



ACCOUNTABILITY, MENTORING AND ENFORCEMENT: PROBLEM-SOLVING IN PUBLIC HOUSING

Providence Police Department
2012 Herman Goldstein Award Submission

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Providence Police Department (PPD) undertook problem-solving in collaboration with the Providence Housing Authority (PHA) and other partners to address violent crime and gang activity in two public housing developments.

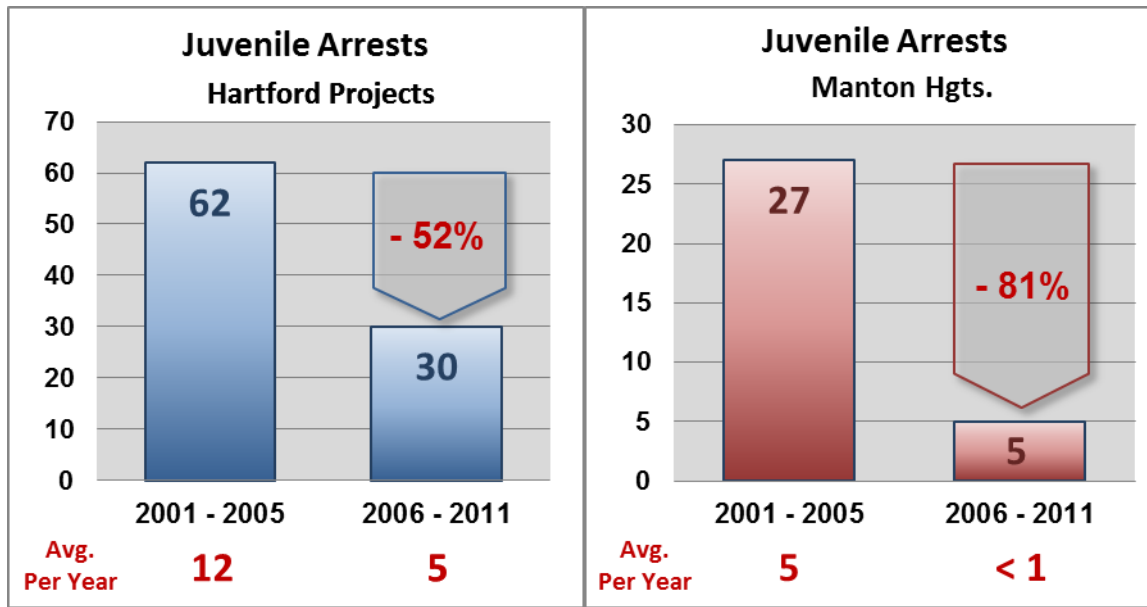
Scanning - Situated about 1.5 miles apart, Manton Heights and Hartford Park are home to more than 2,000 low-income residents. Animosity between residents of the two developments dates back more than 30 years and has given rise to two territorial gangs. Disproportionately frequent shootings and violent crime in and around Manton and Hartford can be attributed to cross-gang aggression, with juveniles being the primary perpetrators. Residents expressed pervasive concern that young people were aggressively recruited into gangs and pressured to engage in criminal activity. Traditional enforcement response had previously proven ineffective in sustainably resolving the problems. A different approach was needed given the high human and financial cost of the status quo.

Analysis - Analysis of crime data coupled with intelligence gathering from residents, officers and PHA managers uncovered several key findings including: (1) Most gang members were not residents of Manton and Hartford, but were instead family members or associates of legal residents. (2) For the most part, those associates did not participate in or support illegal activity, but many felt powerless to influence the people or the environment around them. (3)

The aggressive recruitment of juveniles into gangs was among the most damaging of “harms” in light of social costs and hope for long-term revitalization of the area, yet few youth development programs existed. Opportunities for youth to have positive interactions with peers from the other property and with police officers were notably absent.

Response – PPD, PHA and a variety of non-profit partners collaborated to implement a response strategy that encompassed enforcement, intervention and prevention. Enforcement strategies emphasized trespassing infractions to keep known gang members out of the properties, and to inform prosecutors and judges of the more serious context of misdemeanor charges against violators. Intervention and prevention strategies involved a host of programs for youth and parents, including many that afforded Manton and Hartford residents opportunities to get to know each other and PPD officers in safe and non-territorial settings.

Assessment – The chosen assessment period was a ten year time frame consisting of a five year pre-intervention period from 2001 to 2006 and a five year post intervention period from 2006 to 2011. Analysis of crime data and PHA eviction data, along with ongoing interviews with residents, show that Manton and Hartford are now remarkably safer. Juvenile arrests for the post intervention period 2006-2001 dropped by 52% in Hartford Park and 81% in Manton Heights. signals of greater collective efficacy abound; and new cross-agency partnerships have withstood tests of time and resource constraints, giving hope that Manton and Hartford’s futures remain bright.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

SCANNING

Manton Heights and Hartford Park are developments managed by Providence’s Public Housing Authority in the western part of the city. Situated approximately 1.5 miles apart on opposite sides of a highway, their 837 units are home to 2,260 residents. Hartford Park – the larger of the two developments – comprises 507 units in 59 buildings concentrated on 23 acres. Manton Heights has 330 units situated 22 buildings concentrated on 15.6 acres. Both properties fall within PPD’s District 5, under which eight Public Housing Unit officers serve along with other patrol officers.

The populations of the two developments are demographically and socioeconomically very similar (See Figure 1 for detail). In 2011, 75% of residents were white, 23% were African American and 3% were other races/ethnicities. More than 98% of residents are extremely low-income (83.5%) or low-income (15%), with annual incomes averaging \$10,925. The majority of

households are headed by women (93% in Manton and 76% in Hartford) with children. The resident populations are remarkably young: more than 48% are under the age of 18.

Despite their similarities, rivalries between Manton and Hartford residents have existed for more than 35 years. In 2006, when this POP project took shape, much of the crime in the two properties and in their immediate surroundings was fueled by conflicts between members of the “Hartford Soldiers” and “Manton” – groups the Providence Police Gang Squad identify as “development orientated gangs” with members including residents and non-residents. Both are intergenerational, with older members in their 20’s and 30’s recruiting youth, many in their early- to mid-teens. As noted in a 2011 PPD report on juvenile arrests in PHA properties, “Members from Hartford Park will not hesitate to attack members from Manton Heights. Just being a resident of another development can result in an attack from members in another development even if not gang affiliated. Resident juveniles are most affected by this type of gang activity.” The report also noted that the high numbers of weapons possessed by these gangs including conventional firearms, BB-guns and paintball guns contributed substantially to violence and property damage complaints in the area.

In 2005, residents reported being afraid to go outside due to fear of gang-related shootings and other violence around Manton and Hartford. That year, 65% of all Part 1 and Part 2 crimes occurring in PHA properties took place in Manton and Hartford – a disproportionate concentration given that these properties together represent only 32% of PHA units. PPD made 8 arrests for Part 1 crimes and 120 arrests for Part 2 crimes in Manton and Hartford. The properties were also disproportionately represented in deployment of other types of police resources, including calls for service, motor vehicle summons and dispersals: 57% of all such actions in PHA properties occurred in Manton and Hartford in 2005.

Beyond an ongoing recognition of the severity of challenges in Manton and Hartford, several things came together in 2006 that prompted rethinking of police response. The first was a sense of urgency and crisis borne from an impending loss of resources for positive youth activities. In 2006, HUD's Drug Elimination Program ended, cutting off the funding stream that PHA had used to support after school and substance abuse education programs for youth. By 2007, PHA's youth program staff had been laid off, and the community centers in Manton and Hartford that had previously served as a safe haven for more than 100 kids after school were closed and locked indefinitely. The second driver was the leadership and opportunity created by the appointment of Lieutenant Dean Isabella to be commander of District 5. As a sergeant in District 5 in the years prior, Lt. Isabella had helped to launch a highly successful initiative to address interconnected blight, drug activity and violence in a park and residential area proximal to Manton (work for which he later earned the inaugural Anthony J. Sutin Civic Imagination Award from the COPS office). Lt. Isabella sought to apply the same model of engaging diverse public and private partners for problem analysis and response to the Hartford and Manton problems, with a particular emphasis on stemming gang-related violence and recruitment of juveniles into gangs within the properties.

ANALYSIS

Brought together by Lt. Isabella and PHA Resident Services Director Sorrel Devine, PPD and PHA were committed to operating as a more cohesive team to respond to violence and other safety threats in the Manton and Hartford developments. They drew on a variety of different data sources to analyze the problem together, including the crime data summarized above, intelligence held by District 5's patrol and PHU officers, information from the PHA Resident

Services Coordinator and other staff, and interviews with residents. The information was synthesized by the team over a period of several months, yielding the following key findings.

Who was involved? A more in-depth analysis of crime data confirmed that most violent incidents were inter-gang – a symptom of the long-standing, deep animosity between the two developments. PPD had conducted extensive intelligence work over time, were familiar with all of the gang members in both developments, and knew the individuals who were perpetrating these crimes. Violence was also largely perpetrated by juveniles, many of whom were intentionally targeted by older gang members to commit violent acts on behalf of the gang due to their juvenile status.

An early and important finding was that the perpetrators of the vast majority of crime were not official residents of Manton or Hartford. Those gang members were instead residents' family members or associates who lived there illegally or visited. In speaking to those family members and associates, District 5 officers found that many were young single mothers who strongly disliked the crime conditions in Manton and Hartford, but who for a variety of reasons felt unable to control or otherwise prevent their children, boyfriends and other associates from engaging in gang activity including criminal behavior. Many expressed significant concern that their children faced pressure by older gang members to join gangs and participate in criminal activity.

What were the harms? Manton and Hartford residents were disproportionately subject to bodily harm from gun violence and other weapons. (In 2005, Manton residents were threatened at gunpoint, reported 4 shots fired and 2 knife incidents – all within property lines.) They also experienced a disproportionate amount of loss of property as noted above. All of this

bred fear that undoubtedly affected mental health and well-being, a finding that was reinforced in ongoing interactions with scared and frustrated residents.

Crime in Manton and Hartford was also very costly in financial terms (see Figure 3). Applying the conservative estimates of the combined individual and social costs of crime highlighted in the 2010 Rand Occasional Paper “Hidden in Plain Sight”, Part 1 crime in Manton and Hartford cost \$11,737,000 from 2005-2006.¹ This includes the drain on scarce PPD resources that the properties caused due to high calls for service, arrests and incidents.

Finally, it was clear to all involved in the project from the outset that the notoriety of Manton and Hartford was damaging to the reputation and revitalization prospects of the larger community. This was of particular concern in 2006-2007 given the improvements that were just taking hold in other parts of the neighborhood due to collaborative work by PPD, Olneyville Housing Corporation and a host of other partners. The possibility that continued conflict between Manton and Hartford residents and the embattlement of the youth in particular would damage that positive progress was very real.

What were underlying causes? Why were previous responses ineffective? Analysis highlighted that violence in Manton and Hartford was largely not driven by economics, though both gangs were involved in narcotics activity. In most cases, incidents stemmed from interpersonal conflicts, perceived insults or lack of “respect”, and territoriality and group identification as noted above. Many crimes could be tied to earlier crimes or incidents, showing that retaliation and escalation were common. It was also apparent that most residents knew who was responsible for violence and other problems, but they were reluctant to report on associates and neighbors to police due to fear and an overall feeling of separation between the community

¹ Heaton, Paul (2010). *Hidden in Plain Sight: What Cost-of-Crime Research Can Tell Us About Investing in Police*. Rand Center on Quality Policing, Occasional Paper 279. <www.rand.org>

and police. This hindered incident investigations which were the primary form of response to the problem prior to 2006.

In addition, prior to this project, PPD did not regularly interact with PHA managers to discuss problems and strategize solutions. This communication wall was not conducive to quick and strategic responses to incidents, many of which escalated with the pattern of retaliatory violence in the properties. As one key example, analysis revealed that the PHA lease included specific language that disallowed long-term guests who were not named on the lease, and that held the tenant responsible for criminal activity perpetrated on the property by visitors. Federal legislation had recently affirmed the enforcement power of such lease language, giving the PHA “one strike and you’re out” grounds to evict violators. Those powers had not yet been exercised in any coordinated or strategic way in response to Manton and Hartford’s crime problems, though they were highly relevant given that perpetrators were primarily non-residents.

While the project team agreed that the physical layout of the properties was not ideal for surveillance and social cohesion, the lack of an apparent pattern to the location of specific crimes and the fact that a major physical overhaul was not feasible led the group to de-emphasize physical “place” interventions as part of the response. Changes to how PPD and its partners engaged in enforcement against offenders and mobilized residents (victims) took precedence in the response strategy, though ongoing efforts by PHA to keep the properties well-maintained and to upgrade camera systems were useful complements.

RESPONSE

The PPD-PHA team identified the following primary goals based on analysis findings:

- (1) Focus enforcement resources on preventing non-resident gang members from spending time in the properties, with a particular emphasis on blocking the primary perpetrators of violence.
- (2)

Strengthen the ability of law-abiding tenants of the properties to communicate and uphold their own high standards for behavior and safety, including strengthening faith in and cooperation with PPD. (3) Provide alternative activities and leadership development for youth and support for their parents to break the pipeline of gang recruitment and youth involvement in violence. (4) Break down the rivalry between the developments to address a long-term source of crime in the properties and the surrounding community. (See Figure 4.)

The PPD and PHA team developed the following key response strategies to advance these goals. In keeping with Lt. Isabella's prior experience, they engaged a variety of other partners in the course of implementation, several of which are highlighted here.

(1) Resident education and engagement. In October 2005, PPD and PHA co-sponsored meetings to which all Manton and Hartford residents were invited. PHA Residents Services staff helped with outreach to ensure strong participation. At the meeting, PPD and PHA communicated a firm message that they were aware that gang activity and criminal behavior were being largely perpetrated by visitors and illegal tenants of the two properties. They highlighted the rules and responsibilities of tenants and made it clear that tenants would be held accountable for violations.

As a primary tool for enforcement, PPD and PHA held meetings with tenants affiliated with known gang members over the ensuing days in which tenants signed "No Trespass" orders against the gang-involved individuals. These orders gave PPD officers grounds to arrest gang members found on the property.

(2) Enforcement. PPD tapped its alliance with the Rhode Island Office of the U.S. Attorney to ensure that the No Trespass orders were an effective enforcement tool. Together they developed a list of the nearly two dozen of the most violent offenders and a summary of their

prior criminal involvement. Every time one of those individuals was arrested, even for typically moderate offenses like trespassing, prosecutors and the court received the documentation of their history. PPD notified the Attorney General's Office at the time of arrest; the AGO flagged these cases through the court system. As PPD and PHA's combined effort to improve safety in Manton and Hartford became more known, these summaries served as effective statements about the impact of these individuals' behavior on a community seeking to improve quality of life.

(3) Maintenance. Responding quickly and consistently to any trespassing and criminal activity on the Manton and Hartford properties was an explicit part of the strategy from the outset. PPD officers and PHA staff knew this would be essential to maintaining any gains earned through the resident engagement and enforcement efforts. Any time an incident occurred following the project launch, the tenants involved were immediately called into a meeting at the property manager's office where the manager and PPD officers indicated that the tenant had put his/her housing in jeopardy. This strategy has appeared to notably reduce incidents of retaliation as tenants realize that it just "isn't worth it" to actively encourage or passively allow problems to escalate and lead to more violence.

(4) Youth development initiatives. The aggressive recruitment of juveniles to join gangs and perpetrate violence was determined to be among the most influential causes of the "harms" detailed above due to its impact on families in Manton and Hartford and the reputation of the community at large. In addition, the team recognized that reducing conflict between residents of the two properties – young people in particular – would be necessary to achieve peace and safety in the long-term. As such, a significant emphasis of the response was on prevention and intervention – a series of efforts to provide alternative, positive activities for at-risk and gang-involved youth. PPD and PHA engaged a variety of additional partners with an explicit goal of

finding or developing youth programs that would respond to specific analysis findings regarding community-police relations (underreporting and lack of cooperation with investigations) and Manton-Hartford rivalry. Some of the most successful initiatives were:

- **Boys & Girls Club.** The PPD-PHA team seized an opportunity to relocate a Boys & Girls Club chapter – recently left homeless after its prior site was condemned – into the then locked and vacant Manton and Hartford community centers. Club staff opened the centers on weekday afternoons (3-6 pm) for children ages 6-12 and in the evenings (6-9pm) for teens ages 13-18 years. They hosted cross-development activities such as basketball tournaments that were highly popular and overwhelmingly peaceful, creating a forum for positive interactions between Manton and Hartford youth.

- **Youth Police Initiative.** In partnership with the national Native American Family Institute, PPD and PHA brought the Youth Police Initiative (YPI) to Manton and Hartford. PPD specifically referred youth at risk for joining gangs. YPI engages youth from both developments with PHU and patrol officers in an interactive training program that seeks to prevent gang involvement, reduce crime and limit delinquency. Through dialogue, role playing and other activities, youth learn conflict de-escalation skills and gain a greater understanding of the responsibilities and challenges faced by police officers in their community. Officers gain an understanding of adolescent development and urban socialization issues, while developing better communication strategies when interacting with local youth. Since 2009, 45 youth and 14 officers have participated. The current class of 17 is comprised of young women from both Manton and Hartford.

- **Youth Safe Haven.** Also promoting positive community-police interaction, the Youth Safe Haven Program has engaged officers as consistent mentors and tutors to youth ages

6-12 from the developments in a safe environment in the Hartford property. As of December 2011, an average of 30 youth attended daily. While teen programming starts in the same facility in the evening, PPD and PHA staff has regularly observed that teens arrive early to help younger kids with homework or activities.

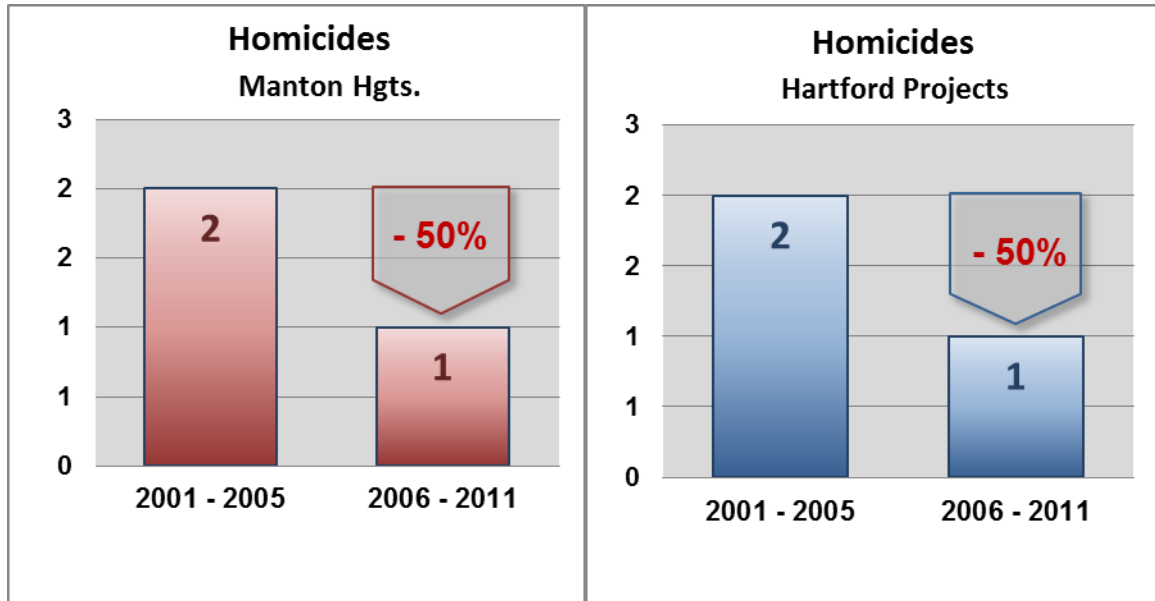
(5) Increased services and support to parents. Given the prevalence of young single mothers in the properties – many of whom expressed disempowerment when it came to influencing the people and environment around them – another component of the response strategy involved increasing services and supports for parents. PHA convened monthly group mentoring for parents with a particular target on recruitment of parents of youth involved in the Safe Haven Program and other initiatives. PHA and PPD also helped secure the deployment of the Mayor’s Substance Abuse Prevention Team in the two developments. Social workers on the staff of another non-profit partner, Family Service of Rhode Island, provide programs for parents and their kids that address problem-solving and critical thinking skills. These initiatives have given parents more tools to improve family stability while creating lasting family connections for formerly struggling youth.

ASSESSMENT

These combined strategies were very effective in reducing violent crime and gang activity including recruitment in Manton and Hartford. They also had a calming effect on the surrounding neighborhood. PPD and PHA drew these conclusions from analysis over the period from 2001 to 2006 pre-intervention and 2006 to 2011 post-intervention. Prior to the interventions through the end of 2011, though the most notable effects took hold by 2007-2008. Results can be categorized as follows.

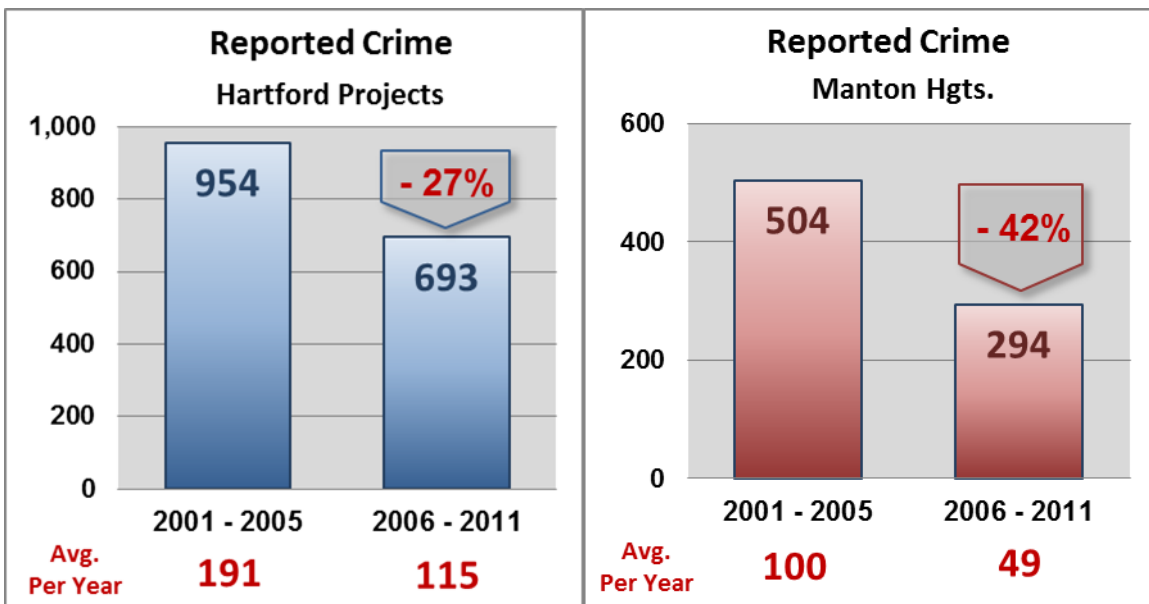
(1) Reduced crime and costs. The initial meetings with residents at which they signed “No Trespass” orders against known gang members were effectively and consistently executed. Within several months of the initial resident engagement meetings, every known gang member in Hartford and Manton had been “No Trespassed” and violators were receiving 30-90 days at correctional facilities due to the contextual information provided by PPD and the U.S. Attorney’s Office to prosecutors and judges. Previously, trespassing charges were rare, and when they did occur, they had yielded considerably more moderate sentencing.

By the time most known gang members had been “No Trespassed” in mid-2007, Manton and Hartford were notably safer. There were no homicides in either property from 2007-2010. During the pre-intervention period from 2001 to 2006, there was an average of one homicide per year in either Hartford or Manton. Post intervention period was homicide free from 2007 to October of 2011. Assaults dropped by 62% (from 16 in 2005 to 6 in 2011) and simple assaults dropped 27% (from 26 to 19). Weapons offenses dropped 44% (from 9 to 5).



As further evidence that the “No Trespass” strategy was effective, PHA has made no evictions from Manton and Hartford due to violation of trespassing or crime-related lease terms since 2007. One might expect that evictions would have spiked given that holding residents accountable was a key part of the strategy. Instead, residents largely complied by barring problem people from their units, took action to limit their involvement in and exposure to retaliatory actions when incidents did occur, and otherwise supported the PPD/PHA enforcement strategy. Also, as evidence of the effectiveness of the program, post intervention reported crime dropped 27% in Hartford and 42% in Manton.

Using the same Rand study cost estimates cited earlier, crime in 2011 in the properties resulted in costs totaling \$547,600 less than in 2005 without modifications for inflation.



(2) **Greater collective efficacy among Manton and Hartford residents.** PHA and PPD have noted anecdotally that residents are more prepared and willing to police themselves. While some residents pushed back on the message delivered at the meetings and the “No Trespass” strategy, others expressed relief that they now had tools with which they could prevent problem people from being involved with their families. Many expressed hope that conditions at the properties would improve.

As noted above, the number of trespassing violations by gang members is nominal compared to the months immediately following response implementation, due in large part to legal residents barring gang members from coming to the properties. Residents also cooperate more readily with police when incidents do occur, and young mothers who previously expressed frustration at not being able to prevent their kids from joining gangs now reach out for services when they are needed. Due in part to the Youth Police Initiative and Safe Haven programs that have introduced officers to young people, friendly two-way greetings now occur on a first-name basis when District 5 officers visit the properties.

Another indicator of enhanced cohesion both within Manton and Hartford and between the properties and the surrounding communities has become apparent as part of a neighborhood planning process underway around Manton, funded by a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant to PHA and complementary to an initiative led by Olneyville Housing Corporation to improve the area's overall quality of life. Residents of Manton have participated in planning charrettes and community events as part of these initiatives – both significant milestones as the neighborhood looks to a more hopeful and united future.

(3) More youth involved in prevention/deterrence activities and indicators of declining rivalry between the properties. Hundreds of youth take advantage of the YPI, Safe Haven and Boys & Girls Club activities annually in Manton and Hartford. The portfolio of programs offers opportunities for youth ages 6 and up during the after school hours into the evening when most crime incidents previously occurred. In the course of many of these programs, youth interact peacefully with peers who live in the other property – something that was nearly unthinkable back in 2006.

(4) Stronger alliances between institutional partners. The POP project implementation solidified a new working relationship between PHA – particularly the Resident Services unit – and PPD, including both beat officers and the PHU officers. Those entities now share information regularly both informally and through data systems to ensure that the safety gains at Manton and Hartford are maintained. In addition, private organizations like NAFI, Family Services of Rhode Island and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation have committed resources to support the PPD-PHA strategy. These alliances have already helped to resolve new problems such as gaps in resources to sustain youth programming in these difficult economic times. While the residents of Hartford and Manton continue to face challenges, threats to safety

are now minimal, and stronger community-police connections promise to help sustain those gains in the years ahead.



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Figure 1. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile of Manton Heights and Hartford Park Public Housing Developments (2011).

	Total Units	No. of Households		No. of Residents		Average Household Size	Head of Household		Average annual income
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent		Male	Female	
Hartford Park	507	496	19%	1,383	25%	2.8	24%	76%	\$11,067
Manton Heights	330	329	13%	877	16%	2.7	7%	93%	\$10,783

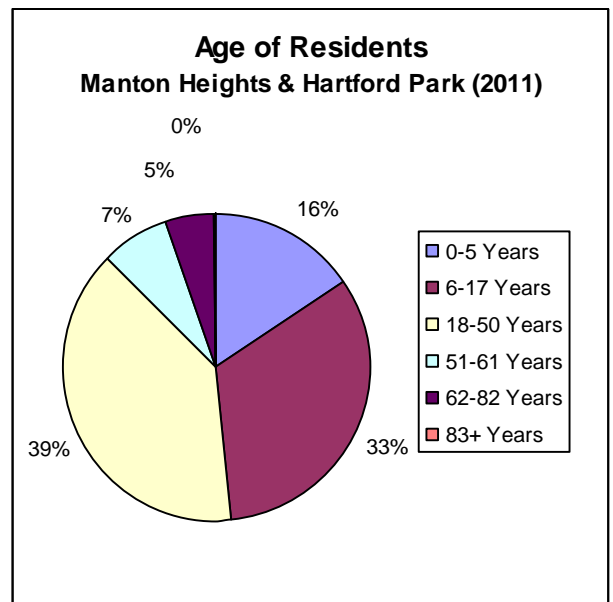
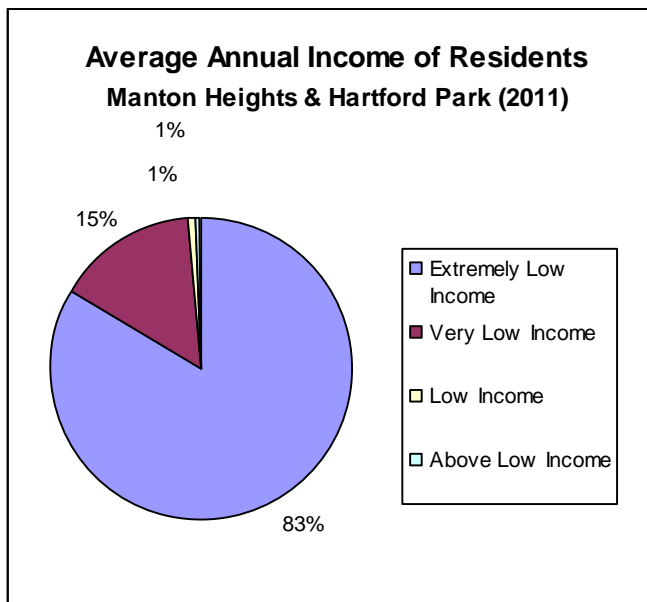


Figure 3. Estimated Cost of Crime in Manton and Hartford, 2005-2006.

Part 1 Crimes	2005-2006 Total for Manton-Hartford	Per Crime Cost Estimate	Cost of Manton-Hartford Crimes
Murder	2	\$5,000,000	\$10,000,000
Rape	0	\$150,000	\$0
Robbery	11	\$23,000	\$253,000
Assault	20	\$55,000	\$1,100,000
B&E	25	\$5,000	\$125,000
Larceny	25	\$2,800	\$70,000
Motor Veh. Theft	21	\$9,000	\$189,000
Total			\$11,737,000

Per crime cost estimates from: Heaton, Paul (2010). *Hidden in Plain Sight: What Cost-of-Crime Research Can Tell Us About Investing in Police*. Rand Center on Quality Policing, Occasional Paper 279. www.rand.org

Figure 4. Project Strategy.

