eide at 1996 Problem-Oriented Policing Conference.

Editors' note: Two officers were able to start solving Fresno's group-home problem. Their effort is interesting in several respects. Finding that most group homes are well run and therefore go unnoticed in the community, the officers used that knowledge rather than regulatory sanctions as the lever for change among the few problem homes. The pattern analysis the officers did provided the underlying basis for this approach, because it showed that there were fewer problem group homes than patrol officers first suspected. The officers tailored a response that made the problem operators "accountable to the forum, not just the police." They estimated that they spent 40 police hours on this project. This would appear to be time well spent, since they saved the Fresno police from responding to 300 calls for service in the year immediately following the project. With an average of 30 minutes per call for the most typical group-home calls (regarding assaults, disturbances, mental illness, and runaways), those 300 calls would have required 150 hours of police response.

A Group Home Problem in Tulsa, Okla.

Murdock Villa is a Tulsa, Okla., high-rise public-housing complex with 144 units. The woman who donated the property to the government specified that it house only physically and mentally handicapped residents. As of 1986, she continued to pay for some of the property upkeep, while the Tulsa Housing Authority administered the property and hired a resident manager. At the time, about half the residents hired home-health-care providers approved for subsidy payments by the state human services department.

In the spring of 1986, Tulsa police officer Kay Orndorff noted the high number of calls for service to Murdock Villa. Most of the calls were rather vague reports of burglary, drug dealing and theft, although rapes were occasionally reported. She also noted that the property was in poor condition — roach-infested and foul-smelling. Many residents appeared unkempt. Outside doors were often propped open with chairs, and there was no visible security at the complex. Nonresidents often wandered the hallways, and residents often fought. In short, the complex seemed in total disarray.

One evening, Orndorff and another officer investigated a report of stolen prescription medication from one of the Murdock Villa apartments. The resident's home-health-care provider was there when the officers arrived, and he seemed disoriented and under the influence of a substance. He told the officers there was no problem, but they noticed the resident, a 45-year-old quadriplegic woman, trying to signal them silently. When they questioned the resident alone, she began to cry and begged them for help. She told them the provider was stealing her medication. The officers confronted the provider with the allegation, and ultimately ordered him to leave. The next day, Orndorff advised the human services department of the situation, and arranged for the resident to select a new provider.

Two months later, Orndorff was assigned to a newly created position in the police department, community outreach coordinator. She was given latitude to work on



problems in new and creative ways. Soon after beginning this assignment, Orndorff received a call from the same Murdock Villa resident, who reported that her new home-health-care provider was stealing her jewelry. She said many other residents were being similarly victimized, but their providers threatened to abandon them if they reported the thefts. When Orndorff tried to interview other victims, she found most hesitant to talk.

Orndorff helped the woman fire the second provider, and then advised the human services department of the situation. With her department's approval, Orndorff stayed with the woman for a week, to stabilize her situation and look deeper into the complex's problems. Orndorff spoke with the woman's physician, who described his patient as highly lucid and intelligent. She found the woman's human services case-worker rather uncooperative; he refused to believe the theft allegations. He revealed that the human services department did not screen home-health-care providers; it merely gave residents their names.

Orndorff next spoke with a staff member of a nearby group home, the Independent Living Center. He told her that he, too, had heard complaints about the victimization of Murdock Villa residents. He said he had forwarded these complaints to the Tulsa Housing Authority, but he had not revealed the alleged victims' names. The victims were afraid they would be evicted if they filed complaints.

While living with the invalid woman, Orndorff was able to build some trust and rapport with other residents, sufficient for them to tell her that two human services workers were also stealing medication from residents. With some difficulty, Orndorff located the complex's resident manager; she found him to be unkempt and unconcerned about the residents' problems. The tenant association was largely ineffective in asserting tenants' rights, serving more as a social club.

To free her time to investigate the problem, Orndorff arranged for local church volunteers to spend time with the residents. She contacted the invalid woman's family in Georgia and reported her concerns. Unfortunately, the family could not afford to go to Tulsa, and the home-health-care providers had so depleted the woman's funds that she could not afford to travel, either. After some searching, Orndorff secured a donation from a local police civic organization to pay for the woman's relocation to Georgia.

Having solved one resident's problem, Orndorff looked to address the underlying problems affecting all residents. She researched calls for service over the past two years, finding some 230 of them to Murdock Villa. Joined by her commander, then-Maj. Drew Diamond, Orndorff met with the housing authority staff. Armed with the calls-for-service and crime reports, they challenged the staff to address the problems. The staff expressed surprise, claiming they had received no complaints about Murdock Villa. They did pledge to investigate the matter, however.

The police requested inspections of the complex by the fire marshal and health inspector; several violations were noted. Alerted to the complex's crime problems, the local news media publicized them. The woman who donated the building learned of

the problems through media reports. She promptly contacted Orndorff and pledged her support by vowing to close the complex if the housing authority and human services department failed to rectify the problems.

Two other Tulsa police officers, Debbie Daniels and Nancy Reed (formerly Blades), working in a new program to promote community involvement and crime prevention, joined Orndorff in her efforts to improve conditions at Murdock Villa. Specifically, they set a goal of reducing the intimidation of residents. Their intermediate objective was to *increase* by 20 percent the number of complaints filed with the police about problems at the complex. Officers Daniels and Reed worked through the tenant association to strengthen its ability to safeguard its members.

Orndorff visited Murdock Villa every other day for three weeks, both in uniform and in plain clothes. She sought out capable residents and designated them as floor monitors. The floor monitors attended tenant association meetings, identified ongoing problems, and helped find solutions to those problems. The tenant association began meeting regularly and became much more effective. The housing authority developed a better security system for the complex that regulated nonresidents' access to the building. It also corrected the fire-code violations and improved the pest control.

The mayor appointed an ad hoc committee to improve conditions at Murdock Villa. Through this effort, several private citizens raised \$15,000 to hire a tenant services coordinator. The coordinator worked independently of the housing authority. She developed an orientation program for new tenants, and helped keep the tenant association strong and active. With continued help from Orndorff, the coordinator recruited the local library, religious organizations and Meals on Wheels program to offer their services at the complex. These services helped reduce many residents' isolation and loneliness.

The intermediate objective to increase residents' willingness to report problems was met. Calls for service from Murdock Villa increased 28 percent, and reported crimes increased 51 percent, from the year prior to the intervention. During the same period, calls for service had increased only 3 percent citywide, and 7 percent in other neighborhoods the police had targeted for community outreach. The officers involved believed this partially confirmed the success of their efforts at Murdock Villa.

According to Deputy Chief Charlie Jackson, reflecting on conditions some 10 years later, the Murdock Villa experience was a catalyst for more widespread improvements in the housing authority's operations, and in its relations with the Tulsa police. Maj. Diamond, who went on to become the Tulsa police chief, recalls that after he and the officers intervened at Murdock Villa, the complex became a "nonproblem."

Officer Reed said the key to their success was getting the tenants to know and trust the police. She believed many tenants either were too afraid to call the police or did not believe it would do any good. She said, "We empowered the tenants to take control of their own problems, and to know who to contact to help solve them." She noted that conditions at Murdock Villa remained much improved for at least two years following their efforts. When she retired from beat officer, from 1995 to 1996, she said



the police were no longer getting a lot of calls for service to Murdock Villa, even though few of the original tenants and managers were still there.*

Editors' note: This project is noteworthy for the officer's unconventional way of analyzing the problem – moving into the problem complex. The officer uncovered a serious crime problem that the police and Tulsa Housing Authority had previously underestimated. The officer motivated other individuals and organizations to work toward a long-term solution to the problem. The officer's initial focus on one victim was subsequently expanded to other victims, and ultimately, to the conditions and management practices that allowed crimes to occur. The responding officers also received considerable support and help from their commanding officer, who used his influence to get other agencies involved in solving the problem.

Additional Editors' Comments on Group Home Problems

Increasingly, group homes dot the nation's communities. The need for additional correctional space spurs some of the increase. However, many group homes house young people who are victims, not necessarily offenders. Many communities have group homes for the mentally impaired, and social service and mental health agencies often provide the residents with assistance. Some group homes are called “assisted-living facilities” because they received help from public and/or private agencies. At some facilities, funding or regulatory agency representatives provide full-time, live-in assistance and monitoring; at others, representatives simply visit periodically. Some group homes come to a community's attention due to crime, while others never do.

The variety of living facilities, the variety of people housed in them (offenders, victims, mentally ill, elderly, etc.), and the range of those people's needs make it difficult to generalize about solutions to problems. Certainly, capable guardianship, such as monitoring and adequate supervision, is key, although how much is required will vary with the setting and the problems encountered. One issue underlying the efforts in this section is “Who should bear the costs of capable guardianship: the facilities or the police?” The two approaches documented here reflect attempts to equitably resolve this issue.

The editors found two other approaches worth noting. Two St. Petersburg, Fla., police officers working on group homes with repeat calls for service became certified assisted-living-facility administrators. Doing so helped them understand and resolve chronic problems at these facilities. Also in St. Petersburg, officers noted that several assisted-living facilities were generating a disproportionate number of calls for service. The officers analyzed the types of calls and tracked those who made them (e.g., residents or staff). In one case, a high number of unnecessary residents' calls prompted police to ask the management to move the phones to a staff-monitored area. Other types of calls and disturbances at these facilities required different tailored responses.

*Sources: “Murdock Villa – Tulsa Case Study,” by Karen Allen, field technical assistance coordinator for the Problem-Oriented Approach to Drug Enforcement project administered by the Police Executive Research Forum, and funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, undated; personal communication with Deputy Chief Charles Jackson, Oct. 23 1997; personal communication with Drew Diamond, Oct. 30, 1997; personal communication with Detective Nancy Reed, Nov. 10, 1997.

Chapter 11

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Homeless-Related Crime

Homeless-Related Crime

A Homeless-Related Crime Problem in Fort Pierce, Fla.

In the fall of 1990, Fort Pierce, Fla., police officer Eugene Sereg, assigned to the city's downtown area and beaches, began receiving complaints from citizens, fishermen, merchants, and tourists about panhandling, petty thefts, and garbage and disorderly people in a riverfront park. To assess the problem, Sereg patrolled the area more closely and interviewed frequent park users and park maintenance workers. He also systematically interviewed the people suspected of creating the nuisance. In addition to identifying them, he asked them why they chose to hang out in the park. Many told him the police did not bother them there, and it was close to a grocery store that sold cheap beer and wine, even to intoxicated people. The park and the surrounding downtown area also provided a steady stream of income through panhandling. Sereg's survey of the area revealed that many transients were sleeping under the South Beach Bridge. He also noticed that the height and spacing of the bushes in the park gave the transients concealment and shade.

Suspecting the problems might not be limited to the downtown area, Sereg asked other patrol officers to notify him of similar problems elsewhere in the city. He confirmed problems in at least five other parks, but each park's problems were different. Older alcoholics favored some parks. Drug addicts of various age frequented one park.

One park, known as the Savannahs, is a naturally wild habitat. Most of the transients living there were not alcoholics. They stole from nearby businesses and retreated to the woods. Although they preferred to commit crimes of opportunity, if confronted, they could be very intimidating to merchants. Most thefts occurred in shops and parking lots along nearby U.S. Highway 1. In addition, the transients often failed to pay for meals.

Using the sheriff's department's helicopter, Sereg and a cameraman conducted aerial reconnaissance of the park, as it is big and difficult to penetrate on foot. The photographs confirmed the presence of fairly elaborate campsites. The campsites were near a set of railroad tracks on which 22 trains per day traveled between Florida and points north. While working on a different problem involving noise complaints at the railroad switching yard, Sereg noticed that the transients regularly used the trains for transportation. There were hopping-off points along the tracks elsewhere in the city; bridge overpasses were the most popular.

Realizing that he was dealing with a bigger, more complex problem than he first imagined, Sereg knew he would have to address it one step at a time. He began by recontacting the downtown merchants to let them know he was aware of the problem and would need their cooperation to solve it. He assured them he would increase his visibility in the area, but in exchange, he needed them to contact him on his pager whenever they had a problem with the transients.



Sereg also recommended that the merchants stop giving money and food to the transients, and that they discourage their customers from doing so. Although the merchants felt they were helping to solve a social problem, in reality, they were doing little to solve the larger problems of hunger and poverty. Rather, they were encouraging behavior that was harming both the transients and community commerce. For about three weeks, Sereg stood on the streets daily to discourage people from giving money to the transients. This tactic was very tiring and unpleasant, but necessary to break some long-entrenched practices.

The next step was to contact organizations and agencies that provided services to transient and indigent people; Sereg educated himself about the services each organization provided. There were four agencies he could count on. The Salvation Army provided subsistence-level food and clothing, and made referrals for medical care. A ministry provided emergency food, shelter and clothing for homeless families, and made referrals to state public-assistance agencies. A church provided medical referrals and short-term shelter for alcoholics. The state human rehabilitative services department provided rehabilitation services for alcoholics and drug addicts who volunteered to participate. A few other churches and businesses agreed to notify Sereg if they could feed transients on holidays. Working with a local migrant-workers advocate, Sereg also made referrals for Spanish-speaking transients.

Sereg recontacted the transients and, depending on their individual needs, referred them to the appropriate organizations. Unfortunately, local hospitals seemed less willing to help with more serious medical problems.

To motivate some transients to seek help, Sereg set about making it uncomfortable for them to live in park bushes and under bridges. He arranged for the railroad company to spray a pesticide that was nontoxic to humans in places where transients' living habits attracted rodents. He had the parks department trim park bushes and install new sprinkler heads near the more popular sleeping spots. He had gates installed across the stairwells of some businesses and government buildings to prevent transients from sleeping there.

Sereg arranged for the sanitation department to make more frequent dumpster pickups and to have damaged dumpsters repaired. He compelled some store owners to clear away obstructions to the dumpsters. He told restaurant owners to put food waste at the bottoms of dumpsters, where it would be less visible. He had fast-food restaurant managers put locks on their dumpsters. He knew the transients were at risk for disease from eating contaminated food. He encouraged merchants to limit the number and type of alley garbage containers. City code-enforcement inspectors reminded a few uncooperative merchants, and at least one government agency, of their legal obligations, and fined them for failure to comply. Sereg testified at several hearings.

Sereg advised transients of the city ordinance prohibiting picking through garbage containers. He showed photographs revealing the sanitation problem to interested city officials, to inform them of the scope of the problem and of the police response to it.

Sereg briefed other patrol officers about the problem and the agencies available for referral. He encouraged them to refer difficult transients to him.

The problem in the Savannahs park proved to be more difficult. Sereg tried to get the state fire marshal to survey the area and do a controlled burn. Environmental concerns made this approach impractical. Code-enforcement inspectors advised an absentee property owner to clear out the underbrush and garbage. When he refused, the city cleared out the brush and fined him \$1,300. Unfortunately, this hurt the owner-police relationship and slowed the cleanup.

Sereg and the train engineers worked out a train whistle code to notify officers if transients were riding on a train. A few transients were removed from the trains as a result of this warning system.

The problems were not eliminated, but there were some indicators of progress. Sereg identified approximately 35 people causing problems when he first began the project. One year later, he estimated there were about six problem transients living in the city year-round, and another six who were seasonal. Sereg rarely encountered a transient whose name and background he did not know. This improved his and other officers' ability to refer transients to appropriate agencies. The transients also came to know Sereg; some occasionally called the police station to check on his schedule.

Visually, the downtown area's streets and alleyways improved. Casual interviews with fishermen, merchants, office workers, and park maintenance workers indicated lowered levels of concern and increased use of the parks. Dispatch records did not separately code complaints about transients and panhandlers, and officers wrote few reports on such calls. However, Sereg received fewer direct and dispatched complaints about transients.*

Editors' note: This project is noteworthy for the officer's persistence and systematic progress over more than a year. He developed a wide range of carefully tailored responses to address the problem's many discrete aspects. His goal was not merely to stop the problems the transients created; he also wanted to help them. His strategy reflected both concerns.

A Homeless-Related Crime Problem in San Diego, Calif.

California's Otay River Valley is a massive tract of undeveloped land, covering 8,000 acres. It is bordered by the cities of San Diego, Chula Vista and Imperial Beach. Thick underbrush covered much of the land, making passage by foot difficult. The businesses surrounding the river valley suffered from burglary, panhandling, theft, and vandalism. People often illegally dumped trash and debris in the valley. Transients, perhaps as many as 300, lived at campsites in the valley. Huts of bamboo, metal, plywood, and tarpaulin were furnished with tattered and filthy chairs, couches and mattresses. Some transients had propane barbecue grills and refrigerators powered by generators or car batteries. They used shopping carts to transport stolen property, or

*Sources: Script for videotape narrative chronicling the project, written by Officer Eugene Sereg and Michael Scott, and produced by the Fort Pierce Police Department, 1991; "Sign of the Times," Police Magazine, Vol. 16, No. 3, March 1992.

cut them into grills for cooking. Many of these items were either scavenged or stolen. Some campsites were booby-trapped to ward off intruders. Others had gardens and recreational equipment. Many of the transients suffered from infectious diseases like AIDS, sexual and skin diseases, and mental illness. Owing to the heavy drug use, especially of methamphetamine, some people came to refer to the valley as "Club Meth."

Before late 1991, most of the police response was reactive. Officers would file crime reports, but few crimes were solved, as the connection between the crimes and the transients was not firmly established. Officers Mark Haas and Joseph Snarponis first noticed an increase in crime at a shopping plaza located at the edge of the valley. They located a group of transients in the valley who they believed were at least partly responsible for the crime. They took note of valley conditions and contacted the property manager of the H.G. Fenton-Western Salt Co., which owned some of the land. With the property manager's cooperation, they cleared out some of the transients' campsites, but they were stymied in their efforts to clear out the underbrush and debris due to state environmental regulations.

In early 1993, police discovered several new campsites while investigating a sexual assault that allegedly occurred in the valley's western region. The victim told officers that other assaults in the valley were going unreported, and that some of the transients were getting more aggressive. Complaints from the shopping plaza escalated, and the fire department put out a number of fires in the valley. The surrounding communities' fear peaked when two young boys were found murdered in the valley. Police efforts to address the crime-related transient problems had to be put on hold for fear of compromising the murder investigation. (The police had not solved the murders as of late 1997.)

As political pressure mounted to remove the transients, Officers Bobby Wight and Sylvia Vella were assigned to take on the valley as a problem-oriented policing project. The officers contacted the property manager and enlisted his cooperation in posting no-trespassing signs at various campsites. The property manager contracted with a company to clean up the properties. By the end of November 1993, all the campsites were cleared out. The police enforced the trespassing warnings. Only one person refused to leave, and that person was taken into protective custody due to mental illness.

In May 1994, the problems resurfaced. Property managers now complained to a city council member that crimes were again occurring at nearby businesses. In June, a meeting was convened to which representatives from all agencies and businesses affected by the Otay River Valley were invited. The problem clearly called for a more comprehensive solution. Given the large scope of the project, a police sergeant and two lieutenants (one each from San Diego and Chula Vista) assumed supervisory responsibility. Officers Wight and Bryon Barmer presented the problem at the police department's monthly Problem Analysis Advisory Committee meeting, and their strategy began to take shape. They envisioned a three-phase effort involving enforcement of trespassing laws, cleanup of the property, and restoration of the land to a use that

would discourage illegal camping. Various government agencies from the cities of San Diego and Chula Vista, San Diego County and the state of California, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Army Corps of Engineers, joined with private-property owners on this massive project.

The police officers began analyzing the problem by conducting aerial reconnaissance of the valley, mapping out the campsites and the ingress and egress points. Police crime analysts compiled statistics on crimes and calls for service related to the valley, to verify the problem and establish baseline data from which progress could later be measured. Officer Wight met with the city's property department to discern who owned the valley's various parcels of land. He learned that the city of San Diego had bought some of the land, and intended to buy an additional 6,000 acres. Wight held several community meetings to keep business owners, property owners and elected officials apprised of developments and to form consensus on project goals.

The officers leading the project were thoroughly prepared to present their strategy to their divisional command and project steering committee. They had color maps of the valley, statistical crime maps, photo presentations, videotapes of air surveillance, a nine-page orientation paper, and a three-phase operational plan. Once the project was approved, the officers informed prosecutors about it so that they would not trivialize any resulting charges. A prosecutor was assigned as legal counsel for the project. The private-property owners gave the police written authority to enforce trespassing laws. Project officers gave the steering committee a tour of the valley, during which they found several more campsites not visible from the air.

The first step in responding to the problem was to enforce trespassing warnings. Once again, the police issued warnings to transients and ordered them to leave the property. At the same time, they provided the transients with information about area homeless shelters and other services they might need. The police photographed and identified the transients they warned in case it became necessary to arrest them. They made three separate sweeps through the valley to ensure that all trespassers had been warned. This time, they made nearly 100 arrests — many on outstanding warrants, some for trespassing. In late September, after the official notifications were completed, all campsites were torn down. Police found an assortment of knives, a sawed-off rifle and ingredients for pipe bombs among the abandoned debris.

The second step was to clean up the valley. With the police providing security, approximately 200 volunteers collected 38 tons of trash and cleared out the campsites. Many of the volunteers came from the California Conservation Corps, the federal Urban Youth Corps, and the National Civilian Community Corps (part of AmeriCorps). A second cleanup was conducted in June 1995, with added assistance from state prison inmates. A private landfill agreed to waive \$1,500 in dumping fees. A private waste-hauling company donated the use of large trash containers. Thirty tons of trash were removed.



According to data the crime analysis unit analyzed, burglaries and related crimes dropped 80 percent after the evictions and cleanups. This decline has held steady through 1997. Before the project, San Diego police were spending about 3,000 hours per year on valley-related calls. Since the project was completed, the annual figure has dropped to between 500 and 800 hours. San Diego and Chula Vista officers walk through the valley twice each month to ensure that the transients do not return. Police estimate there are now only about 50 transients who still occasionally sleep in the valley; however, these transients have not established elaborate campsites.

The city of San Diego's long-term plan for the Otay River Valley is to develop it as a regional park, with hiking trails and a wildlife refuge.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the magnitude of the problem and the amount of work and coordination required to implement the responses. San Diego police jokingly refer to this effort as "the mother of all POP projects." Coordinating the commitments and activities of dozens of agencies and businesses and hundreds of volunteer and paid workers was remarkable in itself. Many large problem-solving initiatives fail more because of coordination and commitment failures than because of poor strategy.

A Homeless-Related Crime Problem in Santa Ana, Calif.

Harbor Plaza is a large commercial complex at the corner of two main thoroughfares in Santa Ana, Calif. The complex has about 30 businesses, including a large supermarket and a drug store. In 1993, property managers and merchants complained to the Santa Ana police that increasing crime at the plaza was seriously hurting their business. The supermarket was the plaza's anchor store, and its managers were considering closing and relocating. The managers and merchants said aggressive drug dealing, panhandling and theft from vehicles were the most common problems. Police officers in the Westend district decided to address the problem.

They started by refining their understanding of the problem. They looked at crime and calls-for-service data and conducted a written survey of the plaza's merchants. The data showed that most of the crimes and calls occurred during one patrol shift. The survey also showed that panhandling was the merchants' predominant concern. During surveillance, the officers watched panhandlers aggressively accost shoppers, begging for money. Some panhandlers pretended to be military veterans. Many of the targeted customers were Hispanic and Asian women. Some panhandlers also offered to wash windshields for money, giving them the opportunity to look in vehicles for valuables to steal. The officers identified and contacted 15 panhandlers and learned that all were addicts who used the money mainly to buy drugs. Many had come to Santa Ana due to the weather and the city's reputation for cheap drugs and tolerance of transients.

Partly due to police efforts to curb homeless-related problems downtown and the closure of a nearby park, the number of homeless in the Westend district had increased.

*Sources: Otay River Valley POP Project report, San Diego Police Department, July 1995, submitted in support of nomination for 1995 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; "SDPD and CVPD Combine Efforts for 'the Mother of All POP Projects,'" by Patti Clayton and Roxana Kennedy, Law Enforcement Quarterly, August-October 1995; personal communication with Officer Patti Clayton, July 11, 1997.

Five blocks away from Harbor Plaza was the Santa Ana riverbed, in the Orange County Sheriff's Office's jurisdiction. It had become a favorite campsite for many transients because the bridge overpasses offered shelter. The officers suspected that the Harbor Plaza problems were connected to the riverbed, which they confirmed by videotaping activity there. The same people causing problems at the plaza were living at the riverbed. The videotapes also recorded criminal activity at the riverbed, including drug dealing and prostitution.

Westend police officials knew they had to address this problem carefully. The city had incurred substantial legal liability in the past by addressing transient problems through strict law enforcement. Moreover, the city's ordinance prohibiting public camping was still under an injunction, pending a legal appeal. Accordingly, the police department's legal advisor briefed all personnel working on the project, before they took any action. Project officers established their goals: to reduce the number of crimes in the area, reduce the incidence of drug dealing and use, and eliminate aggressive panhandling. They developed a five-phase response plan.

In the first phase, the officers coordinated with the Orange County Sheriff's Office and Environmental Management Agency to remove all people illegally camping in the riverbed, and to clear out the campsites. The police sought and received support for this operation from two elected officials, a city council member and a county supervisor. The response team posted warning notices at illegal campsites and handed out flyers to transients advising them that camping was illegal, and that police were going to enforce the law. On the date scheduled for enforcement and cleanup, all transients left the riverbed without resistance. Cleanup crews found stolen property, used drug paraphernalia and window-washing equipment. The cleanup operation was videotaped.

In the next phase, the officers sought to reduce the number of people committing crimes and panhandling in the plaza. They intensively patrolled the plaza and made field contacts with nearly 100 people suspected of various offenses. They made only 10 arrests. Many people left the plaza and did not return. Only about a dozen people persistently returned to cause problems. To put pressure on the remaining hard-core offenders, the officers conspicuously followed them, warned them and interrupted their illicit activities. Eventually, all the panhandlers left the plaza. The officers also uncovered and disrupted a fraud scheme in which people sold stolen calling-card numbers to public-pay-phone users.

Once they had removed the transients from the riverbed and plaza, the officers turned their attention to promoting environmental changes in the plaza that would deter future problems. They convinced merchants to lock trash dumpsters to prevent scavenging. An alley drug users and prostitutes often used was gated. Sections of the parking lot frequented by prostitutes and drug dealers were chained off at night. Businesses with public restrooms were convinced to control access by using keys or tokens. A water fountain window-washers used to fill their buckets was moved away from the parking lot. A fast-food restaurant changed its beverage service to reduce



thefts. Several public pay phones used for drug dealing and prostitution were removed; the remainder allowed only outgoing calls and were disconnected late at night. Poor outdoor lighting was improved. A newly hired private security company began impounding vehicles parked without authorization, to remove potential theft targets and hiding places for other unlawful activities. The police trained security officers.

In the final phase, officers designed a flyer to educate shoppers about the problem of panhandling. The flyer discouraged indiscriminate contributions to panhandlers, and promoted contributions to legitimate charities that serve the needy. The flyers were posted in store windows and distributed to customers.

Once the plan had been carried out, the officers conducted a follow-up written survey of the merchants. All merchants noted decreased panhandling, fewer disturbances and fewer transients. Some said their business had noticeably increased and customers had commented favorably on the improvements. A fast-food restaurant manager reported a 50 percent increase in sales, and the supermarket managers said their sales had increased to the point where they had postponed plans to relocate. The merchants formed a business association and agreed to meet with the police regularly to address issues of mutual concern.

Arrest statistics showed that proactive arrests for municipal-code violations and for vice and narcotics offenses increased during the project period, while offenses such as theft from vehicles and vandalism decreased. The police department did not receive a single citizen complaint about the officers' actions, although they believe homeless advocates were monitoring them. According to Westend district commander Lt. William Tegeler, conditions at the plaza have remained improved four years later. The plaza is fully occupied, although the anchor supermarket moved for reasons unrelated to the transients. A new grocery store that better caters to the largely Hispanic clientele moved into the vacated space, and is thriving. The police department receives only occasional complaints regarding plaza panhandling.

The riverbed has remained clear of transient campsites. County engineers reconstructed the areas under the highway overpasses, using a rock-and-cement combination that makes the ground unsuitable for camping.*

Editors' note: This project used a carefully tailored combination of tactics to address its goals. The responding officers studied the offenders' behavior and the environment before taking any action. They appropriately consulted with legal advisors, knowing there were issues of constitutionally protected activity. The police used warnings and education more than actual enforcement, thereby maximizing voluntary compliance, both from offenders and from merchants and shoppers. The many changes made to the environmental conditions of the plaza and the riverbed seemed quite productive. This project received a 1993 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

*Sources: Project report submitted in support of nomination for 1993 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, Santa Ana Police Department; personal communication with Lt. William Tegeler, May 30, 1997.



Additional Editors' Comments on Homeless-Related Crime Problems

The number of homeless skyrocketed in many cities in the 1980s. For some transients, the economy was the catalyst; for others, it was drug and alcohol abuse or discharge from mental health institutions. The police in these cities were put in the unenviable position of addressing homeless-related problems. Even when the homeless broke no laws, many citizens felt that street-living and panhandling degraded the community's image, and they looked to the police for solutions. The police also walked a fine line trying to discern what was constitutionally protected. The efforts in this section document officers taking a careful look at different homeless-related problems, including aggressive panhandling, burglary, public urination and defecation, theft, and trespassing. In the San Diego and Fort Pierce projects, officers tried to link the homeless with appropriate social-service providers who could more adequately address their needs. In all three projects, officers made physical changes to areas to make them less attractive for aggressive panhandling, burglary, foraging, sleeping, stealing, and urinating.

The editors found several other strategies worth mentioning. In 1990, in Savannah, Ga., community sentiment against the homeless was running high, with many suspecting that the homeless accounted for a high proportion of crime in the downtown historic area. Savannah police studied the problem and found the opposite: Less than 1 percent of all calls for service and Part I crimes was attributable to the homeless. Many of the people police interviewed who appeared homeless actually had a place to stay. A fair number were heavy drinkers, had manual-labor skills and were unemployed.

In Evanston, Ill., as part of a study of aggressive panhandling, police found there were 36 panhandlers in the downtown area, 81 percent of whom had criminal records. Many used panhandling money for drugs and alcohol. The most generous donors were local college students. As a result, the city used several strategies. It hired part-time workers, called "intervenors," to help panhandlers find alternatives to aggressive panhandling, and to provide givers with information on ways to help panhandlers through charitable donations. The city strategically placed cash-donation boxes in the downtown area so donors had an immediate way to help people in need, through charitable organizations. The city placed posters in the downtown area discouraging panhandling and emphasizing the research results. The posters dissuaded direct giving to panhandlers, stating, "Most panhandlers in Evanston are struggling with substance abuse and are not homeless."



Chapter 12

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Mental Illness

Mental Illness

A Mental Illness Problem in Los Angeles County, Calif.

Over the last two decades, in part due to a national trend toward deinstitutionalizing the mentally ill, individual communities have struggled to handle this group's special needs. Local mental health agencies, often strapped for funds, frequently cannot cope with all these needs. More and more, police are called to intervene when the mentally ill require medication or psychiatric care, are involved in disputes, or endanger their own or others' lives. Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office (LASO) Sgt. Brian Smith said, "So many of the mental health programs in counties throughout California have been eliminated that many of the mental health clinics tell callers requesting crisis service to simply call 911."

Overcrowded jails, which often are the wrong place for the mentally ill, force the police to turn to hospitals and institutions for placement of those who are a danger. The LASO estimated that 15 percent of its call load involved mentally ill people. On average, if a deputy committed a mentally ill person to an institution, it took 3.2 hours — certainly a lot of time, particularly on a busy shift with a lot of calls. In addition, LASO deputies were frustrated at "being forced to resolve a situation where the uniform created an adversarial [atmosphere]," Sgt. Smith reported. There was some concern that a uniformed response might contribute to a confrontation, concluding with the need for physical force.

In addition, some deputies believed they were not informed enough to handle these situations. They needed more information about the people they were responding to, their medical histories, and their insurance coverage (so that proper placement could be made). For instance, a veteran's hospital might already have a significant case file on a person, and be able to provide better treatment.

In October 1991, the LASO collaborated with the mental health department, teaming a sergeant and a mental health counselor in one region of the county to see if they could have greater success in handling calls involving the mentally ill. This response stemmed from research the LASO had done on handling special populations. They had read an NIJ publication, *Police Response to Special Populations*, which Sgt. Smith said encouraged police and mental-health-service providers "to work more closely together in an allied effort to address the problems associated with the mentally ill." The book outlined successes from other jurisdictions, and the LASO crafted a response that suited the particulars of its own jurisdiction.

A one-month pilot project was put together and studied to determine the feasibility of this new approach. During this time, the police-mental health counselor evaluation team spent over 123.5 hours on 43 contacts, with the following results: Seven people



were committed to county psychiatric hospitals; one person was arrested; eleven people were admitted to private psychiatric hospitals; five walkaways were returned to board-and-care facilities; follow-up phone referrals led to additional use of private bed space; physicians were enlisted after hours to help with patients exhibiting extreme behavior; and twelve people were either returned home for family care, with referrals to private services and outpatient clinics, or convinced to take prescribed medication.

Due to this initial effort's success, the LASO formed five additional collaborative mental health evaluation teams. Each team is trained in nonviolent confrontations, and the police receive intensive training in de-escalating incidents involving the mentally ill. Generally, "the teams evaluate the patient at the point of contact, and arrange appropriate placement depending on [the patient's] needs and resources," Sgt. Smith said. The teams' objectives include providing better service to the mentally ill; maximizing the availability of patrol deputies; providing more expert intervention; helping patrol deputies assess a person's need for mental health services; defusing volatile encounters with the mentally ill; providing background information on patients so appropriate assessments and placements can be made; working on chronic or acute neighborhood disturbances involving the mentally ill; training deputies on care and services available for the mentally ill; maintaining a computer database on people with mental illness and their needs, and on the services available, from least-secure to most-secure placements; intervening in attempted suicides where mental illness might play a part; working with courts for the secure placement of the dangerously mentally ill; and helping relatives of those with mental illness.

Sgt. Smith said that, for the most part, the teams transport the mentally ill themselves, avoiding ambulances, so that the patient

. . . is rapidly [placed] in the mental health care system, assuring stabilization. This process bypasses extended waiting periods at county psychiatric emergency rooms, and frees patrol deputies to return to community . . . duties. The [mental health] units are equipped with knowledge and resources that enable them to seek placement funded by sources other than the county tax-supported system . . . The units also attempt to ensure that private, county and state service providers who are licensed to receive difficult patients do not refuse these patients in order to pick and choose high-paying, low-maintenance patients.

The teams found that many of the people who were formerly placed in county psychiatric facilities had Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, or veteran's benefits. One measure of success was that the teams diverted 70 percent of the people "away from county-funded programs . . . [alleviating] the overcrowded conditions of the county psychiatric emergency rooms, and retaining vital bed space for indigent-acute mentally ill individuals," Sgt. Smith said. By diverting people to more appropriate placement, and preserving county mental health facilities for the needy, the mental

health teams saved the county \$1.4 million for fiscal year 1993 to 1994, according to an evaluation of their efforts.

Another success was the development of a diversion policy for minor-misdemeanor offenders "who are in psychiatric crisis." They no longer are criminally booked. Instead, "the person is placed in an appropriate care facility, and [the person's] crime [is] held in abeyance, pending no further problems," said Sgt. Smith.

Finally, the LASO checked whether the teams had an impact on violent confrontations during encounters between police and the mentally ill. They looked at cases where police arrived and the mentally ill person had a gun or knife, or threatened some other type of harm. On 170 occasions, the teams were able to convince the person to stop the threatening behavior, after a patrol deputy had failed to do so.

Through July 1997, the teams had intervened in more than 5,000 cases. In only 219 of those did they recommend arrest. In more than 1,000 cases, they determined that the people did not need to be hospitalized.*

Editors' note: Over the last decade, experts have suggested several ways to measure the effectiveness of problem-solving efforts. These measures include (1) reducing the number of problem incidents; (2) reducing the harm from the problem; (3) eliminating the problem completely; (4) finding the right organization or person to handle the problem; (5) handling the problem more effectively; and (6) leaving those most affected by the problem better equipped to deal with the problem in the future. For many problem-solving efforts, the measure most used in assessment is the first: whether the number of incidents has declined. It is notable that in this case, the LASO was successful by several of the less traditional measures. They reduced the harm from the problem – a significant number of potentially violent confrontations were avoided, and the monetary drain on the county mental health system was lessened. Also, the LASO enlisted the support of a more appropriate agency for their collaborative team approach, bringing mental health clinicians to the streets when the problems with the mentally ill were occurring. Finally, the LASO and county mental health department believe police encounters with the mentally ill are better handled now with this new team approach. The patients are better served – their mental health needs are better understood. And most encounters no longer result in long waits at county mental health facilities or the jail, or in physical confrontations.

Two Mental Illness Problems in St. Louis, Mo.

CASE STUDY NO. 1

In 1992, a man began repeatedly phoning the chief's office of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. The chief's special assistant, Mike Scott, and his aide, Sgt. Robert Heimberger, handled the calls. The man complained about juveniles

*Sources: Project description submitted by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; conversations with Sgt. Brian Smith; written material submitted by Smith in support of project results.

involved in drug dealing. He claimed to be a confidential police informant, former military intelligence officer, grand juror, and neighborhood-watch leader. He spoke of his efforts to rid the neighborhood of crime and gang problems. After about a dozen such calls, Scott and Heimberger researched the dispatch and incident report files. They discovered that between January and May 1993, the police were dispatched to the man's home 27 times. The calls varied from minor disturbances to more serious armed robberies and assaults.

In just three years, the man had been listed as the victim in 17 felony reports, most of which were for assaults, burglaries and robberies. He had also been arrested for aggravated assault. Crime summaries showed the man reported either unknown assailants who robbed him on the street, or unknown intruders who assaulted him in his home. The reports further identified associates who were regular crime suspects. In addition, several police officers had been injured in a suspicious fire at the address.

The man had made most of the calls for service, complaining about people hanging around in the street, not leaving his home, or stealing money from him. Officers had handled most of these calls without writing a report. They had spent over 100 hours handling the initial criminal investigations alone. Patrol officers and detectives had spent substantial, though undocumented, time handling calls and following up on investigations. However, no single patrol officer or detective had handled more than a couple of incidents.

The man had thought patterns characteristic of a mental disorder such as schizophrenia. He also said he routinely brought people into his home to stay. Scott and Heimberger verified that the man was a Korean War veteran, and that Social Security was his only source of income. On one police report, the man had listed his sister as an emergency contact. Heimberger called her, and she told him her brother had behaved strangely ever since being discharged from the military. She had refused to let him live with her because of his behavior. Scott and Heimberger also visited the man's home, where their original impressions of him were confirmed.

Heimberger contacted the Veterans Administration Hospital, and a caseworker agreed to contact the man. After a phone conversation with him, the caseworker agreed to place him in VA housing, where his mental illness could be managed. Meanwhile, Scott and Heimberger sought help from Jim Rudden, a district police officer who had extensive contacts at social service and mental health agencies. Rudden took the man to a local social service agency to speak with counselors. The counselors confirmed that the man had a chronic, but treatable, mental disorder.

Scott and Heimberger spent no more than one hour making phone calls to address this problem and find help for the man. As of November 1993, police officers had been dispatched to the man's new home only once in four months, to preserve the peace.

CASE STUDY NO. 2

In October 1993, St. Louis patrol officers Fran Krupp and Laure Lamczyk received a call regarding burglars in a home in the Wells-Goodfellow neighborhood. They met the caller, an elderly woman who was legally blind. The woman complained that some people had broken into her basement, and that she could hear them talking while they did their laundry. Although the officers found no signs of intruders, the woman was convinced that people had entered her basement. However, for the time being, she was satisfied with the officers' inspection.

Officer Krupp later recalled having heard several other assignments to that address. She checked the computer-aided dispatch system and found records of 188 calls to the address in the past year. It was the 10th highest call location in the district. Over the past three years, police had responded to the address nearly 300 times, for either "burglars in the building" or "disturbances." Krupp also discovered that no officers had ever written reports on these calls.

Talking with other officers who had handled calls at this location, Krupp heard the same story repeatedly – an elderly woman had called the police because she heard noises coming from her basement. Each call had been unfounded and coded out. Police had already spent an estimated 240 hours handling the previous calls, and these calls would continue if the department did not do something.

Field supervisors agreed that every time a call was dispatched to this location, the precinct sergeant would call the complainant to determine if the police were really needed. If not, the sergeant would code the call and call off the responding officers. Krupp and Lamczyk contacted a close relative of the woman and described the problem. The relative knew that the woman sometimes called the police, but was shocked when he learned how often. On Oct. 18, 1993, Krupp, Lamczyk and Sgt. Greg Wurm met with the family. During the 30-minute meeting, the family agreed that something had to be done. They assured the officers that they would work with the woman to stop the unnecessary calls.

Several weeks later, Krupp noticed that no calls had been dispatched to the address. Concerned for the woman's well-being, Krupp and Lamczyk went to her house to check on her. When they arrived, the woman greeted them at the door and told them that her family had forbidden her from calling the police without first checking with them. As of February 1994, only one call had been dispatched to the woman's home.*

Editor's note: These two cases share certain similarities. Both reveal how an underlying mental condition can generate incremental, but sizable, work demands on the police that can easily go undetected in an incident-oriented environment. The proper care and treatment of the callers were not necessarily simple or entirely effective, and evidently, the police were not best suited to address the underlying problems. The families and other agencies were.

*Sources: Keys to the City: Problem-Solving in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, Vol. 2, No. 7, and Vol. 3, No. 1.

Additional Editors' Comments on Mental Illness Problems

Encounters with the mentally ill are some of the most challenging police face. The variety and complexity of mental and emotional problems people can have make it difficult for police to accurately assess how best to proceed in each situation. The efforts documented in this section highlight different approaches to handling problems with the mentally ill. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office chose to improve its handling of the mentally ill countywide, based on successful experimentation. The St. Louis efforts demonstrate more localized approaches to improving police response to the mentally ill.

The editors discovered several other noteworthy efforts. In Montreal, police research found that one woman called the police 2,000 times in a three-year period, complaining of break-ins, fires, shootings, and attempted suicide. Constables met with the woman, her physician, the emergency medical service, and court liaisons seeking solutions. Her physician told constables the woman had symptoms of schizophrenia, evidenced by hallucinations. The court ordered that she undergo a psychiatric evaluation, but the problem persisted. After a second court-ordered evaluation, it was determined that the woman was on the wrong medication, causing hallucinations about crime and victimization. Court psychiatrists prescribed more suitable medication, and the police have received no further calls from the woman.

A St. Petersburg, Fla., officer discovered that police are asked approximately 145 times a year to find missing people whose memory is impaired. The officer recommended that the police adopt a program developed by the Alzheimer's Association, called "Wanderer's Identification." Alzheimer's sufferers receive a bracelet or necklace with their name and a code number. The county sheriff's computer stores vital information about the person, retrievable by the code number. Many other police departments are working with local chapters of the Alzheimer's Association to institute similar efforts, efforts that are time-saving to police and helpful to memory-loss sufferers.

Minneapolis, Minn., police piloted a program to aid families in crisis. After analyzing 911 "domestic dispute" calls, police found that many involved children who were despondent, drug-addicted, suicidal, or acting out from some unresolved issue. As a result, a mobile crisis team of mental health workers is now dispatched if an officer determines a need, providing immediate expert intervention.

Chapter 13

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Neighborhood Disorder

Neighborhood Disorder

A Neighborhood Disorder Problem in Glendale, Calif.

Glendale, Calif., a community of 200,000, began looking at problems associated with its day-laborer population. Day laborers, sometimes referred to as "casual" laborers, solicit temporary employment in residential and commercial areas. Residents and businesses objected to traffic problems caused by the laborers' swarming around vehicles at intersections, seeking work. Traffic was sometimes blocked, and because the laborers had to be outdoors to solicit employers, they used the nearby alleys, parking lots and streets as restrooms. Littering was a significant problem, as well.

Glendale police officers Javier Ruiz and Ron Gillman decided to address the problem, which residents complained had been plaguing the city for almost 25 years. They met often with residents and business owners to hear their complaints. They were also concerned about the laborers' welfare. They met with them frequently, knowing a successful response depended on their cooperation. Officer Ruiz said: "The majority of [day laborers in Glendale] are recent immigrants and refugees from Central or South America and Mexico. Additionally, there are migrant farm workers seeking an economic alternative in an urban work force." Many of the laborers had few other options. Some had limited English-language skills and formal education. Others lacked legal-immigrant papers. This heightened the competition among them for a day's employment, sometimes ending with fights and assault charges levied.

In the past, officers had used extra and directed patrol to address laborer problems, but this met with little success. At one point, Catholic Charities, Glendale's largest social-service provider, offered its office space as a meeting point for the laborers, but this proved impractical due to its distance from home building-supply stores, a central point for hiring the laborers. For this current effort, Ruiz and Gillman enlisted the support of Catholic Charities, as well as the Salvation Army.

The officers made two site visits to cities with designated hiring spots for day laborers. They agreed that a hiring center could resolve many of the complaints from both sides. They recommended a Glendale site near a Home Depot store, where many laborers already gathered. A day-labor advisory board convened that included police, Home Depot, city, resident, business owner, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and redevelopment agency representatives.

Home Depot agreed to supply building materials and an office trailer for the site, and to fund a staff position at the site for five years. Catholic Charities agreed to administer the site if the police could find funds for the position. The officers got two grants (totaling nearly \$100,000) to fund part of the construction. Ruiz and Sgt. Pete Michael oversaw the project's construction and evaluation phases.



The city passed an anti-solicitation ordinance to steer day laborers to the center. The center's design minimizes traffic congestion and allows employers to make orderly arrangements with and pickups of the laborers. The center offers English-language and computer classes, as well as classes on immigration issues.

Officers measured the project's success in different ways. They found a decrease in the number of incidents involving day laborers that required police, fire and other city services. Prior research had shown only a 10 percent daily hiring rate for the laborers. Since the center's opening, the daily hiring rate had increased to over 80 percent, adding to the laborers' enthusiasm about the center. Perhaps as a result, the laborers have voluntarily complied with the anti-solicitation ordinance; through October 1997, no enforcement had been necessary.

Residents are no longer subjected to swarming, and the laborers no longer use alleys, parking lots and streets as restrooms. Employers also benefit from the center. The laborers are divided by specialties (painting, plumbing, framing, etc.), which helps to assure employers that those hired have the skills for the job. The officers did not think displacement would be a problem; quite the reverse, they thought the center would attract day laborers from other cities. Thus, they worked with nearby cities, offering advice on starting day-laborer centers there.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several respects, aside from its success in stopping the swarming that caused the residents' initial complaints. The officers convinced diverse groups of the proposed solution's viability. Some city officials and politicians were reluctant to get involved due to the immigration issues. Social-service advocates were mainly interested in the humane treatment of the day laborers, but they had little ability to fund an effort. Some residents saw the workers as a good, independent source of labor, while others saw them as an immigration and traffic problem. The officers had to convince Home Depot that it would receive a good return on its investment. And some laborers were suspicious of any efforts to regulate their livelihood. The officers had to do a significant amount of research and work to address all these interests and justify the construction of the center. The project is also notable because the officers proposed a center whose design minimized traffic and congestion problems.

A Neighborhood Disorder Problem in Los Angeles, Calif.

The Virgil/Burns neighborhood of Los Angeles comprises apartment complexes, single-family homes and small businesses. Its crime rate started increasing noticeably in 1991 and 1992. Most of the calls for police service were for narcotics-related disturbances and vandalism, although more serious crimes like robbery and assault were also on the rise.

Los Angeles Police Department Senior Lead Officer Suzanne Campbell targeted a 2-by-4-block area where the concentration of calls and crimes was highest. She discovered that 82 calls for service had been dispatched in this area in a four-month period of 1992. She identified five main sources from which the calls were being generated.

*Source: Day-labor project narrative submitted in support of nomination for 1997 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; personal communication with Officer Javier Ruiz and Sgt. Pete Michael, October 1997.



The first source was a parking lot behind a bakery, where gang members and drug users gathered at night. Transients gathered there to drink during the day. The second source was two streets near a day care center, where drug wholesalers were supplying 12 to 15 retail dealers. The third source was a multiple-level parking garage the Los Angeles Community College owned that had become a haven for transients and drug dealers and users. Few people parked in the garage anymore. The fourth source was an abandoned house that had become a flophouse for drug dealers and users, prostitutes and runaways. Because the city had declared a moratorium on razing residential property, the house could not be removed, and prior efforts to board it up had failed. The house was a health and fire hazard. The final source was a nightclub that generated many complaints about noise and drug dealing among patrons. Officer Campbell noticed that many of the same people were connected to all five locations.

Besides encouraging area property owners to improve fencing and lighting on their properties, Campbell targeted the five high-call sources. She persuaded the bakery owner to move several dumpsters away from a retaining wall. The parking lot's popularity was partly due to the dumpsters, which provided easy access over the wall onto adjoining properties. The owner also made some minor improvements to the lot's lighting. While he was unwilling to invest in improved fencing, he did tell Campbell that he planned to tear down the bakery within six months. The owner of the property next to the bakery was even more cooperative. He erected a 10-foot, spiked wrought-iron fence in front of his property, and razor wire and motion-sensitive lighting in the rear. He hired a full-time property manager and maintenance worker, who removed all graffiti. With the support of extra police patrol, these improvements led to a complete halt in calls for service within two weeks.

Campbell knew who the main area narcotics wholesaler was. She detained him on outstanding arrest warrants, one of which was a federal warrant for illegal immigration. The man also had cocaine on him when she detained him. He was incarcerated and faced up to ten years' imprisonment and deportation. Several additional drug-dealer arrests near the day care center seemed to convince the remaining dealers to move elsewhere.

In and around the college parking garage, Campbell found an abandoned vehicle and discarded furniture. The garage's exterior was covered with graffiti and overgrown weeds. She had the vehicle towed and asked the college to clean up the garage. Within two weeks, the garage was cleaned and repainted, and structural renovations had begun. Six weeks later, it remained free of graffiti, and students again used it for parking.

With respect to the flophouse, Campbell learned that the city was soon to lift the moratorium on demolition. She contacted the owner and worked with him to get the necessary demolition permits. As soon as the city lifted the moratorium, the house was demolished, and the owner put the lot up for sale.



To address the problem nightclub, Campbell attended a community meeting, where she learned who the club's owner and his attorney were. Although the club was violating several alcohol-license conditions, the state Alcohol Beverage Control Board was too understaffed to help enforce the law. Campbell met with the club owner's attorney and explained the nuisance being created in the neighborhood. It turned out that the owner owned at least a dozen other city clubs that were under better control. The attorney told Campbell that the owner would likely cooperate, with a little pressure. Campbell encouraged neighborhood residents to send written complaints about the club to the police department division that investigates such matters. With those complaints in hand, division members met with the owner and advised him of the nuisance and possible penalties. The owner chose not to renew his lease, and closed the club.

For two months after these interventions, none of the streets where the five problem spots were located showed up on the police department's report of multiple-call locations. After a series of robberies was solved with an arrest, the following two months again revealed no multiple-call locations in the target area. The gang that used to gather at the bakery disbanded. Most of the transients and drug dealers left the area, and complaints about drug dealing near the day care center stopped. Campbell's efforts seem to have revitalized the neighborhood.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the way the officer pinpointed the exact sources of the neighborhood problems. Rather than relying on broad-based campaigns targeting the entire neighborhood, she tailored her responses to the specific problem locations and inspired overall neighborhood improvement. In addition, she secured several property guardians' voluntary compliance and the nightclub owner's cooperation, with only a little pressure. This project received a 1993 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

A Neighborhood Disorder Problem in Spokane, Wash.

In the early 1990s, Spokane, Wash., a city of 200,000, began experiencing gang-sponsored drug dealing. The 1100 block of West First Avenue in downtown Spokane, adjacent to the city's historic district, housed older, deteriorating buildings; residential high-rise hotels; the city's only special-needs public-housing complex; a railroad viaduct; a Greyhound bus terminal; bars; an adult video store; and an extremely active gang-run crack trade. Spokane police officer Rick Albin, a neighborhood problem-solver, said, "Gangs chose the West First area because of its proximity to cheap room rentals, the only Greyhound bus terminal, and because it was already a neighborhood where most of the low-income, special-needs and elderly residents had already 'given up' the street."

In the late 1980s, the block generated 1,000 calls for service a year. By 1995, the call load had risen to 3,300. Officer Albin said, "This call load, from basically one city block, represents approximately 3 percent of the service load for the entire city . . ." The *Spokesman-Review*, a local newspaper, stated the block "accounted for 165

*Source: Project report submitted in support of nomination for 1993 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

times its share of the Spokane Police Department's attention." In the 1980s, the block experienced a high level of property crimes. By 1995, the block was experiencing a high level of violence. Drivers circled the block to buy drugs, and the drug trade attracted prostitution. The gangs recruited juveniles into the drug market, knowing that federal (and even local) prosecution of juveniles for dealing was less likely. The public-housing tenants – all either elderly or disabled – became targets for intimidation by the block's dealers. Two drive-by shootings on the block wounded six people in August 1996. Residents were terrified.

As part of a HUD drug-elimination grant, a survey of public-housing residents verified high fear levels and the dangers of the block's drug problem. Local media found much to report about on the block; fear and violence levels were high; and the block, it was suspected, contributed to neighborhood deterioration beyond its borders.

Officer Albin and others gathered a wide variety of information about the problem. The gang members were "Crips," infamous for their impact on Los Angeles' neighborhoods. Spokane's special investigations unit tracked each member's involvement: some had moved to Spokane from Los Angeles, while others had always lived in Spokane. Washington State University Professors Quint Thurman and Ed McGarrel surveyed block residents, and police surveyed businesses about safety. Officer Albin said, "Surveys showed the majority of [residents] felt captive to the inevitable loss of their neighborhood, and that they had adjusted their lifestyles around that loss." Bob Lincoln, a doctoral candidate and Spokane police planner, conducted observational research on the block, and did a social and physical inventory of the neighborhood. Police civilians and HUD consultants did crime-prevention-through-environmental-design (CPTED) studies and found the block's mixed uses challenging. Some businesses left the area, a few accommodated the drug trade, and the rest tried to stay legitimate.

Officer Albin, city agencies and residents implemented a number of responses to address the problems. Business owners formed a local steering committee. The police provided residents with training in community organizing. The city and the businesses adopted many of the CPTED recommendations. They improved alley lighting, banned on-street parking, removed litter, repaired and renovated buildings, fenced off the viaduct (where dealers hid drugs), and changed traffic flow, restricting right turns and stopping the circling of cars for drugs and sex. Albin reported the following:

Particularly high-risk areas (such as dark areas underneath the railroad viaduct) were painted white and fenced off . . . Positive-use activities (social, business promotion, etc.) now replace former activities in high-risk areas. The steering committee also donated funds to hire a part-time marketing/research assistant, and alliances were formed with other downtown groups and Washington's State Economic Development Council to facilitate coordinated change.

The police used foot and bike patrols, local businesses supplied pagers, and police sent letters to vehicle owners whose cars were seen stopped on the block to buy



drugs. Officer Albin, citizen volunteers and two state corrections officers staffed a sub-station in the public-housing complex, making services accessible to residents and area businesses. The district attorney supplied a legal intern and agreed to vertical prosecution of the block's offenders, using more serious statutes, and also supported greater corrections contact with released offenders. Apartment owners and hotel managers formed an association, and most agreed to screen residents. They also adopted some CPTED recommendations to make public space less attractive to dealers and users. The steering committee recruited new businesses to anchor the block, including a farmers market and an art gallery. Block auto dealers and others in the area contributed close to \$20,000 to install video surveillance cameras to monitor 20 blocks, including West First Street. Police monitor the videos from an office in the public-housing complex.

As for evaluation, police report a 75 percent decrease in violent crime since December 1996, and a 35 percent decrease in calls for service on the block. Washington State University is evaluating other project results, and is documenting physical and social changes over the coming year.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several ways. Officer Albin and others tackled a huge problem, one that probably festered for years before violence and chaos erupted. Block residents suffered from fear, intimidation, property crimes, and violence. Intimidation can paralyze people, and getting them to act requires a highly coordinated and organized effort. In this case, collaborative responses caused a 75 percent decrease in violence, requiring an enormous amount of work and commitment from police, residents and businesses. This project entailed a wide range of strategies to tackle the problems, and successfully disrupted an entrenched and violent drug market that impacted the entire neighborhood. The strategies addressed each identifiable aspect of the problem: the circling of cars to buy drugs, the hiding of drugs in the viaduct, the lack of surveillance on the block, the lack of follow-up with offenders reentering the community, and the movement of evicted dealers from one apartment or hotel to another. And to replace the drug dealing and related crime, project participants initiated positive block activities and businesses.

Additional Editors' Comments on Neighborhood Disorder Problems

In some cities, whole neighborhoods experience disorder and high crime. Although only specific sites (e.g., parks, bars and liquor stores) may experience the crime (e.g., drug dealing, loitering and prostitution), the whole neighborhood feels the bad effects. In these neighborhoods, officers focus on crime hot spots and illegal behavior. In their problem-solving efforts, however, many officers have found that these neighborhoods have few recreational activities for the children living there, almost no after-school programs, and few services for adults. The police cannot address all of

*Sources: West First Street Project narrative submitted by Spokane Police Department in support of nomination for 1997 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Solving; "Cooperative Effort Is Paying Off Again," by Doug Floyd, The Spokesman-Review, Saturday, June 21, 1997; "Making Our Cart Bad-Apple Resistant," by Doug Floyd, The Spokesman-Review, Sunday, July 13, 1997; personal communication with Officer Rick Albin, October 1997.

these issues, but in many of the problem-solving efforts reviewed, they enlisted the support of other city and nonprofit agencies, applied for grants, supported rehabilitation loans to upgrade area housing, and did other social and civic work to improve neighborhood conditions.

In the efforts described in this section, officers took on whole neighborhoods experiencing problems and pinpointed the exact locations or sources of their problems. Two Glendale officers recognized that large numbers of men hanging out on street corners and swarming around cars looking for work created a sense of neighborhood disorder. They enlisted government, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and won community development grants to address the long-standing problem. In Los Angeles, Calif., an officer focused on five sources of one neighborhood's disorder problems. In Spokane, Wash., an officer found that one block accounted for 3 percent of the entire city's calls for service. After focusing on the problem's crime aspects, he worked with community activists to initiate positive neighborhood activities helping to turn around one community's reputation.

During the research, the editors found several other efforts worth reporting. Norfolk, Va., police used traffic engineering, community-court watch and interagency government collaborations to shore up a neighborhood experiencing much crime and disorder. In addition, they sent family-assessment teams to repeat locations of family disputes. The police accomplished a lot, but the neighborhood retained its image for violence and disorder. As a result, an officer worked with the community to transform the neighborhood's image, highlighting its revival.

A St. Louis officer found that a tavern and liquor outlet generated much neighborhood disorder. The officer made arrests for drug dealing and gambling, and along with the residents, removed garbage and litter from area properties, sought improved neighborhood lighting, pushed for demolition of vacant buildings and community use of vacant lots, requested the revocation of one establishment's liquor license, removed graffiti, and sought additional neighborhood recreational activities.

In Bridgeport, Conn., one drug-and-gang-infested neighborhood accounted for one-sixth of the state's 1992 homicides. The police worked with local community development and social service agencies and, among other things, devised one of the nation's most comprehensive crime-prevention-through-environmental-design strategies, placing traffic diverters at over 40 intersections to increase the effort and risk for drug buyers.



Chapter 14

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Parks

Parks

A Problem Park in Georgetown, Texas

Blue Hole Park is located about 20 minutes north of Austin, Texas, along the San Gabriel River in Georgetown. It is a picturesque park, surrounded by limestone cliffs and covered with vines and oak trees. A park dam creates a unique swimming hole. In the mid-1990s, the park became a problem location. Calls for police service increased significantly, especially during summer months. The calls were for assaults, disorderly conduct, drownings, drug offenses, fights, indecent exposure, public drunkenness, and robberies. A double suicide also occurred in the park. The problems were, at times, exhausting police resources.

Georgetown police watch commander Sgt. David Morgan and two patrol officers, Robert Newell and Fred Pitcher, took on Blue Hole Park as a problem-solving project in April 1995. Their goal was to restore the park's reputation as a place to swim, fish and enjoy the natural beauty in peace. (The park had developed a reputation as a party place largely free from official oversight and regulation.)

During summer months, out-of-town visitors predominantly used the park. They came from Austin, Dallas, Houston, and Killeen. Many were soldiers stationed at Fort Hood Army Base, the largest military base in the world. Unfortunately, many visitors had little interest in the park's future. Broken bottles, cans and trash littered the park. Vehicles haphazardly parked near the ecologically fragile riverbanks were contributing to soil erosion and pollution. Four feet of silt had accumulated in the riverbed, near the banks.

Sgt. Morgan and the officers analyzed the problems in greater detail by meeting with a nearby neighborhood group and reviewing police reports taken at the park in the past few years. The officers learned that officials had seldom consulted the nearby residents, mostly minorities, about decisions affecting their neighborhood. Residents told the officers they wanted a uniform set of policies for all city parks. For example, if alcohol was not banned in other parks, they did not want it banned in Blue Hole Park.

The officers identified several concerns. Park users, often intoxicated, jumped or dove off the 30-foot-high cliffs into the river, resulting in injuries and drownings. The gravel road running alongside the river was too narrow to hold the vehicle and pedestrian traffic. There was no designated parking area, often leaving 85 or more vehicles parked along the riverbanks. As many as 200 pedestrians mingled with vehicle traffic along the roadway. Emergency vehicles had difficulty getting through the traffic. The only road into the park exited into a residential neighborhood where children played. Nearby residents were afraid. A historical cemetery at the edge of the park had been vandalized. The officers concluded that a disproportionate amount of the city's reported crime was occurring in the park. Drunken offenders and victims contributed to much of the crime and disorder.



To gain some immediate control over the problems, the police began strictly enforcing laws in the park. In one month, they issued over 200 citations and made many arrests. Over 90 percent of the arrestees were from out of town.

The officers next turned their attention to the park's main attraction, the cliffs. People would walk across the dam to reach the cliffs, where they would drink alcohol and jump or dive into the river. Many people, including the police, assumed the land behind the cliffs was part of the park. In fact, the federal government's Resolution Trust Corp. owned it, and leased it to a local cattle rancher. At the officers' request, the rancher agreed to help the police enforce trespassing laws. He was incurring damage to his property and risking liability, so he was eager to cooperate. The city posted no-trespassing signs.

Next, the officers developed a traffic-control plan for the park. They got a local rock quarry to donate enough large boulders to create a barrier along the riverbank. This would serve to protect the riverbank, better define the roadway and restrict parking. They further restricted parking along the drive leading out of the park. After discovering that park traffic and parking regulations were unenforceable for lack of proper authority, the officers worked with the city attorney's office to write and pass new legislation.

The city had applied for grant funds to develop a hiking-and-biking trail along the river, so the officers worked closely with the parks-and-recreation director to ensure that their proposed changes fit in with the comprehensive plan for the park. The director gave the officers his full support. Over the next few weeks, the officers presented their plan to a citizens police advisory committee, the parks and recreation board's public safety committee, the neighborhood group, and the city council. All groups endorsed the plan. The police chief secured the aid of a local business to transport and place 260 tons of boulders.

In June, Sgt. Morgan and the officers met with the Fort Hood provost marshal at Blue Hole Park. They briefed him on the problems, the soldiers' behavior at the park, and the proposed plan of action. The provost marshal agreed to warn the soldiers about problem behavior, and to take action if the police subsequently informed him of such behavior.

Police officers began enforcing the trespassing laws. Community-service workers cleared brush and picked up trash in the park. Local high school students designed and built an attractive park entrance sign, complete with notices of prohibited conduct. The county allowed a nearby vacant lot to be used for overflow parking. By early July, all plan provisions had been carried out.

By all indicators, Blue Hole Park had been completely turned around. Traffic was orderly and safe. People stopped jumping from the cliffs. Drunken and rowdy people drifted away, and families returned to the park. There was a noticeable reduction in trash and debris. Reports of crimes virtually ceased.

According to now-Lt. Morgan, the results "exceeded our expectations," even two years later. The city has since received the grant for the trail, and the river has been dredged and widened. These improvements have enhanced the park's beauty. The city is applying for another grant to extend the park farther down the river, connecting it with another park. The roadway into the park was paved, and parking was further limited to a few handicap spaces. This has ended all traffic congestion. The city plans to pave another parking area outside the park to accommodate legitimate park users.

The park is now used almost exclusively by local families. The soldiers no longer go to the park. Park users now drink alcohol more responsibly, making more drastic restrictions unnecessary. A new owner of the property behind the cliffs updated the trespassing-enforcement authority granted to the police. The city quickly replaces damaged no-trespassing signs and removes graffiti.

Georgetown police continue to monitor the volume of calls for service at the park. The most recent assessment revealed only about 10 calls in an entire year. No one has drowned since the project was completed, and there have been virtually no medical calls for service, a significant saving of emergency medical and fire resources.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several respects. The response plan was comprehensive and incorporated all the stakeholders' views. The police put a lot of effort into building support for the plan before proceeding with changes. They successfully promoted safe and legitimate park uses, and discouraged unsafe and illegitimate uses, without resorting to more drastic restrictions and enforcement. This project received the 1995 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

A Problem Park in Madison, Wis.

Brittingham Park lies in a southside Madison, Wis., neighborhood known as the "Triangle." In early 1991, Randy Gaber was assigned as the new neighborhood police officer for the Triangle. Gaber arranged several meetings with residents to introduce himself and hear about their concerns. At these meetings, he learned about the problems in Brittingham Park. Residents told him they no longer felt safe there because of frequent assaults, fights, liquor-law violations, noise disturbances, robberies, and thefts. They also complained about the broken glass and litter in the park. In a letter to the editor of a local paper, a security officer at the nearby Bayview Apartments wrote: "There was a lot of drinking going on in the park, and when our tenants would go across the road to enjoy the park, they would be jeered at, screamed at and, sometimes, even sworn at. In short, it was impossible for any of the older folks and the disabled to enjoy themselves, mostly because they were afraid."

In response, Officer Gaber spent more time patrolling the park and talking to park users. He concluded that the residents' complaints were valid. He called another com-

*Sources: "Summary of the Blue Hole Park Project," Georgetown Police Services Division, submitted in support of nomination for the 1995 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; personal communication with Lt. David Morgan.

munity meeting, at which attendees discussed possible ways to address the problem. Gaber believed that most of the problems were attributable to a few people who used the park mainly for drinking. With the residents' support, Gaber agreed to discuss the problem with the local alderperson, Andy Heidt.

Noticing that most of the park's drinkers drank out of glass beer and liquor bottles, Officer Gaber proposed a special ordinance banning glass containers from the park. Alderperson Heidt agreed to sponsor the legislation, and the city council passed it. Gaber spent a lot of time enforcing the ban. Although he noted some decline in calls for service in the park, the residents remained concerned. They reported that the same group of people continued to drink and harass people in the park. They either hid their glass containers or used aluminum cans or plastic bottles and cups.

Officer Gaber recontacted Alderperson Heidt and made another, more radical, proposal: banning all alcohol from the park. Gaber and Heidt met once more with residents to discuss the proposal. The residents overwhelmingly supported the idea, and with Heidt's sponsorship, alcohol was banned from the park as of July 4, 1991.

Officer Gaber said he was amazed by the ban's impact on calls for service and park activity. He reviewed the past 10 years' data on calls for service in the park. The most recent years' data showed that the police department had recorded 84 calls in 1989, and 91 in 1990; they recorded only 16 in 1991. Calls about disturbances, drunken people and suspicious people all decreased dramatically.

Gaber attributed the reduced number in the first half of 1991 to his increased vigilance at the park. He had initiated seven of the eight calls that occurred after the ban took effect, to enforce the ban. Only one citizen had called the police in the six months after the ban. From Oct. 3, 1991, to April 6, 1992, there were no calls for service to Brittingham Park.

Brittingham Park Calls for Service (1982-1991)

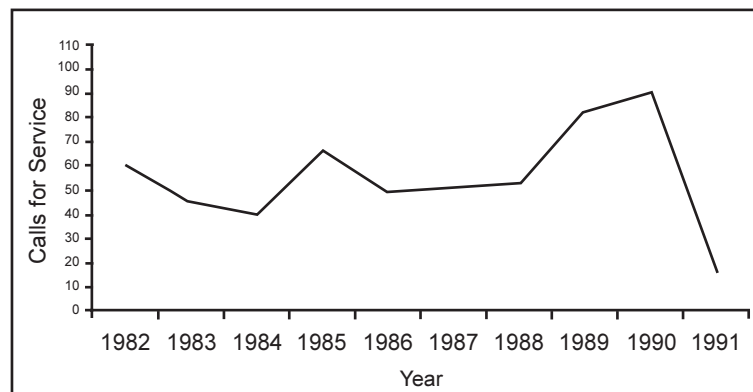


Fig. 1. Brittingham Park calls for service

Residents told Gaber that they once again felt safe using the park. The security guard who wrote the letter to the local paper did so to praise Gaber for his efforts. He wrote: "[T]hings have changed. We don't have to worry anymore. The change has been like night and day. All at once, the elderly can go across the road and enjoy themselves . . . "*

Editors' note: This problem-solving effort is notable in that a localized solution was adopted for a localized problem, namely, banning alcohol from one city park. The solution was supported by nearby residents who, it could be argued, had a higher stake in the park than did nonresident park users. It is highly improbable that the majority of citizens would support a total ban on alcohol in all of Madison's parks. The officer gradually increased the level of coercion in his response, supporting more-extreme measures only when he was convinced less-intrusive measures had failed. He escalated his response from warning people about offensive behavior, to banning glass containers, to banning alcohol entirely. The dramatic decline in calls for service also makes this project noteworthy.

A Problem Park in Mankato, Minn.

In early 1993, officers in the Mankato, Minn., Public Safety Department's problem-oriented policing unit set out to restore peace in the city's Sibley Park. Sibley Park is a 40-acre tract of land along the Minnesota River. In it are picnic shelters, baseball diamonds, a playground, a band shell, a petting zoo, and a parking lot. The parking lot was the problem. It had become popular as far back as 1978 as a place to drink and get rowdy. The police were regularly responding to incidents of assault, drug dealing, harassment, indecent exposure, juvenile drinking, reckless driving, theft, and vandalism. In 1993, the department responded to 81 citizen complaints in the park. The repair bill for the park had topped \$15,000 over the past few years.

As the city built other baseball diamonds elsewhere, athletes drifted away from the park, leaving behind the rowdier crowd. Some of the crowd started to gather on a park hillside, creating two problem locations. People threatened parks department employees who tried to control their behavior. In 1984, the police and parks department officials decided to close the hill to public use. The crowd began to gather in the parking lot around noon every day, and by nightfall, 300 to 400 people filled the lot. The crowd became so rowdy that nearly all other park uses ceased. The ball fields and picnic shelters were empty.

In response, the police and parks department employees increased their patrols of the park, installed floodlights in the lot, videotaped disorderly behavior, and scheduled alternative park uses. None of these solutions had any lasting effect. The problem got so bad, even police officers did not want to go to the park. Said Jerry Huettl, then a department supervisor, "After throwing everything but the kitchen sink at the problem, we backed up and asked ourselves what we were doing."

*Sources: Correspondence from Officer Randy Gaber to Professor Herman Goldstein, University of Wisconsin Law School, April 6, 1992; "The Kids' View in Bayview," by Patricia A. Parker, Police Magazine, May 1992; personal communication with Gaber, September 1997.

Officers Marcus Erickson, Chris Boyer, Mike Roy, and other POP unit officers began addressing the problem simply by observing the crowd. They did so not with an eye toward apprehending offenders, but just to better understand what was going on. All the unit's officers spent time watching the crowd so they could gain a common perspective on the problem. Next, they started mingling with the crowd to develop some rapport. They started asking people about the park's attractions. They learned that the park was popular with this crowd because it was remote, had a large parking lot, and was seldom used by others. In addition, the park's layout allowed them to see the police coming from a distance, and there were two exits by which to escape the police. The officers also discovered that many people from other communities were going to Sibley Park just to be part of the scene.

The officers next interviewed park users who were not part of the rowdy crowd. These interviews confirmed that the crowd was intimidating those who were not members of it. The POP unit held a public forum on the park and its problems. Many people expressed frustration over the situation. Most supported a suggestion to ban alcohol from the park. The officers discussed this option with the parks director, but all agreed this would unnecessarily prohibit more responsible alcohol use by other park users. They focused instead on the parking lot as the underlying source of the problem.

Continuing their analysis, the officers learned that the park's ball fields, once the main site of the city's softball tournaments, were now only ancillary fields. The large parking lot, built to hold the softball crowds, now seemed oversized. One officer considered the rowdy crowd's attraction to the lot. He noted that the long, uninterrupted roadway down the length of the parking lot made it ideal for hot-rodding; drivers went down a steeply inclined roadway to the flat lot. This allowed them to gain a lot of speed, yet watch for any obstructions. The officer concluded that the solution was to make the lot inconvenient. He and his colleagues settled on a plan to redesign the lot to eliminate its appeal, while leaving enough parking for legitimate park users. They also decided to create an alternate site that would attract this crowd, yet allow better control of disorderly behavior.

Working with city engineers, the officers changed the park roadway from two-way to one-way. They divided the big parking lot into two smaller lots, one near the ball fields and one near the picnic shelters. By the spring of 1994, the city had completed construction and erected new traffic signs, at a cost of \$5,000. The city authorized a downtown parking lot to be used as a meeting place for car enthusiasts. City ordinances already prohibited alcohol in this parking lot, and it was much more visible to police patrols. Picnic tables and portable toilets were placed on the lot.

The plan worked. The rowdy crowd disappeared from Sibley Park and started showing up at the downtown lot. However, the crowd slowly dwindled to a handful of car enthusiasts. The officers thought the crowd had split into smaller groups who either stayed in their own communities or gathered at other Mankato locations. Complaints about the park stopped. Thirty-, 60- and 90-day assessments all confirmed that the project objectives had been met, and were holding up over time. According to interim Public Safety Director Jerry Huettl, the project remains successful over three years

later. He said: "I don't know where the motorheads have gone. They went downtown for a while, but once that was redeveloped, they left there. Most of them probably just grew up, got married and quit that activity."*

Editors' note: This problem-solving project is noteworthy because the officers took time to study the underlying conditions that fostered the problem. By changing the environmental conditions – in this case, the traffic patterns and available parking space – and providing an alternate site for the crowd, the officers eliminated the problem. Moreover, they did so without resorting to more drastic restrictions (e.g., banning alcohol) that would have negatively affected the larger community. The public safety department also seems to have had the active support and aid of other city departments and local politicians.

A Problem Park in San Diego, Calif.

San Diego's Marian Bear Park is a popular site for bicycling, hiking, picnicking, and walking dogs. It was also once a popular site for gay men to meet and engage in casual sex acts, acts other park users frequently witnessed. In October 1992, after yet another in a long history of citizen complaints to the police about the sexual activity, San Diego Police Department Sgt. James O'Neill asked Officers Timothy Hall and Cindy Brady to address the issue as a problem-solving project.

The park is considered a nature preserve, and so, with the exception of some public restrooms and a parking lot, it is undeveloped. It had no electricity or telephones. Most of the complaints about sexual activity centered on areas around the restrooms and on bushes at one end of the parking lot. San Diego police had set up decoy operations in past years to arrest those soliciting sex in the park. One operation had netted over 90 arrests. Officers made many arrests only after foot chases and resistance from the offenders. Because of limited jail space, most offenders faced only misdemeanor citations. Some nighttime activity was curtailed when police prohibited parking in the lot at night. These measures, although somewhat successful, were expensive, and the foot chases exposed police officers to environmental hazards like poison oak.

When Officers Hall and Brady first surveyed the park, they found up to 20 men in and around the restroom, several of whom were having sex. After arresting two men, the officers interviewed them to try to learn more about the problem. The men admitted it was likely that all the men around the restroom were there to solicit sex. They said the park had been a well-known "cruising spot" for gay men for over 14 years. It was even listed in some national gay publications as such. One man said he learned about the spot from past news reports about police operations. The other man admitted to having previously been arrested in the park for the same conduct. The men told the officers that the privacy the park offered and its long-standing reputation made it an ideal place for men who wanted quick, anonymous sex. When asked, the men said

*Source materials: Project report prepared by Mankato Public Safety Department's problem-oriented policing unit, included in materials for Fifth Annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference, 1994; "Park Disturbances Cease After Parking Lot Redesign," by Glenn Gabriel, *Problem-Solving Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Police Executive Research Forum, 1995; "Sibley Lot Returns to Calmer Days," Mankato Free Press, July 16, 1994; personal communication with interim Public Safety Director Jerry Huettl, July 8, 1997.

videotaping might be the most effective deterrent. The officers returned to the park after booking the men, and found the activity around the restroom and bushes had not stopped.

The officers returned to the park the next day, this time to survey park users. Only one person they spoke with mentioned the sexual activity, though the officers suspected they were interviewing people who were in the park for exactly that reason. Next, the officers attended a meeting of the Marian Bear Park Committee. Almost everyone cited the illegal sex as the main park problem. A committee member suggested using surveillance cameras, but the officers reminded the committee of the potential for controversy over doing so. However, the committee voted to endorse the tactic. The committee also agreed, at the officers' suggestion, to actively promote legitimate park uses.

Before taking any action, the officers consulted with a colleague, an openly gay police officer. He told them he was trying to address a similar problem at another city park. He said he had some success getting a gay-and-lesbian publication to discourage sex in the park. Hall and Brady spoke with the department's official liaison to the gay-and-lesbian community, and they met with the Gay and Lesbian Coalition to explain the problem. Without prompting, a coalition member suggested using a video camera. The coalition endorsed the proposal, as well as the posting of warning signs in the park. The group also considered asking prosecutors to make treatment for compulsive sexual behavior part of the sentence for those convicted of having sex in the park. The officers ruled out having the park bushes trimmed back, because the parks department was committed to preserving the park in its natural state.

Knowing they had firm support from several quarters, the officers placed a marked police car at the park's entrance and videotaped people entering and leaving the park. They varied their schedules and patrolled the parking lots. With help from the police department's legal advisor, the officers designed warning signs. The park committee bought the signs and had them posted around the parking lots. The signs warned that public sex was illegal, and that *all* the park was considered public. The prosecutor agreed with the officers' request that banishment from the park be part of the sentence for anyone convicted of breaking this law.

The officers wrote to the gay publications that had advertised Marian Bear Park as a cruising spot, requesting that they take all San Diego parks off their lists. One of the publications complied with the officers' request. Another publication refused to. The local Gay and Lesbian Coalition responded by asking local businesses to stop advertising in the publication.

To assess the project's impact, the officers periodically went to the park in plain clothes. Even with limited use of the video camera, they found that the cruising activity had noticeably declined. Those who continued to cruise the lots usually left, not finding the willing partners they used to. The officers encountered one man who had

been convicted for having sex in the park and, subsequently, banished from it. His probation was revoked upon notification of his probation officer. By videotaping vehicles in the park and checking license-plate records, the officers learned that more local people were returning there, replacing the out-of-town men who went there for sex. They also noted more women and children frequenting the park, many of whom praised the officers' efforts. The effort received widespread publicity; the only complaints about it were made, ironically, by two former law enforcement officials, one of whom was later found soliciting sex in the park.

The officers estimated that the sexual activity in the park declined by about 80 percent. To stop the offenders who remained undeterred by the videotaping and warnings, the officers conducted undercover operations. All arrestees pled guilty. Because undercover operations were so time-consuming and costly, the officers had to develop another way to address the problem. Through the park committee, they organized a program in which volunteers would watch the park for cruising activity, take down license numbers, and give them to the police. Using motor vehicle records, the police would send vehicle owners letters advising them of the problems in the park. The officers trained the volunteers and developed appropriate reporting forms and guides. With all response measures in place, the officers reported that the department had not received a single additional complaint about people having sex in the park. (In recent months, after several years of relief, nearby residents have once again complained about open sexual activity in the park. A new team of officers is addressing the current problem.)

A local neighborhood publication reported similar activity in another San Diego park in June 1997. San Diego police officers addressing that problem used some of the same tactics as Officers Hall and Brady, including the same warning signs. The publication asserts that, according to nearby residents, the sexual activity at that park has been cut by half since police initiated the project.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the officers' efforts to garner support for a controversial tactic, public videotaping, before they implemented it. They also sought voluntary compliance from publishers who were contributing to the problem by advertising the park as a prime location for the activity.

Additional Editors' Comments on Problem Parks

Park assets like open space, secluded walks, benches, water fountains, unmonitored public restrooms, multiple entrances and exits can become a draw for criminal behavior including drug dealing, prostitution and open sexual activity. In the efforts documented in this section, officers analyzed and sought solutions to several types of park crime. In each case, the problem activity had deterred residents from using the park. Officers used a variety of tactics, including ingenious physical reengineering, heightened oversight in previously unmonitored areas, and enlistment of community support.

*Sources: "Marian Bear Park: A Problem-Oriented Policing Project Analysis," by Timothy C. Hall and Cindy L. Brady, prepared in support of nomination for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, July 12, 1994; "Taking Back Presidio Park," by Spencer Soper, in Mission Hills News, June 1997; personal communication with and supporting material sent by Detective Brady.

The editors found several other park-crime projects of note. In Riverside, Calif., open sex in one park prompted officers to restrict certain parking to 20 minutes, limit access to areas, cut back overgrown foliage, convert to handicapped-only parking the spaces adjacent to public restrooms, enlist citizen volunteers for park patrol, and engage the gay community in distributing literature encouraging safe sex and responsible behavior in public places. Montreal officers trying to improve a drug-infested park tested a variety of strategies, including visiting drug rehabilitation centers to better understand drugs and drug addiction. They believe this understanding helped them provide better referrals and counsel for park addicts.

Chapter 15

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Burglary

Burglary

A Burglary Problem in Huddersfield, England

The Police Research Group, a division of England's Home Office, commissioned a 30-month project designed to reduce burglary and auto-crime revictimization. Researchers Ken Pease and Sylvia Chenery teamed up with local police to test tailored responses against such revictimization. This project, growing out of England's work in crime prevention rather than problem-oriented policing, was inspired by prior research that indicated that some victims are likely to experience revictimization. Police Research Group material notes that, "[o]nce victimised, a person or place is more likely to be victimised again than one who has not [been victimised]."

In the case of residential burglary, researchers found that revictimization tends to occur soon after the first burglary. They learned that 40 percent of all repeats took place within a month of the last burglary. For the target area, researchers found that the biggest predictor of future burglary was a recent past burglary. After a certain period of time, the risk of further victimization declines.

Victimization, the Home Office found, "is heavily concentrated upon particular individuals and places . . ." Of the 3,951 burglaries recorded in the target area in an 11-month period, somewhere between 623 and 927 were repeat burglaries. Researchers found that revictimization was significantly underreported to the police, and that only one-on-one interviews with victims revealed this higher level of revictimization.

Other patterns identified involved burglar break-in points, occupancy when break-ins occur, and items stolen. In over 66 percent of the burglaries and attempted burglaries, offenders gained access to the homes through windows. In addition, in the vast majority of cases, the homes were unoccupied when burglarized, and electronic goods were the most frequently stolen items.

The Huddersfield responses to repeat burglaries incorporate tailored deflection and detection strategies, thus uniting crime-prevention and crime-control strategies to tackle the problem. Responses are graded, matching the revictimization risk level. Adopting an Olympic-medal scale, bronze through gold, project staff assign victims with some repeat risk a bronze response (property marking, security assessment, intense neighbor watch of home), while assigning those with the highest risk (already victimized twice) a gold response, which might include focused police patrol and installation of loaned silent-alarm equipment to increase detection.



Table 1. Police "Medal" System

Measures by Offense Type and Level*			
Offense	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Burglary	<p>Victim receives letter containing crime prevention information and UV marker pen for tagging property</p> <p>Victim receives discount vouchers for security equipment</p> <p>Police check with informants for information</p> <p>Police do a quick check on known pawn shops</p> <p>Police target offenders</p> <p>Police lend victim temporary equipment (e.g., alarms, timer switches and dummy alarms)</p> <p>Neighbors initiate "Cocoon Watch"</p> <p>Rapid repairs are made</p> <p>Security is upgraded</p>	<p>Crime prevention officer visits victim</p> <p>Police use search warrants against suspected burglars</p> <p>Police install monitored alarm</p> <p>Police visit victim (twice weekly)</p> <p>Police lend victim security equipment</p>	<p>Crime prevention officer visits victim</p> <p>Police arrange for expedited results on burglary-scene fingerprints</p> <p>Police install high-tech equipment (e.g., covert cameras and alarms)</p> <p>Police visit victim daily</p> <p>Police strategically place distinctive dye at site to mark offender</p> <p>Police put tracking device on highly vulnerable items</p>
<p>*Modified version of chart appearing in <i>Biting Back II: Reducing Repeat Victimisation in Huddersfield</i>, Police Research Group, <i>Crime Detection and Prevention</i> series, Paper 82, by Sylvia Chenery, John Holt and Ken Pease.</p>			

Detection strategies are used more frequently when revictimization levels are high, due to some early evidence that the same offenders were responsible for many of the repeat burglaries. One area inspector who worked on the effort, John Holt, offered a theory on the high revictimization rate. He suggested that within four months of a burglary, victims received an insurance payment for the stolen items, and replaced them; this made their home a tempting target for a burglar to revisit, as the burglar was already familiar with the home's layout, and with the quality and quantity of its contents.



Results indicated that the strategies had a significant impact. The Home Office reported that, "[w]ithin the first nine months of the project . . . burglary had reduced by 24 percent . . . in the target area." In addition, due to the tailored detection efforts, burglars were caught at an increased rate – 14 percent, up from 4 percent.*

Editors' note: This project has spurred similar efforts focused on repeat burglaries in several U.S. cities. Results are not in, so it is unclear whether the pattern uncovered in this significant researcher-police effort will hold true to the same degree as described here. One factor, such as different victim insurance rates here and in the Huddersfield area, may make an impact. England has studied several other crimes for revictimization patterns, including domestic violence, race-based hate crimes and bullying.

Researchers Graham Farrell and Ken Pease suggest several reasons why police training, anti-crime tactics and prevention strategies ignore revictimization. First, revictimization rates, while often quite high, represent a small percentage of overall crime rates in low-crime areas. Second, a revictimization pattern may take some time to develop (unlike that for weekly calls to police about a chronic location like a drug house). Third, organizationally, it is difficult for police agencies to recognize revictimization because geographic boundaries may camouflage it, officers' shifts vary, and, due to their days off, officers may not know of all revictimizations in an area. Fourth, current police record-keeping may require hand tallying to decipher repeat victimization. Fifth, it is awkward for police to tell a victim there is a high likelihood of revictimization after a traumatic experience, especially if police think part of their job is to reassure victims. Sixth, repeat victims of certain crimes can be some of the most vulnerable and least vocal advocates for their position. Finally, focusing on repeat victimization vs. repeat locations can be painfully misconstrued as blaming the victim.

A Burglary Problem in San Diego, Calif.

Secure Self Storage is a San Diego warehouse with over 1,400 units. Many of its customers are U.S. Navy personnel who often are away for months at a time and, thus, cannot regularly check on their belongings. Many return to find their property missing. During one six-month period in 1993, San Diego police investigated 150 burglaries at Secure Self Storage. Actual victimization was undoubtedly much higher, as past experience indicated that most people do not report burglaries. Each initial investigation took an average of 90 minutes, which, when combined with time spent on follow-up investigations, amounted to a significant expenditure of police resources.

The storage facility is located in the city's eastern police division. The division has a Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol, a group of senior citizens the police train on the prin-

*Sources: "Once Bitten, Twice Bitten: Repeat Victimization and Its Implications for Crime Prevention," Police Research Group, Crime Prevention Unit series, Paper 46, by Graham Farrell and Ken Pease; "Biting Back: Tackling Repeat Burglary and Car Crime," Police Research Group, Crime Detection and Prevention series, Paper 58, by David Anderson, Sylvia Chenery and Ken Pease; "Preventing Repeat Victimization: The Police Officer's Guide," Police Research Group, by Cressida Bridgeman and Louise Hobbs; "Biting Back II: Reducing Repeat Victimization in Huddersfield," Police Research Group, Crime Detection and Prevention series, Paper 82, by Sylvia Chenery, John Holt and Ken Pease; speech by Holt at 1995 Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego.

ciples and methods of problem-oriented policing. A team of the volunteers, led by 69-year-old Agnes Brookes, a retired church secretary, took on the Secure Self Storage burglary problem as a project. They learned that the warehouse was managed by a husband and wife who seemed somewhat lackadaisical about security. When approached about the problem, they did not seem overly eager to stop the burglaries. The managers were employed by a property-management group that, in turn, was retained by the warehouse's owner. The owner had property throughout the metropolitan area, valued at over \$32 million: Secure Self Storage was but a small part of this investment.

The volunteers began analyzing the problem by walking through the warehouse and inspecting security measures. They paid particular attention to the layout of the warehouse, number and type of entrances, and physical condition of the property. Nothing about the warehouse seemed unusual, but crime statistics showed that the burglary rate there was three times the average for other city self-storage facilities.

The volunteers looked for any similarities among the burglaries at Secure Self Storage that might suggest a cause and a remedy. Suspect information in police reports was rare, and what existed showed no pattern. Some burglars had cut locks, while others had broken into units through adjoining walls. The volunteers found no consistent pattern in time of occurrence, largely because investigators usually did not know when burglaries had occurred. Nor did they find any significant patterns among victim profiles. The only factor common to all the burglaries that seemed relevant was that they all occurred under one set of management practices.

Agnes Brookes, the volunteers' leader, contacted five other self-storage facilities to ask about similar burglary problems and security measures. While she could draw no firm conclusions about what prevented burglaries, she did learn that the other facilities were not experiencing as big a problem with them. The volunteers agreed that this warranted further analysis. Accordingly, Brookes developed a telephone survey, through which she interviewed more than 30 area self-storage facilities. This survey gave Brookes a much better understanding of self-storage security and management practices.

Brookes learned about burglars' common methods of operation. Some burglars stole from one storage unit and stored the stolen goods in another. When sufficient time passed, they removed the goods from the facility. Brookes also learned about effective locks and sensor alarms, and, importantly, about management practices that discouraged theft. Among the recommended practices were to rent suspicious customers units easily observed, time customer visits, periodically check on customers while in their units, and lock doors leading to common hallways, when not in use.

While Brookes was learning about effective management practices, three other volunteers were further studying the Secure Self Storage warehouse. They discovered that the external security was reasonably good. A 6-foot Cyclone fence with Byzantine wire and a controlled entrance made it nearly impossible to move large or heavy objects surreptitiously. Although the entrance gate was electronically controlled through pass codes, several vehicles could pass through the gate before it closed. This allowed people to enter without being registered.

The internal security seemed weaker. Customers were free to move about the common hallways, which were left open. Moreover, many of the unit locks, especially those the property managers sold, were of inferior quality. Some could be broken, cut or picked, while appearing to remain secure. The managers did not screen customers, and assigned them to units randomly. The volunteers concluded that the net effect of these conditions and practices was to leave burglars feeling confident they would not be detected.

To respond to the problem, the volunteers got the property-management group to put some pressure on the managers to cooperate with the police. The volunteers designed and printed a brochure on effective security devices and practices, to be given to customers. They recommended that the managers install pressure pads, restricting access between floors; use different access codes for different hallways; install video cameras in hallways; improve lighting; upgrade locks; and affix special stickers to locks to readily identify tampering.

Once the managers implemented the new security measures, the decline in reported burglaries was both immediate and dramatic. The number of reported burglaries dropped from 150 in the six-month period before the intervention, to one in the three months following. A customer with an unauthorized set of master keys committed that burglary; the customer was arrested and evicted from the warehouse.

With the Secure Self Storage burglary problem under control, Brookes followed up on her telephone survey by preparing and distributing a crime-prevention flyer suitable for all self-storage facilities.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several respects. Most of the project was conceived and implemented by citizen volunteers with a modest amount of background or training in police procedure. The impact was dramatic, saving the police department's resources, while expending virtually none. It seems that the key to their success was, first, learning what might deter burglaries and, second, using their influence with the property-management group to motivate the managers to heed the prevention advice.

Additional Editors' Comments on Burglary Problems

The nation is witnessing a sharp decline in the number of reported burglaries. In recent years, burglaries dropped well below 3 million cases, from 3.8 million cases in 1981. The early 1970s represented the high point in burglary, with 93.1 burglaries and attempted burglaries for every 1,000 households. The rate is about half that now. Experts suggest several reasons for the dramatic decline, including an increase in the crack market, as compared with the heroin market. Heroin users, they suggest, take the time to commit daytime burglaries. However, crack users are more impatient and prefer robberies and drug dealing – quicker moneymakers, with no need to pawn stolen items – to finance their addiction. Improved residential and commercial security measures may also account for some of the decline, as well as a demographic decline in the number of young offenders, although an increase is expected in the coming years.

*Sources: "The Church Lady Tackles a Burglary Series," by Officer Andy Mills, undated, submitted by San Diego Police Department to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; "*Property Crimes Steadily Decline, Led by Burglary*," New York Times, Oct. 12, 1997; personal communication with Sgt. Mills, October 1997.

The efforts included in this section highlight the value of hot-spot and revictimization analysis in looking at burglary. Even with such large declines in burglary, patterns may emerge in terms of location, type of location (storage facilities, malls, etc.), and victimization, providing information for fine-tuning responses.

The editors uncovered other notable approaches during the research. Mesa, Ariz., police established a program to address burglary in storage facilities. They restricted the hours customers could enter the facility (eliminating the excuse for late-night traffic on the property), provided training, and applied crime-prevention-through-environmental-design principles, including the installation of tamper-resistant locks. Scottsdale, Ariz., police used a two-pronged approach to address the burglary of items such as bikes and golf clubs from open garages. They stopped at homes with open garage doors to warn of burglary susceptibility, and they also provided education to the community on area burglary problems and the ease of theft when there is open access. Tempe, Ariz., police suggested that a repeatedly burglarized storage facility hire a homeless man, whom they knew to be trustworthy, to live at the facility and monitor against break-ins.

Westchester County, N.Y., police convinced the local legislative body to pass a law regulating the sale and exchange of precious metals and gems in the county. Prior to this, gem dealers were buying stolen jewelry (gained from residential burglaries), and county laws required no paperwork documenting the sale or information on the person selling. In Orlando, Fla., to reduce break-ins of vulnerable households in one area, police placed enhanced security measures in the homes of the elderly, single parents and victims of prior break-ins, if they financially qualified for the assistance.

The Peel, Ontario, Canada, Regional Police's crime prevention services is pursuing amendments to Ontario's building codes to reduce burglaries. One hundred ten single-family homes are being built using the suggested burglary-prevention designs. Evaluators will compare these homes with a control group of the same size over a five-year period.



Chapter 16

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Prostitution

Prostitution

A Prostitution Problem in Champaign, Ill.

By the late 1980s, despite police efforts, a prostitution problem in downtown Champaign, Ill., had not subsided. Champaign police officer Chase Leonhard, among others, was frustrated with the high recidivism rate among prostitutes:

Extended incarceration seemed inappropriate, because the prostitutes were almost status offenders; they were all addicts. Arrest [provided only] temporary relief. Prostitutes were stopping cars and blocking traffic, asking if the male drivers wanted a date. Collateral crimes, including theft, robbery, assaults, and "john rolling," caused a significant draw on police resources. Complaints were received from local merchants, citizens and members of the city council, making this problem the number one priority for enforcement action by the Champaign Police Department.

When Leonhard left the department to become an assistant state's attorney, he remained interested in the problem. He believed that extra police patrols and enforcement of motor vehicle and traffic laws in the area did little to lessen it. In fact, the greater the police presence, the less impact it had. Leonhard noted:

The prostitutes seemed to actually enjoy the attention being given to them, and became even more brazen. Anonymous citizens reported that the prostitutes were flagging down their customers by lifting up their dresses and opening up their blouses, exposing themselves, and were using finger and hand gestures to solicit their customers. When the prostitutes were stopped by officers, they proved to be surprisingly knowledgeable in the area of traffic law that related to pedestrian responsibilities.

The prostitutes knew the law and developed ways to avoid citations and convictions. Leonhard decided something else should be tried. From 1983 through 1987, officers made nearly 300 prostitution-related arrests, but the problem persisted. Ninety percent of the prostitutes were repeat offenders; 15 chronic prostitutes held the lion's share of convictions. Major construction projects in the downtown area made it practically inaccessible, forcing prostitutes to migrate to an adjacent residential neighborhood. Neighbors complained that prostitutes used apartment-building foyers, church parking lots, driveways, and private alleys to have sex.

In Illinois, prostitution is a class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. State law mandates progressive discipline, so prostitutes never receive the maximum allowable sentence. Leonhard said, "Even in those cases that were not plea-bargained, a typical sentence for a first-offender misdemeanor prosti-



tute would be 12 months' probation, a fine and, perhaps, some public-service work." Prostitutes were rarely convicted; incarceration, even for recidivist prostitutes, was rare.

The city attorney suggested that officers use the city's anti-solicitation ordinance. However, this offered no long-term solution. A solicitation conviction merely resulted in a fine, and the cases were difficult to prove because defense attorneys argued the women were simply seeking rides home.

The police conducted reverse stings; female officers dressed as prostitutes and arrested "johns" for attempted patronizing. While in the state's attorney's office, Leonhard dismissed these cases because entrapment defenses were too difficult to refute without evidence of the johns' predisposition. Stings with male officers posing as customers provided a number of arrests, but the problem remained.

In 1989, the state legislature passed a law that made a third prostitution conviction a felony punishable by up to three years in prison. Leonhard said, "The initial promise of this new provision soon evaporated in light of the fact that many months – sometimes years – would pass before an offender would amass a criminal history sufficient to make her or him eligible for the enhanced felony sentencing." In addition, many judges disliked the law and favored a less-severe progressive-discipline approach, opting for longer probation terms rather than jail time.

Leonhard believed court-imposed travel restrictions might help. He asked the police department's crime analysis unit to analyze prostitution arrests over a five-year period. They found that 92 percent of 321 prostitution arrests occurred in a 12-square-block downtown area. Leonhard researched judicial case law across the nation. He said, "While the cases did not speak with one voice on the issue, the prevailing view appeared to be that such restrictions would be upheld, if not overly broad or onerous in their scope or effect." However, none spoke to travel restrictions for prostitutes in as large an area as was contemplated in this case. On a small scale, location banning was authorized in cases like shoplifting and trespassing, prohibiting the offender from returning to the store or location; however, Leonhard could find nothing in statutory or court authority about large-scale restrictions. He said, "I was sensitive to the right to travel granted by the Constitution's First Amendment, so I suggested that, as we pursued travel restrictions, we allow convicted prostitutes in the 12-block area for legitimate purposes – with a note from their probation officer."

Armed with a pin map showing the clustering of prostitutes in the 12-block area, Leonhard requested that the court impose a travel restriction on one chronic prostitute. Her defense attorney argued that this violated her constitutional right to travel. Leonhard countered that this restriction was permissible under the corrections code, which authorized imposing reasonable conditions on convicted offenders, if for a rehabilitative purpose. Leonhard believed the travel restriction would keep the prostitute away from potential customers, since the 12-block area was the only significant prostitution market in Champaign. If she had a legitimate need to be in the area, her probation officer could authorize it. The judge agreed.

Within two months, Champaign courts imposed travel restrictions on 13 chronic prostitutes. "This took care of the core of recidivist prostitutes," Leonhard said, adding that "Illinois law permits police to make on-view arrests of probationers found to be in violation of the conditions of their sentences." Police arrested convicted prostitutes found in the 12-block area without authorization, and immediately brought them before the court. The state's attorney then revoked their probation.

One defendant appealed the restriction to the state appellate court; the court upheld the trial judge's ruling. The next year, at a judge's request, the Illinois legislature codified travel restrictions, allowing them as a condition of probation when a rational basis for them was shown (as was established by the pin-map clustering).

Over the 18 months following the use of travel restrictions, street prostitution declined in Champaign by 90 percent. This held true for four years following the restrictions. In terms of displacement, a few prostitutes migrated to Urbana, a nearby city, and one or two ended up in jail on unrelated charges. As for the others, they abandoned the area, and some, perhaps, the profession.

Leonhard more recently assessed the prostitution problem, saying it is no longer chronic in Champaign. There are a few seasonal prostitutes; in the summer of 1997, there were three in the city. However, when assistant state's attorneys ask for travel restrictions, the problem ends. Leonhard said, "If you look up Champaign on the prostitution Internet web site, it now says, basically, don't go there."*

Editors' note: This project is significant for several reasons. Limiting access to the area (except for legitimate purposes) disrupted the market, separating prostitutes from customers. Leonhard relied on both his police and his legal training to devise a nontraditional solution to the problem. From his experience as a police officer, he understood the debilitating effect a street prostitution problem can have on a neighborhood. As an assistant state's attorney, he recognized that limited jail space can influence a judge's sentencing decisions. His police and legal training both sensitized him to safeguarding constitutional rights. Through his police experience, he knew the crime analysis unit could geographically plot the prostitution problem, which provided the basis for reasonably restricting convicted prostitutes' access to the area, without constitutional implications.

A Prostitution Problem in Nassau County, N.Y.

In 1994, Nassau County, New York, police officials noticed a sudden influx of massage parlors, especially in communities near the county's western border with Queens, New York City. There were 31 parlors in seven of the county's eight police districts. The parlors advertised their services in local newspapers and magazines, and employees handed out business cards at local gyms and supermarkets. The police learned that, while the businesses advertised that they offered massage therapy, they were unlicensed to do so, and were actually offering sexual services. Community activists wrote letters to the police department about the parlors and the police's seeming inability to

*Sources: Project description submitted by Champaign Police Department in support of nomination for 1993 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; personal communications with Chase Leonhard and Champaign Police Department personnel.

close them down. According to Fifth District Officer Bill Leahy, "Residents were afraid it was turning into 42nd Street." (Manhattan's 42nd Street was for years renowned for prostitution and sex clubs, though its image has improved more recently.)

Officer Leahy, assigned to the Fifth District problem-oriented policing team, began studying the problem by surveying community residents, vice squad members and patrol officers. They learned that most massage parlor employees were Korean or Hispanic. The vice squad had made arrests for code violations, prostitution, unauthorized use of a professional title, and unlicensed massages, but this had not stopped the illegal trade.

The POP team researched records in the county clerk's office and located the owners of the buildings in which the massage parlors were operating. They interviewed the owners and discovered that lease agreements had typically been executed under false representations by the parlor operators. They told building landlords they were operating physical-therapy centers or legitimate massage-therapy clinics. The owners often had problems finding the people who signed the leases, making civil remedies like injunctions difficult to obtain. When parlor operators altered the buildings' physical structure, violating building and fire codes, the property owners were admittedly lax in demanding compliance.

The various agencies that had some regulatory authority over the massage parlors, including the attorney general's office, health department and state education department, had different regulatory criteria and enforcement priorities. Consequently, many efforts to regulate the businesses were stalled, either in court or in the various bureaucracies. The U.S. Customs, Internal Revenue and Immigration and Naturalization services could not help the local police at the time. All the while, the parlors continued to operate illegally.

Finally, the POP team decided that the best strategy was to force the property owners to help them shut down the businesses. They notified the owners about building- and fire-code violations and fraudulent lease agreements that had been detected. They told the landlords they intended to cite them to put them on official notice of the violations. They also told the landlords that the absence of appropriate professional licenses and the fraudulent nature of the leases were sufficient grounds to evict the massage parlors. The education department was able to advise the police of whether parlor staff had professional licenses. The officers negotiated with the sheriff's department to give parlor-eviction processes top priority.

When property owners did not cooperate, police, fire marshals and building inspectors reinspected the massage parlors and cited the owners. The building violations could cost them from \$200 to \$1,000 a day. Fire-code violations could cost as much as \$5,000. The penalties tended to be stiffer for property owners than for tenants. Other properties the uncooperative landlords owned were also targeted for inspection and citation, as were businesses on the same property as the parlors. All this was intended to put as much pressure as possible on the owners to evict the unlawful ten-

ants; under existing laws, owners had the greatest leverage against such tenants. The officers asked the district attorney's office to file criminal charges for permitting prostitution and criminal nuisance against owners who refused to evict. Prosecutors agreed to do so, finding that code citations gave the owners sufficient legal notice of the illegal activities occurring on their property. Applying yet more pressure, the officers notified the properties' mortgage holders of the illegal activity, and suggested to them that the prostitution and consequent arrests could result in adverse publicity for them.

At the same time the officers were pressuring the property owners, they were also targeting the massage parlors' patrons through field interviews and traffic enforcement. They also solicited cooperation from the local newspapers, asking them to stop running ads for illegal parlors. The major regional newspaper, *Newsday*, finally stopped running ads after several requests from the police and county executive. It further changed its advertising policy to require a background check on businesses seeking to buy advertising space. The officers got the local gyms to agree to remove any parlor business cards posted on their bulletin boards. A local radio station interviewed the county executive and the police district commander about the problem, bringing more public attention to it.

The result of all these efforts was that all illegal county massage parlors were closed or vacated. Some parlors closed when notified of the eviction proceedings against them; the sheriff's department did not have to evict them. Some closed upon hearing of other evictions. The IRS began a criminal tax-evasion investigation of a person connected to the parlors. The police periodically review local newspapers and magazines and visit gyms, looking for parlor advertisements. Officers were working with attorneys to draft local legislation that would strengthen the county's authority to close down businesses that failed to meet all occupational and building requirements.

As a final step, the Nassau County police notified the Suffolk County and New York City police departments about their success in closing the massage parlors, and advised them to be vigilant should the parlors try to reopen in those jurisdictions.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for its dramatic success in closing down all known illegal massage parlors. Although doing so was not likely to seriously disrupt the prostitution trade, it curtailed a part of the trade that was so open and notorious that it undermined the public's confidence in the police. This project is also notable for the way officers used official influence on the property owners, compelling them to address the problem. While the owners may not have been directly responsible for the unlawful activity, they profited indirectly. The officers effectively shifted some of the costs of the parlors to the property owners, reducing their profits. In addition, the officers secured their supervisors' help, as well as the county executive's. This project was a semifinalist for the 1995 Webber-Seavey Award, sponsored by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and Motorola.

*Sources: "Illegal Massage Parlors/Houses of Prostitution," Nassau County Police Department narrative submitted in support of nomination for 1995 Webber-Seavey Award; project description submitted by Nassau County Police Department to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; supplemental correspondence from Officer Susan Giannone to Rana Sampson, June 2, 1995; supplemental correspondence from Officer William Leahy to Rana Sampson, June 20, 1995; personal communication with Leahy, June 15, 1995.

A Prostitution Problem in National City, Calif.

In a three-block stretch near the I-5 freeway in National City, Calif., 20 to 30 prostitutes worked the street. The area was one of the city's main entry points. The National City Police Department noted that "the problem had existed for years, but had recently grown in size." Drugs, robberies and thefts were prevalent in the surrounding area.

Sgt. L. Brent Roark and his neighborhood policing team (Officers Joseph Florentino, Patrick Kelley and Matthew O'Deane) conducted a community survey to find out more about the problem. Crime analysis provided the officers with information on calls for service and geographically mapped hot spots, or repeat-problem locations. The officers surveilled the area to get a better sense of how the prostitution market operated. This also helped them to understand the connection between area physical conditions and the prostitution market. They videotaped prostitutes as they solicited customers, or "johns." They interviewed johns to learn why they frequented the area, what the pay scale was, what their prior and family histories were, what their sources of income were, whether they or the prostitutes used drugs, whether pimps were involved, and how they perceived police activity.

The surveys, surveillance and interviews helped the officers tailor their responses. They calculated that, overall, 500 prostitutes were working the area, some only intermittently. Some were "circuit girls" (perhaps 30%), those who moved on to Los Angeles, San Francisco and Portland when things heated up; others were local. Some of the locals were full-time prostitutes (perhaps 50%); others (perhaps 20%) "supplemented their income by prostituting on weekends," according to Sgt. Roark. The circuit girls often used aliases. If police arrested them, they would fail to appear in court, skip town, and return perhaps six months later, using new names. By then, Roark said, "most officers had forgotten them, or at least the aliases they previously used." The circuit girls were less dependent on drugs and made, "conservatively, at least \$500 a day," according to Roark.

Prostitutes made money, but the physical cost was high: Officers recorded numerous incidents of johns robbing, beating or raping prostitutes, as well as incidents of pimps and prostitutes victimizing johns. Police identified at least 60 pimps and panderers (those who steered johns to the prostitutes).

Sgt. Roark believed the nearby budget-rate hotels and motels contributed to the problem. In 1996, they generated 538 calls for service. Two motels accounted for 67 percent of the calls. Police met with the hotel and motel managers. Prostitution was the only business many of them could count on, because the number of legitimate guests had dropped dramatically.

In prior years, special police units tackled the problem, and if they were understaffed, patrol officers provided additional enforcement. Enforcement was the main tool, but some officers were more creative. Sgt. Roark said, "At times, officers would physically escort groups of prostitutes down the street at the front bumper of a police cruis-

er, until reaching the city-limit boundary between National City and San Diego . . ." Jail overcrowding prevented the misdemeanor incarceration of prostitutes, so police used cite-and-release, which simply created a revolving door for citations and warrants issued for failure to appear. Roark said the johns knew they had little risk of arrest:

[They] knew that, based upon the sheer number of motorists in the area, chances of being stopped and identified as a john cruising the area [were] remote. Even if stopped, the worst-case scenario usually produced a field interview. Further, information was being provided on the Internet about the area, providing directions, including specific off-ramps, and naming . . . National City for those looking for prostitutes. Further, the physical environment had steadily deteriorated, adding to the perception that "nobody cared" and that criminal activity was "expected" to occur there.

With the analysis completed, the police team focused on environmental and legal responses to the problem. They worked with San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) to add lighting and upgrade wattage. At the team's request, "SDG&E modified power utility boxes in the area, preventing the use of them as benches or leaning rails," according to Sgt. Roark. The team asked that slat fencing be woven into a chain-link fence to obscure the view, so johns could not pick out dates from the highway. (Vegetation will be added to further limit freeway viewing.) With the help of the San Diego County Pay Phone Owners' Association, the team removed four pay phones prostitutes used. To address the problem of repeat johns, the city attorney's office drafted an ordinance permitting officers to impound vehicles as public nuisances if used during an act of prostitution. One prosecutor handled all the team's cases; this vertical prosecution ensured that arrests did not slip through the cracks.

To address the prostitutes, the team tried several strategies. They focused on decreasing the amount of money prostitutes made. When they arrested prostitutes, they seized their money, condoms and pagers as evidence. In the case of johns and pimps, the team had their vehicles towed when circumstances warranted. As part of an agreement with the San Diego Police Department, National City officers ignored city boundaries for the purposes of prostitution arrests; offenders could no longer elude arrest simply by crossing the border street between the two cities. The team identified and fingerprinted prostitutes, eliminating their ability to come back months later under an alias. The team also developed a file system containing all the prostitutes' names and known aliases, allowing for cross-referencing.

National City contracted with San Diego for misdemeanor jail space, so that prostitutes did some time for their offenses. The team employed a little-used state vehicle code authorizing courts to suspend the driving privileges of those convicted of prostitution within 1,000 feet of a private residence, if a vehicle was used. In addition, the team encouraged county welfare to pursue investigations of some of the prostitutes who were getting government aid. Sgt. Roark said, "The team also arranged for a social-service counselor to be available during sting operations, in the event a prostitute



decided to leave the business and wanted help with drug rehab or counseling." The team also gave arrested prostitutes a social-service referral pamphlet.

To slow prostitution at the hotels and motels, the officers requested, and the city council adopted, an ordinance requiring hotels and motels to have customers show a valid picture ID before providing a room. Sgt. Roark said, "The team found that few prostitutes carry valid ID, and johns are reluctant to use their real names and addresses."

The team found that many johns were Navy personnel, perhaps as many as 50 percent when they first started the project. The team considered asking the Navy to make this National City area off-limits, but decided not to because Navy personnel would be prohibited from legitimate area activity. Instead, they arranged with the Navy for a follow-up policy on all arrests. The team would turn arrestees over to Shore Patrol, and their command would be notified. This would eliminate johns' anonymity. To dampen Navy personnel's interest in the prostitutes, the team drafted and disseminated a letter (with the Navy Base Safety Committee's help) to all commands. Sgt. Roark said it "outline[d] the dangers and possible repercussions associated with prostitution activity."

Officers targeted some of the neighborhood houses analysis identified as contributing to the problem. These have since been renovated. For those pimps on probation or parole, the team successfully sought changes to their release conditions, excluding them from the targeted area. Finally, the team enlisted the media's aid. This rallied public support for the project, and also alerted johns to the team's intensive problem-solving effort.

Sgt. Roark commented on the strategies' impact: "The results were immediate and dramatic." He said the team interviewed prostitutes who were leaving the area for good. He also noted: "[T]he hotels and motels reported a more favorable clientele. In the three months following completion of the project, calls for service at the six area motels dropped 66.86 percent, compared [with] the same period the previous year. Prostitutes in the area are now the exception, not the norm."

The team is also checking whether displacement has occurred. Sgt. Roark said, "The team uses a countywide crime-information system to track for displacement, monitoring the movements of offenders in terms of arrests, cites, field interviews, etc., as they appear in other jurisdictions."*

Editors' note: This effort is notable on a variety of fronts. First, the team did an in-depth analysis, particularly on the offenders. This helped them determine why the area attracted prostitution, and allowed them to make lasting environmental changes. The hotels and motels, having to verify IDs, can now be held accountable for activity on their property. The team enlisted the Navy, whose employees accounted for a lot of the johns, to become a capable guardian over its personnel. The team, with all their tailored responses, seems to have transformed what was once a prostitution bazaar into a high-risk, low-reward location for the activity.

*Sources: Presentation at San Diego Police Department's April 1997 Problem Analysis Advisory Meeting, open countywide to police and guests; "Roosevelt Avenue Project: Anti-Prostitution Project," submitted by National City Police Department in consideration for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; San Diego Union-Tribune article, March 17, 1997.

Additional Editors' Comments on Prostitution Problems

While prostitution has been around for a long time, police responses to it (e.g., citations, reverse stings and arrests) have remained the same for several decades. Police and community groups have recently tried new approaches based on a better understanding of prostitution markets, after looking at the markets' economics and health risks, and the environmental conditions that allow them to flourish. More recent strategies include altering street traffic and parking patterns, pushing local judges to reassess their sentencing practices, using civil laws, offering social services, educating "johns," shaming johns, discouraging those facilitating prostitution, and engaging outraged communities.

The editors found several other projects of note. In San Diego, in response to 60-plus prostitutes working a commercial strip, a sergeant asked merchants to seek temporary restraining orders (TROs) in civil court against the prostitutes. The sergeant learned that many of the strip's prostitutes would stick around only as long as business was profitable and, as "circuit girls," would move on to northern cities to maintain their income. The judge agreed to TROs against many of the prostitutes, which prohibited them from flagging down motorists, loitering on corners and engaging in other solicitation-like behavior within 100 yards of the plaintiffs/merchants. Violating a TRO resulted in five days in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Almost overnight, the prostitutes left the area, and nearby hotels reported increased legitimate business from customers staying more than one night.

A Newport News, Va., officer documented 28 prostitutes in a 26-block area. He enlisted the commonwealth's attorney to seek a judicial order, in lieu of jail time, restricting convicted prostitutes from the area. The judge agreed. When prostitutes established a brothel in an abandoned building, the officer brought in the buildings department, which condemned the property based on unsafe conditions. Some prostitutes used a local parking lot for trysts, knowing that Virginia police cannot enforce trespassing laws on private property. The officer contacted the owner and suggested he change the lot to paid-parking and have a tow company tow trespassing vehicles (driven by johns and pimps) from the lot, at the vehicle owners' expense. Some remaining prostitutes conducted business in bars and local motels. The officer worked with the Alcohol Beverage Control Board and gave each bar owner a copy of the law, which prohibited lewd conduct and made it illegal for bars to be meeting places for "persons of ill repute." The officer gave motels copies of local laws, which prohibited registering guests under an alias and renting a room more than once in a night. The bar and motel operators immediately complied. A time-series evaluation of the effort showed that the number of prostitutes in the area declined from 28 to six, a reduction of over 75 percent.

In St. Petersburg, Fla., with the proceeds from convicted johns' fines, officers helped establish a program for prostitutes, to turn their lives around. A residential treatment center (modeled after one in Reseda, Calif., called the Mary Magdalene Project) uses



a case-management approach and offers classes and counseling as part of court-ordered sentencing. Due to the program's recent implementation, it is too early to assess its effectiveness in dissuading prostitutes.

In Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, to minimize assaults against prostitutes, social workers alert prostitutes of patterns of abuse by johns and provide timely information on dangerous customers. Also in Edmonton, as part of a separate problem-solving effort, residents developed a better understanding of the magnitude of a local prostitution market by documenting how many cars entered the hot-spot area between midnight and 1 a.m.

In San Francisco, Calif., convicted johns attend a class on the ills of prostitution, taught, in part, by former prostitutes. Washington, D.C., police altered traffic and parking patterns to discourage johns from circling an area for prostitutes. In San Bernadino, Calif., residents picketed local motels catering to prostitution. Baltimore County, Md., police informed residents of defendants' court dates in prostitution-related cases. Police believe this boosted judicial accountability and increased offenders' sentencing. In Des Moines, Iowa, neighborhood residents write down johns' license plate numbers and ask the motor vehicle department for vehicle-ownership information. The residents follow with letters to the registered owners, notifying them that the vehicle's driver was seen with a prostitute, and asking that the activity stop.

Chapter 17

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Robbery

Robbery

A Robbery Problem in Gainesville, Fla.

In the spring of 1985, a barrage of convenience-store robberies in Gainesville, Fla., led the Gainesville Police Department to conduct an exhaustive study of the problem. Led by Planning Coordinator Patrick Callahan, the department researchers wanted to isolate those factors that made convenience stores an attractive target to robbers. They also hoped to identify other jurisdictions nationwide that had successfully dealt with the problem.

Toward the latter objective, the researchers contacted the International City Management Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police and Local Government Information Network. In addition, they contacted the National League of Cities, National Referral Center, National Association of Convenience Stores, Police Foundation, National Crime Prevention Council, Southland Corp., National Criminal Justice Reference Service, and American Society of Association Executives.

This research pointed them to the state of Ohio, where some interesting things were being done. Several cities had ordinances mandating certain robbery-prevention policies and procedures, such as training clerks, keeping minimal cash on hand at night, installing drop safes, putting up signs advertising the safes, maintaining clear views of counters from the street, and having adequate lighting in parking lots. The city of Kent, Ohio, also required that two clerks be on duty during late-night hours. The city of Coral Springs, Fla., adapted the Kent ordinance, offering both gas stations and convenience stores the option of installing locked pay booths in lieu of having two clerks on duty.

Whereas the other Ohio cities with robbery-prevention ordinances showed moderate declines in robberies after adopting the ordinances (ranging from a slight decrease in one city to a 30% decrease in another), Kent experienced a 74 percent decline (from 19 to five) after adopting its ordinance. Coral Springs dropped from three to zero robberies, and consistently had fewer robberies than surrounding towns.

The researchers reviewed Gainesville convenience-store robbery reports filed over the past five years. They learned there were 47 convenience stores in Gainesville, 45 of which had been robbed at least once. The distribution of robberies at individual stores ranged from a low of one to a high of 14. Eighty-one percent of the stores had been robbed more than once. The distribution of robberies across the years studied ranged from 20 to 72, with the average being 39 per year. Convenience stores accounted for 50 percent of all business robberies during this five-year period. (Gas stations, liquor stores, banks, fast-food restaurants, retail stores, and other businesses each accounted for only 5% to 12% of the problem.) While nearly every convenience store had been robbed, much lower percentages of other types of businesses had been robbed. Seventy-five percent of the convenience-store robberies occurred between 7 p.m. and 5 a.m.



The focus of the analysis then shifted to how many people were present during the robberies. In 92 percent of the robberies, only one clerk was on duty. Since most stores had only one clerk working, this finding in itself was not remarkable. However, in 85 percent of the robberies, the robber waited for customers to leave, and thus was alone with the clerk while committing the crime. A second clerk was present in only 8 percent of the robberies, and one or more customers were present in only 7 percent of them. Even when a customer witnessed a robbery, in most instances, either the robber was unaware of the customer's presence, or the customer came onto the scene after the robbery was under way. This told the researchers that, in the overwhelming majority of convenience-store robberies, the robber believed there was only one other person present, namely, the clerk.

One chain of stores had put two clerks on duty 47 percent of the time, but significantly, 96 percent of the robberies at those stores occurred when only one clerk was present. Another chain, with five stores in the area, had, since 1982, adopted most of the standard robbery-prevention measures, including a two-clerk policy. Its stores were never robbed during the period of study. Remarkably, one of this chain's stores was only 100 yards away from a competitor's store that was robbed 11 times during the period. A third chain of stores had adopted many standard robbery-prevention measures, but not the two-clerk policy. This chain's stores were the second most frequently robbed in the area.

Beginning in the spring of 1985, Gainesville Police Department officials began meeting with representatives of the convenience-store industry to try to get their voluntary cooperation in preventing robberies. The discussions quickly turned to two-clerk policies. Representatives of one chain's parent corporation cited a study the corporation had commissioned that concluded that the presence of two clerks did not deter robbers. The researchers in this study interviewed robbers in prison. Gainesville police officials doubted the study's reliability for several reasons. First, it was based on robbers' self-reporting. Second, only 22 percent of the robbers interviewed had robbed convenience stores. Third, the research was primarily concerned with the economic impact on the funding corporation. Finally, the evidence conflicted with Gainesville's experience.

Gainesville police officials next had their own research audited by the city's auditor, who found no methodological flaws. At the police chief's request, a University of Florida forensic psychologist agreed to conduct an independent study, for which the city would not pay him. They further agreed that the findings would be published, regardless of the outcome. The psychologist conducted a three-tiered study that included interviews of incarcerated convenience-store robbers and victim clerks, and an analysis of robbery data. Both the robbers and the clerks indicated that the presence of two clerks was a significant robbery deterrent. The psychologist concluded that the robbers wanted to avoid potential interference to the robbery, and avoid being identified. The data analysis showed, among other things, that stores with only one clerk on duty during any shift had a higher chance of being robbed. On the basis of his findings, the psychologist concluded that the presence of two clerks seemed to be the primary deterrent to Gainesville convenience-store robberies.

A Florida State University and Tallahassee Police Department consultant conducted yet another study of Gainesville convenience-store robberies. He, too, concluded that the presence of two clerks was the main deterrent to them. Finally, Dr. C.R. Jeffery, a Florida State University criminologist renowned for his work in crime-prevention-through-environmental-design, and two of his doctoral students similarly concluded that the presence of more than one clerk was among the best deterrents to convenience-store robberies. Their study analyzed Tallahassee convenience-store robberies.

In the year of meetings between the Gainesville Police Department and the convenience-store industry, the industry's only conclusion was that the police should provide more officers to patrol and to investigate robberies. Most area convenience stores did not adopt even basic robbery-prevention measures, such as having adequate lighting and keeping windows clear. Robberies continued to increase.

In July 1986, after two public hearings and much debate, the Gainesville City Council passed an ordinance requiring that convenience stores maintain a clear view of the sales counter from the street, post signs indicating that minimal cash was on hand, keep a drop safe with a time release, maintain certain lighting, use security cameras, and train clerks in robbery prevention. The proposed two-clerk provision was not adopted, on the condition that the convenience stores implement a robbery-prevention plan that would reduce robberies by 50 percent from the previous 240-day period. This meant that there could be no more than 16 robberies. If such a reduction were not achieved, the two-clerk requirement would automatically go into effect.

The 16-robbery limit was exceeded within 60 days. Accordingly, the two-clerk ordinance went into effect in February 1987, with a 60-day grace period to allow stores to hire new clerks. The convenience-store industry filed suit in federal court, seeking an injunction against the adoption of the two-clerk provision. After reviewing the city's case, buttressed by the studies of the problem, the judge denied the motion, holding that the industry's economic interests would not be irreparably harmed; that there was no constitutional violation; and that granting the injunction would be counter to the public interest because the city had proved the ordinance's preventive value, and the industry's denial of a deterrent effect was unconvincing.

Through October 1987, six months after the ordinance went into effect, Gainesville convenience-store robberies declined by an astounding 65 percent from the same period of the previous year. Almost all of the decrease was accounted for by decreases during late-night hours (there was a 75% decrease in robberies between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m.). As of 1988, there were 18 robberies at convenience stores not exempt from the ordinance (a 70% decrease from 1986). Only three robberies occurred between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m. (an 88% decrease from 1986).

The significant reduction in convenience-store robberies was not part of a bigger trend in crime reduction, as overall reported crime had increased by 63 percent since 1983. Nor was it due to a reduction in *all* robberies, as total reported robberies had increased by 122 percent since 1983. Arrest patterns revealed that only a few robbers



were linked to multiple robberies (no more than five per robber), so the reduction was not simply the result of the apprehension of repeat offenders.

Although convenience-store robberies declined throughout the county in 1987, the county trend reversed in 1988, with 57 percent more robberies than in 1986. Tallahassee convenience-store robberies also increased during this time frame. All this evidence pointed to the conclusion that the two-clerk requirement caused the dramatic decline in Gainesville convenience-store robberies. As of 1988, convenience-store robberies accounted for only 7 percent of Gainesville's business-robbery problem, compared with 50 percent before the ordinance was enacted.

From 1989 to 1993, the number of Gainesville convenience-store robberies continued to decline, reaching a low of seven in 1990. The six-year average before 1987 was 37 robberies per year. The six-year average after 1987 was 13 robberies per year, a 65 percent reduction. Perhaps even more importantly, in the six years before the ordinance was enacted, there were 18 serious injuries related to convenience-store robberies. In the six years after, there was only one.*

Editors' note: This project remains one of the outstanding examples of problem-oriented policing in action. The inquiry was rigorous and exhaustive, and the response followed logically from the problem analysis. The Gainesville Police Department's work was strong enough to persuade a federal court, as well as to influence the state of Florida to enact a stronger convenience-store robbery-prevention statute in 1990.

A Robbery Problem in Post Offices in New York City

In the fall of 1991, the U.S. Postal Service in the New York City metropolitan area began to experience a significant increase in armed robberies of employees and facilities. From 1987 to 1990, there was an average of fewer than 15 robberies reported per year. In 1991, 31 robberies were reported, and in 1992, 65 were reported. Robbers gained access to postal facilities either through unlocked rear doors or at lobby customer counters. They robbed some postal vehicles of the daily cash deposits collected from facilities. Theft of mail from mail-relay boxes (temporary-storage boxes on the street) was also increasing. In 1993, 1,350 such thefts were recorded. During the same period, robberies reported to the New York City Police Department significantly declined.

The Postal Service was concerned about several robbery-related problems:

- increased risk of physical and psychological harm to postal employees and customers,
- short-term loss of revenue,
- deterioration of labor-management relations,
- degradation of customer service, and
- longer-term loss of revenue due to eroding customer confidence.

*Sources: "Convenience Store Robberies in Gainesville, Florida: An Intervention Strategy by the Gainesville Police Department," by Patrick T. Callahan, undated, with statistical updates; "Study of Safety and Security Requirements For 'At-Risk Businesses,'" Robert A. Butterworth, state of Florida Office of the Attorney General, January 1991.

Members of the Postal Inspection Service, the Postal Service branch primarily responsible for law enforcement, began analyzing the robbery problem with the involvement of the area's postal managers. They found that robbery of postal vehicles was the most common type, accounting for 58 percent of the total. Another 35 percent occurred via rear doors to facilities, and 7 percent occurred at customer counters. The project team set a goal of reducing robberies to the 1990 level or below. They further set conditions on the responses they would implement:

- They would not implement procedures that restricted or prevented customer service.
- They would consider short-term measures to enhance security, and long-term measures to restore employee and customer confidence.
- They would restore a perception that postal facilities were invulnerable.
- They would design flexible responses and would not knowingly increase the risk of displaced crime.
- They would follow up to ensure proper implementation.

The final response plan was multifaceted. The project team rejected some otherwise reasonable responses due to the above conditions or to financial impracticality.

The Postal Inspection Service assigned additional investigators to solve the crimes that had already occurred. They made over 130 arrests; 111 offenders had been convicted and sentenced when the project concluded.

Facility security specialists inspected every postal facility robbed. As part of the review, they analyzed neighborhood crime patterns and assessed each facility's likely target points (primarily rear doors and customer counters) for vulnerability. As a result, lighting was improved at some facilities, fencing was installed, and sophisticated access-control devices were installed, as appropriate. Uniformed postal police officers then conducted follow-up surveys of these facilities to monitor employees' compliance with various security measures. The officers often discovered unlocked rear doors and gates, or unauthorized people in restricted areas. One plan objective was to get postal employees to take greater responsibility for facility security.

The Postal Service installed bullet-resistant screenlines in over 75 percent of the area's facilities. Screenlines provided a protective barrier between employees and customers, while allowing them to communicate and conduct business. Postal inspectors had met with community leaders and local police officials to garner support for the installation of these devices. Video surveillance cameras were also installed in some facilities.

To reduce thefts of mail from relay boxes, a postal inspector developed a special lock known as a "Silver Bullet Lock." The new lock passed all field tests and was installed on boxes throughout the area. Uniformed postal police officers in high-profile vehicles increased their patrols around postal facilities. Postal inspectors and postal police officers visited post offices throughout the New York area to educate employ-



ees about robbery prevention and proper procedures during and after a robbery. They stressed the need to keep doors to restricted areas locked, to avoid counting money in public view, and to avoid talking to others about the presence of money in facilities. They met with labor-union leaders to get their cooperation in stressing a new security consciousness. They also met with New York City Police Department officials to encourage beat police officers to drop by postal facilities.

The Postal Service also developed an entirely new procedure for transporting cash. Previously, regular letter carriers picked up and transported cash (most of which came from the money-order service) during normal delivery rounds. The new procedure called for an armed escort, following unpredictable schedules, to pick up and transport cash.

The number of armed robberies dropped to 32 in 1993, and further dropped to 21 in 1994. Armed robberies continued to decline in 1995, 1996 and 1997. According to Assistant Inspector-in-Chief Joyce King, who oversaw the project, "We haven't had a single armed robbery of this type since we instituted the countermeasures." Thefts of mail from relay boxes decreased by 52 percent from 1993 to 1994, and by an additional 37 percent in 1995. Over 175,000 cash escorts had been made, without a single robbery attempt, at the project's conclusion. In addition, postal police officers noticed significant improvement in employees' compliance with security measures.*

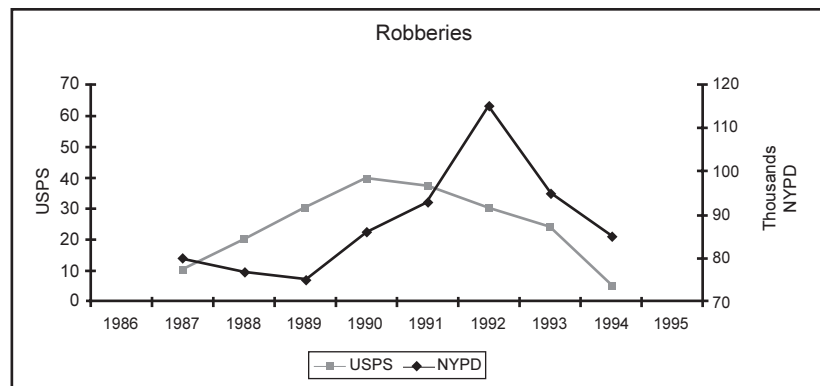


Fig. 1. Comparison of reported robberies: U.S. Postal Service and New York City Police Department

Editors' note: This project is notable for both its scope and its positive impact on serious violent crime. Project staff used strategic planning methods that allowed them to achieve their immediate objectives without compromising their organization's core mission – to serve customers. The project was a finalist for the 1995 Webber-Seavey Award, sponsored by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and Motorola.

*Sources: "Armed Robbery Countermeasures," Postal Inspection Service, New York Division, submitted in support of application for the 1995 Webber-Seavey Award; correspondence from Assistant Inspector-in-Charge Joyce King, New York Division, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, July 29, 1997; personal communication with King, Oct. 9, 1997.

Additional Editors' Comments on Robbery Problems

Willie Sutton, the notorious bank robber, when asked why he robbed banks, is often quoted as replying, "Because that's where the money is." If one could ask him why people robbed the convenience stores and postal facilities in the preceding case studies, he might say, "Because that's where the guardians aren't." The police problem-solvers in these case studies, while not discounting the value of investigation, arrest and incarceration of robbers, sought to strengthen potential robbery victims' defensive and preventive abilities. By hardening targets, adding potential witnesses to the crime, and making employees more vigilant, the police sought to increase potential robbers' estimations of the risks of robbing the establishments. The behavior of victims, presence of witnesses, and appearance of security measures all send signals to robbers, heightening risk and lessening the chance of reward. The police are learning how to fine-tune these signals to a variety of robberies.

The editors found other efforts of note. San Diego, Calif., police instruct convenience-store clerks to clean the checkout counter hourly, so if they are robbed, the offender's prints can be identified. In addition, they suggest that employees park their personal vehicles in front of the store during late-night hours, to deter robbers.

An Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, detective found that one gas station chain was repeatedly victimized. Seventeen of its stations had been robbed at least once, and one station had been hit eight times, for a total of 51 robberies and \$70,000 in reported losses. Upon further investigation, the detective found that some of the losses were due to robberies, while others were due to employee theft. As a result, the detective recommended removing cigarettes from easy-access areas, changing cash- and key-handling practices, and doing background checks on prospective employees.

Baton Rouge, La., police found the vast majority of commercial robberies were of convenience stores, especially those that sold gasoline and were open 24 hours a day. At their request, the city council passed an ordinance requiring 24-hour convenience stores to train employees in robbery prevention and install 35-mm security cameras, which could be triggered manually or through bait money. The police advertised the new ordinance to alert convenience-store operators and potential robbers. After some initial problems with implementation, police claim the effort has reduced robberies at these stores and has increased police clearance rates.



Chapter 18

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Theft From Vehicles

Theft From Vehicles

A Theft from Vehicle Problem in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Constable Doug Storey worked the downtown area in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. While there were problems with robbery and assault, one of the most common crimes was theft from vehicles. Not only is theft from vehicles irritating for victims – they lose clothes, money, stereos, and other valuables – but it is also troublesome for the police, who spend countless hours taking crime reports, with little hope of recovering the stolen property. In 1993, 13,078 Edmontonians were victims of theft from vehicles. As for the police, they spent an average of 15 minutes on each theft-from-vehicle crime report, over 3,200 hours a year documenting a crime that Storey was convinced was "completely preventable."

Storey identified several hot spots in the downtown area that accounted for a disproportionate percentage of the theft-from-vehicle locations: parking lots and garages, apartment-complex garages, and hotel parking areas. He devised a public awareness campaign, as well as crime-prevention-through-environmental-design improvements for the hot spots. The hotels were asked to give guests handouts warning them not to leave valuables in their vehicles. Storey also put together notices for the parking lots and garages; he asked management to mail them to monthly parkers, and asked garage security to hand them out to hourly parkers. He and Constable Mark Knoop sent more than 1,000 faxes about the problem to downtown-area businesses. Along with volunteers, they visited 127 downtown apartment complexes, and they arranged to speak at tenant meetings and hand out theft-from-vehicle prevention material. They spoke at the tenant meetings six months later to keep the issue fresh in the tenants' minds.

The constables also focused on the parking garages' physical construction and layout. They looked at entrances and exits, and developed controlled-access policies so that all those entering the garages would have to pass a guard, increasing the risk offenders took in committing crimes there. Warning posters were strategically placed in all garages.

The media were enlisted. Several newspapers helped by publishing supportive articles, and two TV stations carried top stories on preventing theft from vehicles in their morning, lunch-hour and evening news broadcasts.

Lastly, vehicle owners who continued to keep valuables in their vehicles were targeted with a more intensive intervention. Warning notices were placed on vulnerable cars. These warnings listed the most commonly stolen items: briefcases, purses, radar detectors, shopping bags, stereos, tapes, and tools. In addition, horse- and foot-patrol constables and community-service officers wrote down the license plate numbers of vehicles containing valuables. The plates were run, and volunteers called the vehicles' owners, reciting from a script that read as follows:



Hello. Would Mr. or Mrs. _____ be in? (Once contact is made, the following is read). My name is _____. I am a volunteer with the Edmonton Police Service. I am calling to provide you with some crime-prevention advice that I hope you will consider using in the future. One of our neighborhood foot-patrol officers, while on patrol, noted your car parked in the downtown area, with property visible within the vehicle. Theft from auto is a preventable crime, simply by ensuring all of your valuables are removed from your car. The Edmonton Police Service does not want to see you become a victim of this senseless crime. Please take steps to remove all valuables from your car in the future. Thank you for taking the time to listen. If you wish further crime-prevention advice, please come into any of our division or neighborhood stations to pick up free literature, or to discuss your concerns with the constable on duty. Goodbye.

Sgt. McCartney, Storey's supervisor, in explaining this last, targeted intervention, said the constables believed that "if vehicle owners realized their own property is being surveyed [although not with the intent of theft], they may be more conscientious about locking it out of sight."

Through their focused efforts, the constables decreased theft from vehicles from 676 in a three-month period, to 500 in a four-month period, a decrease of over 50 percent. Some parking garages had no theft from vehicles during the first four months of the project.*

Editors' note: This project was a highly tailored and creative effort that sprang from the realization that theft from vehicles is "completely preventable." The constables focused on informing vehicle owners that removing valuables from vehicles prevents victimization. The constables targeted hot spots, and volunteers contacted vehicle owners who ignored crime-prevention information. Using volunteers was wise, making possible what would otherwise have been considered too costly an approach, due to the strategies' labor-intensive nature.

A Theft from Vehicle Problem in Indianapolis, Ind.

In October 1992, an Indianapolis trucking-company manager contacted the police department's south district community policing coordinator, Sgt. Dennis Rahn. He complained of a rash of thefts from tractor trailers parked on company property. Over the past three months, the company had lost approximately \$50,000 worth of merchandise. The company had reported few of these thefts, so the police had been unaware of the problem.

Sgt. Rahn met with the manager and arranged to have the police conduct an environmental survey of the property. Based on the survey, the police recommended that the manager increase lighting on the grounds; repair numerous holes in the perimeter

*Sources: Paper submitted in support of nomination for 1994 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; notes taken during panel presentation by Constable Doug Storey at 1994 Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego; conversations with Storey; supporting written material Storey sent to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project.

fencing; cut down and remove overgrown trees and bushes that hindered patrolling police officers' view; and park trailers along the loading dock, rather than along the perimeter fence. The manager gave two key cards to patrol officers to allow them to enter and patrol the property.

According to the manager, most of the thefts were occurring between noon on Saturday and 8 a.m. the following Monday, the period when deliveries and pickups were suspended and the business office was closed. Most of the goods stolen – baby clothes, children's games and crayons – were packaged in relatively small, 3-by-2-foot cartons. Thieves were emptying trailers full of these cartons, so it was apparent that they were spending more than a few minutes at the scene. They occasionally took larger items, but usually discarded them a short distance from the property. The police and the manager concluded that the most likely possibilities were either that thieves were entering the property through the holes in the fence, or that employees were stealing the goods.

Beyond offering crime-prevention advice, the police department's response was conventional – they increased patrol to the area and surveilled the property for a few nights. These responses resulted only in the recovery of three stolen elevator motors. The manager was encouraged to report future losses to the police, while the police continued some preventive patrol.

Over the next two months, the company manager repaired the fencing several times, installed additional lighting, and cut down and removed the obstructing trees and bushes. These measures alone cost the company some \$25,000. During the winter months, the number of thefts dropped to about two per month; however, once the weather turned warm again, thefts occurred almost nightly.

As Sgt. Rahn continued his own personal development as the community policing coordinator, he studied the problem-oriented policing methodology more carefully. He continued meeting with the company manager and gathering information. While the number of thefts was increasing, and thefts were occurring on other days of the week, neither the manager nor the police were developing any suspects. Rahn had photographs taken of commonly stolen merchandise, and they were distributed to beat officers with flea markets or secondhand stores on their beats, in hopes that some property could be recovered and suspects identified.

In the meantime, the parent corporation notified the company manager that if the theft losses were not reduced, the business would be closed and relocated to northern Indiana. Such a move would deprive Indianapolis of a \$13-million-per-year business, and 150 jobs.

As he continued to analyze the problem, Sgt. Rahn looked more closely at the property's perimeter. The property was protected on three sides by fencing; a concrete wall bordered the fourth side, closest to the parking area. Here he concentrated his attention. The wall belonged to the city, as it was part of a levee system abutting the company's property. While the wall stood 10 to 12 feet above ground on the city's side, it



stood only 5 feet above ground on the company's side. When Rahn surveilled the area from the roof of a nearby business, he noticed tire tracks in the rain-softened ground leading up to the wall. Vehicles could reach this area from several entry points that led to the top of the levee. A burglar could park next to the wall, climb onto the vehicle, and make the short drop to the ground inside the wall. Once inside, a burglar would have the time and concealment to break into the trailers and, using a pallet as a ramp, hoist stolen goods over the wall. Police vehicles could not easily patrol this area because the levee had steep slopes, and the area was hidden from surrounding streets. The burglars were using four-wheel-drive vehicles or pickup trucks to navigate the terrain. Now that Rahn understood the method of operation, solutions became more obvious.

Rahn proposed placing a fence on top of the wall and blocking several entry points to the levee. He further proposed that the city pay for these measures, as the company had already spent a considerable amount of money, making a good-faith effort to cooperate with the police. Moreover, he argued, the city stood to lose tax revenue and jobs if the thefts did not stop. When Rahn's requests were finally forwarded to the public works department, he was told there was no money for the project. While serving on a mayoral committee that was promoting problem-oriented policing, Rahn told the mayor about the resistance he was encountering on this project. When the mayor intervened, the public works department became cooperative. Within a week, the levee entrances were blocked, and within two months, a 5-foot chain-link fence was erected on top of the wall. The total cost for these improvements was \$3,200.

Once the access points were blocked and the fence was erected, the burglaries stopped. The trucking company offered the police use of the building and parking area for surveillance to address a drug problem in a nearby park. Other trucking companies in the vicinity experienced no increases in theft during or after this project, suggesting that the crime was not merely displaced. The police maintain vigilance over the property, through routine patrolling. As of late 1995, when Sgt. Rahn transferred to another district, the burglaries at the trucking company had remained under control.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the simple, yet effective, solution that followed logically from a proper understanding of the burglary method. Without that understanding, both the police and the victim had tried standard, but ineffective, strategies to stop the crimes. In addition, this project demonstrates how the police and a private company can view crime prevention as a partnership that, through mutual investment of resources, can yield mutual benefits. However, it often takes skillful negotiation to get all parties to recognize where their mutual interests lie.

A Theft from Vehicle Problem in Stockholm, Sweden

Djurgården is part of the Östermalm borough in Stockholm, Sweden. In 1995, Stockholm recorded a significant increase in theft from vehicles, particularly in the

*Sources: "Problem-Solving Helps Indy Keep Trucking," by Dennis Rahn and Kenna Davis Quinet, Law Enforcement News, Volume 22, No. 438, Jan. 31, 1996; personal communication with Rahn, Oct. 27, 1997.

parking lots near some of the city's best-known restaurants. Most of the crimes occurred at lunch- and dinnertime, when the restaurants were crowded with diners. Typically, a thief broke a car window and stole items such as cellular telephones and stereos. Thieves often disabled car alarms by cutting the cables or smashing the flashing warning indicators.

Mounted police officers teamed up with community police officers to devise a solution to the problem. They formed a task force with representatives from the local governmental administration, local housing agency, street department, and private-parking companies. The task force also included parking-lot attendants and police crime-prevention officers.

The task force examined the area's environmental conditions, and noted that a tall hedge surrounded one of the parking lots where many crimes were occurring. The hedge provided thieves with the concealment they needed to steal without detection. Accordingly, the hedge was cut down. Additional and higher-wattage lighting was installed around the lots. Large signs were placed at the lot entries, warning motorists about the risk of theft, and advising them to remove all valuables from their vehicles. The mounted police officers patrolled the lots more intensely, particularly between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., and 5 and 7 p.m. The mounted officers used cellular telephones to notify plainclothes officers of suspicious activity. Said Officer Anders Hedlund: "Sitting on horseback, we can look around far, and we are quite visible. Therefore, it's easy for us to track and frighten away thieves operating in the big parking lots."

In December 1995, a year before this initiative, 54 car crimes were reported in the target area of these parking lots. The number of reported car crimes in the target area dropped to six in December 1996, an 89 percent decrease. The crimes did not appear to have been displaced to the immediate surrounding area, as the number of such crimes in the entire Djurgården district also decreased. In 1995, 270 car crimes were reported to the police. This number dropped by 37 percent to 171 in 1996.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the combination of education, environmental redesign and special patrol used to respond to the problem. The results are dramatic, and crime does not appear to have been displaced to the surrounding area.

Additional Editors' Comments on Theft from Vehicles

Thefts from vehicles, known variously by police as car cloutings, car prowls or vehicle burglaries, are among the most common reported crimes. Large cities experience these by the tens of thousands each year. And for every reported crime, there are probably two to three unreported crimes. Victims often make themselves vulnerable by leaving valuables in plain view. The efforts documented in this section show, among other things, how valuable hot-spot analysis can be in devising successful prevention measures.

*Sources: Personal correspondence from Assistant Commissioner Stig Rösmark, Stockholm County Police Department, June 6, 1997, and Aug. 19, 1997, translating an article about the project in the Stockholm County Police Department's newsletter, 5 Goda Exempel (Five Good Examples) (this newsletter documents problem-oriented policing efforts in Stockholm).

The editors found several other approaches of note. A Philadelphia officer developed strategies to tackle the problem based on extensive interviews with a known, prolific offender. She promised him immunity from arrest in exchange for detailed information on his motivations and methods. In Washington, D.C., limited-duty officers surveil high vehicle-theft and theft-from-vehicle parking facilities. North Miami Beach, Fla., developed a "cellular citation," placed on windshields to warn owners that their visible cellular telephones were vulnerable to theft. San Diego police created a car prowl unit staffed completely by community volunteers trained in latent-prints and evidence collection.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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To obtain details on COPS programs, call the
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www.usdoj.gov/cops

