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Remaking a Playground

by Constable R. Cooper and Sergeant R. Kracher, Edmonton, Alberta, Police Service

Jn the following example of community problem solving, the police played a role, but their role was not a leading one. Rather, the police lent their support and expertise to an initiative already undertaken by a group of concerned parents and area residents. In fact, it had not occurred to the original organizers of this project to ask the police for help. Area residents did not look at this particular problem as a "police matter;" thereby restricting their lobbying efforts to political representatives. It was through this channel that the issue came to police attention.

Scanning

A mother of four young children drafted a letter of concern and sent it to her area's alderman. The letter outlined a number of problems in a neighborhood playground—the Kernohan Park playground. The mother stated that the playground attracted, and had become a "hang-out," for a group of teenagers whose presence and activities discouraged the use of the facility by younger children, for whom it was more intended.

The letter requested action from the Edmonton Parks and Recreation Department and the school board, but made two references to the police that would eventually bring the problem to police attention. First, the mother referred to the successes experienced in the Beaverhills Park in downtown Edmonton. The author correctly pointed out that a redesign of Beaverhills Park had reduced open criminal activity there. The police had played a role in that project.

Though citizens did not at first call on the police to help clean up a neighborhood park, the Edmonton police eventually played a role in this collaborative effort.

Second, the letter pointed out the some of the playground fixtures had been vandalized, presumably by the teenagers hanging out there. The writer had concluded that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to apprehend those responsible for the damage, but the suggestion of

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Was the Violence at Baypoint Middle School Perceived or Real?

by Sergeant William Proffitt, St. Petersburg, Fla., Police Department

Scanning

On Jan. 24, 1995, Officer Dean Clark began a problem-solving project for Baypoint Middle School after receiving telephone calls from parents complaining that their children were the victims of violent crime acts committed by older teenagers while walking home after school. The parents also complained about gang activity among the school's students, and an apparent lack of discipline administered by the school's teach-

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criminal acts caused the political authorities who received the letter to forward it to the police. Sergeant Kracher and Constable Cooper—officers in the Kernohan area—thus began working on this problem.

Analysis

From a strictly statistical standpoint, the Kernohan Park **playground** could not be classified as a "problem location." An analysis of calls for service from spring 1992 to fall 1993 (covering two summer seasons) revealed only four incidents. Two involved mischief to **playground** fixtures (a baseball backstop and a climbing structure), one was for an act of off-road **driving**, and one call involved "trouble with youths." Even if these incidents were all related, they did not make Kernohan Park a particularly troublesome area. Over a two-year time period, many parks would experience similar problems.

It became apparent to the officers that area residents had more information and a truer appreciation for the problems than could be gained through calls-for-service analysis. The officers met with a group of residents, who said that the park had fallen into disfavor with area parents, many of whom no longer allowed their children to visit there unsupervised. Particularly in the evenings, even the adults felt ill at ease, as they were subjected to catcalls and glares from the older youths in the playground. Broken beer bottles littered the playground sand, there were reports of evening bonfires, and people walking their dogs occasionally interrupted a sexual liaison between teenagers. These problems did not prompt calls to police, but they did cause neighbors to stay out of the park. As Kernohan Park offered the only playground in the area, it was an unfortunate situation for neighboring families.

The community group gave Cooper and Kracher a tour of the area. The officers saw one reason they had been

unaware of the problems; the park's natural setting meant that one could not get a clear view of activity there from the road. Kemohan Park is a flat, grassy area that also serves as the schoolground for Anne Fitzgerald School. Two large fields with baseball diamonds and soccer pitches connect to the playground area. Immediately to the east is a heavily wooded area, with an extensive trail network, that leads by ravine to the river valley. The nearest roadway is Clareview Road to the west, but even there the playground is located quite far from the road. A strip mall is located across Clareview Road,

From a strictly statistical standpoint, the Kernohan Park playground could not be classified as a "problem location."

but faces away from the park. Two townhouse developments, one distantly north and one distantly west, serve as the only "eyes" on the park. The end result is a **playground** that can pride itself on a natural setting, but is somewhat secluded.

Furthermore, the park's designers chose to complement the natural areas with contoured ground. Four berms were erected between the road and park, and were planted with coniferous trees and shrubs. While pleasing to the eye, this arrangement completely restricted the view of the park from the road or nearby residences.

As the officers toured the park, they saw evidence of the residents' concerns. Broken glass was mixed in with the sand. A number of playground structures showed signs of abuse and dismantling. Officers were particularly concerned with evidence of graffiti on some structures. Fortunately, graffiti remains a rare phenomenon in Edmonton, so its incidence alone is a strong indicator of problems. In

this case, the lack of calls for police service meant that police were unaware of these problems.

Next, Kracher contacted parks and recreation staff. They confirmed the problems; Kernohan Park had long been considered the "worst" park in the northeast sector of the city because of damage and maintenance requirements. In fact, the playground was far from what it originally had been. Because of vandalism, park staff **had** removed **many playground** structures because they were no longer safe. Budget restraints and other priorities precluded their replacement, and the park's problems led staff to believe that replacing the structures would be a poor use of resources.

Further inquiries revealed that this was **anything** but a new problem. Past principals of Anne Fitzgerald School had requested changes to the park, as had parks and recreation workers, but the requests had not been met. To help the community better present the problems and request assistance, the officers helped with a safety audit. Done in conjunction with the Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities, the audit included a questionnaire for residents and a videotape of the area. This package allowed for a coordinated, focused presentation to city authorities about the problems and the need for solutions.

Response

The officers met with a parks and recreation supervisor to discuss responses. There was a consensus that changes were necessary, but what kind? All parties agreed that the youths congregating in the playground were not the core problem. After all, playgrounds are designed to attract young people, albeit not for destructive or disruptive activities. Looking at the Beaverhills Park project as an example, the people involved agreed that a park redesign held the most

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promise for eliminating the problems.

Constable Desmeules, an expert in crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), was called in to assist, and he suggested a more appropriate configuration of the grounds, allowing for visual access to the playground from surrounding areas. He recommended removing the berms, replacing the coniferous trees with deciduous trees, trimming brush from other treed areas, and cutting back the wooded areas extending from the ravine. It was hoped that this would "open" the area and give disruptive park users a less sheltered feeling.

Though this seemed a fairly straightforward proposal, it posed problems of its own. Removing the berms was not satisfactory for some people; some residents liked the contoured ground and conifers. These residents generally did not have children, and tended not to travel too deeply into the park; thus, they were not as aware of the problems in the playground area.

The berms also played a role in drainage. The playground had a "weeping tile" network that required a good drainage system, and the park's original designers had counted on contoured ground to help with drainage.

Finally, city ordinances stated that planted trees, such as the conifers in question, must be moved rather than destroyed. The expense of this alone would be significant. And the underbrush around native poplars is essential to the trees' survival. The offer of a community-organized "slash and burn" party to remove underbrush was politely declined by city biologists.

A stroke of luck intervened that helped overcome these obstacles. Area residents were pleased when, one morning, a dump truck and tree movers arrived at the park. But they became exasperated when they learned that the workers had come to

plant more trees, rather than reduce the vegetation as the residents wanted. They discovered that the tree movers were private contractors working on a standing list of environmental projects for the city as funds became available. Because of the bureaucratic process involved, the contractor was working on old requests that were out of sync with more current needs.

Armed with the CPTED analysis and the support of the parks and recreation administration, the community group requested and was granted permission to work directly with the landscape contractor to get their needs met. With remarkable speed and modest cost, they implemented a modified version of their original plan. The contractor reduced the berms to less than half their original height, transplanted the coniferous trees to other sites on their standing list of projects, and expertly trimmed the brush with full consideration of the vegetation type.

Assessment

The result is a playground that is considerably more visible from three directions. A compromise was reached between those who wanted more visibility and those who wanted to maintain the wooded atmosphere. There has been no attempt to exclude, or even directly monitor, any particular age group. Follow-up interviews with park users indicated a renewed confidence in using the playground and allowing children to go there. There have been no further incidents of vandalism, and the summer of 1995 passed without any problems.

Continued police presence and interaction with playground users demonstrates that the playground is intended for all to enjoy and that "the community is watching." The next step is to give the playground a facelift and replace damaged equipment. It seems that the changes to date have allowed for a resurgence in Kernohan Park so it is again a positive gathering place for the community.

Message From the Editor

*To Problem Solving Quarterly
Subscribers:*

PERF needs your help to keep Problem Solving Quarterly available for police practitioners and researchers. Article submissions to PSQ have fallen sharply in the past year, and that is why PSQ is not appearing in your mailboxes as regularly as it has in the past.

But we know from talking to practitioners in the United States, Canada and elsewhere that problem solving is alive and well. We need your assistance in getting the information about successful community problem-solving projects to PERF, so we can continue to publish articles that benefit PSQ readers.

There are several ways that PSQ readers and colleagues can help PERF maintain a high-quality, timely newsletter on police problem-solving efforts. Please consider submitting an article, either on a specific problem-solving project or on something related to the problem-oriented policing process, staffing, training or related issues. If you know practitioners who have implemented a successful project, ask them to submit an article, or drop me a note with a name and phone number of someone I can call to

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The 1996 Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award: Submission Instructions

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) is soliciting nominations for its fourth annual Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award. The award recognizes innovative and effective problem-oriented policing projects that have achieved measurable success in reducing specific crime, disorder or public safety problems. The award will be presented at the Seventh Annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego, Calif., Nov. 2—5, 1996.

Eligibility:

All employees of governmental policing agencies who directly deliver police services to the public are eligible for the award. Although this typically applies to police officers, detectives and first-line supervisors, PERF accepts nominations from nonsworn employees and upper-level sworn officers if they have direct service delivery responsibilities.

Judges:

Selection will be made by an independent committee of practitioners and academicians.

Award Categories:

1. Individual Award (a project conceived and coordinated by one person).
2. Team Award (a project conceived and coordinated by more than one person).

Selection Criteria:

The judges will evaluate the entries on the factors below. **The format is intended as a guide, not a blueprint, for your submission.** We recognize that each application will emphasize different points; however, it is important that the four basic steps of the problem-solving model (SARA) be addressed.

Format and Content of Award Submissions:

Write a project summary following the **general** format listed below. The summary **should** be 1,250—2,500 words (5—10 double-spaced pages).

Scanning:

1. What was the nature of the problem?
2. How was the problem identified?
3. Who identified the problem (e.g., community, police managers, officers, politicians, press, etc.)?
4. Far more problems are identified than can be explored adequately. How and why was this problem selected from among problems?
5. What was the initial level of diagnosis/unit of analysis (e.g., crime type, neighborhood, specific premise, specific offender group, etc.)?

Analysis:

1. What methods, data and information sources were used to analyze the problem (e.g., surveys, inter-

views, observation, crime analysis, etc.)?

2. History: How often and for how long was it a problem?
3. Who was involved in the problem (offenders, victims, others) and what were their respective motivations, gains and losses?
4. What harms resulted from the problem?
5. How was the problem being addressed before the problem-solving project? What were the results of those responses?
6. What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem?
7. What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem?
8. What situational information was needed to better understand the problem (e.g., time of occurrence, location, other particulars of the environment, etc.)?
9. Was there an open discussion with the community about the problem?

Response:

1. What range of possible response alternatives were considered to deal with the problem?
2. What responses did you use to **address the problem?**

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3. How did you develop a response as a result of your analysis?
4. What evaluation criteria were most important to the department before implementation of the response alternative(s) (e.g., legality, community values, potential effectiveness, cost, practicality, etc.)?
5. What did you intend to accomplish with your response plan (i.e., project goal and corresponding measurable objectives)?
6. What resources were available to help solve the problem?
7. What was done before you implemented your response plan?
8. What difficulties were encountered during response implementation?
9. Who was involved in the response to your problem?

Evaluation:

1. What were the results? What degree of impact did the response plan have on this problem?
2. What were your methods of evaluation and for how long was the effectiveness of the problem-solving effort evaluated?
3. Who was involved in the evaluation?
4. Were there problems in implementing the response plan?
5. If there was no improvement in the problem, were other systemic efforts considered to handle the problem?
6. What response goals were accomplished?

7. How did you measure your results?
8. How could you have made the response more effective?
9. Was there a concern about displacement (i.e., pushing the problem somewhere else)?
10. Will your response require continued monitoring or a continuing effort to maintain your results?

Philosophy and Organization:

1. At what level of the police organization was this problem-solving initiative initiated (e.g., the entire department, a few select officers, etc.)?
2. Did officers or management receive any special training in problem-oriented policing and/or problem solving before this project began?
3. Were additional incentives given to police officers who engaged in problem solving?
4. What resources and guidelines (manuals, past problem-solving examples, etc.) were used, if any, by police officers to help them manage this problem-solving initiative?
5. What issues/problems were identified with the problem-oriented policing model or the problem-solving model?
6. What general resource commitments (monetary and/or manhours) were made to this project, and, of those resources, what went beyond the existing department budget?

Other Submission Instructions:

You may include up to three (3) supporting documents, such as newspaper

clippings or magazine articles, but all supporting documents must total no more than 10 pages. (Sorry—videotapes cannot be considered by the selection panel.)

Submit eight (8) copies of the completed application package with a brief nomination letter from the agency chief executive by the deadline of August 16, 1996.

Where to Send Submissions:

Send packages to the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), 1120 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 930, Washington, DC 20036, Attention: Herman Goldstein Award. Direct inquiries to Jim Burack of the PERF staff at (202) 466-7820 x276.

* Those submitting award applications consent to the inclusion of their POP project on PERF's POPNet, a database accessible on the Internet that will serve as the central listing of problem-oriented policing projects around the world. Additional information about POPNet will be available at the POP Conference.

Seventh Annual
International Problem-
Oriented Policing
Conference

Nov. 2-5, 1996
San Diego Princess
Resort
San Diego, California

In partnership with PERF and the
San Diego Police Department,
with support from AIR
Government Markets

Registration and agenda information will be mailed shortly.

Baypoint, continued from page 1

ers and staff. The parents believed that problems inside the school fostered violent behavior by the students after school.

Analysis

Officer Clark met with the **Baypoint** school resource officer, Officer Jim Dressback, who said he was unaware of any significant gang problems, although recently he had **taken gang bandannas** from a few of the students. Clark also met with Sergeant John Snyder, supervisor of the department's Gang Intelligence Team, who was unaware of any gang problems at Baypoint Middle School.

Clark researched calls for service at Baypoint Middle School using the department's CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch) and the PI (Police Information) computer systems. He examined total calls for service for each of the city's seven public middle schools, comparing the 1992–93 school year data with the 1993–94 data for any identifiable trends. These data indicated that calls for service increased 152 percent at Baypoint Middle School during the 1993–94 school year. The high number of calls for service continued for the current school year to date (Sept. 1, 1994, to Feb. 16, 1995), when Baypoint reported a total of 101 calls for service—more than twice the number of calls for service reported from any of the city's seven public middle schools during the same time period.

Clark again contacted Dressback, who worked at Baypoint the previous two years, to identify possible explanations for the increase in calls for service over the past **year-and-a-half**. Dressback cited the following reasons:

- a stricter reporting policy by the school;
- some of the calls for service

occurred off-campus, but were attributed to the school's address in the CAD system; and

- Baypoint Middle School's student population increased 120 students from the previous year (although initial estimates of the increase in student population were much higher).

According to Dressback, school discipline was also more stringent than the year before, which accounted for the stricter reporting policy.

The CAD data, however, did not reveal the types of violent crime that the parents had reported to Clark as the problem. Clark discovered that many of the incidents of violence prompting the parents' concerns had never been reported to the police.

During a five-and-a-half month period, Baypoint Middle School had twice the number of calls for service as any other middle school in the city.

Clark and Dressback organized a meeting at the school for parents to more fully discuss their concerns and gain more information on the problem. More than 60 parents attended, along with the school principal, Chief Darrel Stephens, and members of the department's youth resources and community policing sections. After listening to the parent's concerns, the St. Petersburg Police Department agreed to provide additional officers temporarily at the school during dismissal time, while continuing to analyze the problem. Parents were encouraged to become actively involved in the solution. One idea discussed was the possibility of enacting a city ordinance to create a "buffer zone" around the school that would subject nonstudents to arrest for trespassing; however, subsequent research indicated that such a city ordi-

nance would be unconstitutional. Parents agreed to volunteer their time at the school at dismissal time, and were reminded to report all crime to the police.

Response

The parents were mainly concerned about high-school-aged teenagers coming on campus during the afternoons, and crowded conditions at the school. These issues prompted the department to approve a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) survey for Baypoint Middle School. CPTED strategies are designed to increase the perception of natural surveillance, improve scheduling of space to allow for "critical density," place unsafe activities in safe places, etc. The **CPTED survey examined** the physical design and appearance of school property, and provided recommendations for decreasing opportunities for conflict.

The CPTED survey was conducted by Gail Hamilton, supervisor of the crime analysis unit, crime analyst Barry Talesnick, and Robert Jefferies, a neighborhood planner with the city's planning department. After the survey, they sent the results and long- and short-term recommendations to the principal of Baypoint Middle School.

Meanwhile, Clark continued to meet with parents and address their specific crime-related concerns. He encouraged them to become more involved in volunteering their time as monitors or mentors at the middle school. One retired woman in the neighborhood, whose children had long since grown into adults, became a volunteer mentor for one of the students. Several parents monitored trouble spots on the school property before and during dismissal time to help regulate student's behavior. Each day, a school staff member walked the campus at dismissal time with a video camera, which served both to dis-

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suade nonstudents from entering the campus, and prompt orderly behavior by students leaving the campus. Clark was present at dismissal time each day in February, providing additional uniformed presence and assisting Dressback to oversee students' behavior.

The problems among students after school diminished after Clark began the problem-solving project. The parents' fears, which were heightened by a few unrelated incidents, appeared to have been exaggerated by a lack of communication among them, the school and the police department. Clark's analysis showed that the problem was not as serious as the parents first believed. The department's short-term response involved a higher presence of uniformed officers at the school for two weeks, and the long-term response included recommendations to the school for environmental redesign of the campus. Clark's consistent communication with the parents and school administrators helped de-escalate parents' fears, encouraged their involvement in resolving real and perceived issues, and facilitated workable solutions to the problem.

Assessment

Clark re-examined the total calls for service since the inception of this problem-solving project to determine if there had been any meaningful changes. The analysis indicated that Baypoint Middle School had a significantly smaller percentage of total calls for service among all public middle schools in the city since the project began (20.7%). Before the project, Baypoint was responsible for 30.1 percent of the total calls for service.

There was a significant decrease of 50 percent in calls for service during February, when Clark visited the school each day at dismissal time. April and May also showed decreases of about 50 per-

cent, when compared with the number of calls in January. During these months, parents were monitoring students at dismissal time and school administrators began implementing CPTED recommendations.

Since Clark began the project, Baypoint no longer reported the highest total calls for service when compared with the other public middle schools. Baypoint's total calls for service had averaged 18.4 per month during the first part of the school year; they averaged about 13.5 per month from mid-February through the end of May, a figure much closer to that of the other middle schools in the city. The number of monthly calls for service in the census tract where Baypoint Middle School is located remained consistent from January through May of 1995, with no significant increases or decreases reported.

A combination of increased police surveillance, parental involvement and environmental redesign lowered the school's calls for service.

One significant reduction at Baypoint involved 911-call hangups from the public telephone on campus. The CPTED survey recommended moving the public telephone on campus to an area with better visibility. School officials temporarily locked the telephone from March through May, with plans to move it to an open location visible from offices for the upcoming school year

Baypoint school administrators have implemented a few of the CPTED survey recommendations. Large pastel-colored murals have been painted on exterior building walls around campus to enhance the appearance of the school. Administrators are planning to remove the current fenced bicycle compound and cre-

ate a bicycle storage facility inside one of the buildings on campus to help decrease thefts. The remaining CPTED survey recommendations are under fiscal consideration.

Additionally, school administrators have purchased a second video camera to provide two staff members with cameras at dismissal time during the 1995—96 school year. This procedure appears to be effective in preventing nonstudents from entering campus and also aids in regulating students' behavior as they leave the school campus each day. This problem-solving project was significant because it involved both sworn and nonsworn police personnel, a city planning architect, school personnel, and the concerned parents themselves.

Note: A version of this article appeared in the August 1995 issue of Community Policing Problem Solving, a St. Petersburg Police Department newsletter funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Spokane C.O.RS.: How Substations are Making a Difference

by Cheryl Steele, Spokane, Wash.,
Community-Oriented Policing Services

In December 1991, two girls, 12-year-old Rebecca West and 11-year-old Nicki Wood, were abducted from their Spokane neighborhood. Rebecca is still missing. Nicki's body was discovered north of the city in a burning pile of brush several days after she disappeared. Though the entire Spokane community was affected by this crime, the residents of the West Central neighborhood, where the girls lived, were most affected.

The substation concept coincided with the development of a community-oriented public service philosophy within the Spokane Police Department.

In response, area citizens formed the West Central Task Force in the weeks following the abductions. The task force, which included neighborhood residents, business leaders, human service personnel, police and government representatives, began community meetings and surveys designed to identify neighborhood needs and concerns. The needs assessment focused on crime and social issues; however, it also tried to capture those neighborhood characteristics, environmental factors, attitudes and institutions that could be considered as resources.

This planning and assessment led to the development of a Community-Oriented Policing Services (C.O.P.S.) sub-

station. The main issues for West Central residents were the perceived lack of police presence and low response by police to individual and community problems. A police substation in the heart of a residential neighborhood would address the lack of police presence and provide a place for citizens to get assistance with personal or community issues. It would be staffed with volunteers who live, work, own a business or have any vested interest in the West Central neighborhood. A local business eventually donated a building for a token lease of \$1 a year and the city of Spokane has paid the taxes, insurance and utilities.

The substation concept coincided with the development of a community-oriented public service philosophy within the Spokane Police Department. In January 1992, the department received a grant from the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance to employ two **Neighborhood Resource Officers (NROs)** in two target neighborhoods, including West Central. A partnership of West Central residents, police, schools, churches, business owners, government representatives and human services agencies opened Spokane's first neighborhood-based C.O.P.S. substation on May 1, 1992.

Because the substation was an extension of the local police, issues of **confidentiality and** the qualifications of volunteers *staffing* the facility were especially important. An application, police background check and 12-hour training course were developed to ensure that substation volunteers were fully qualified.

In the first six months after the substation opened, **we found that** 80 percent of the issues people brought in had little to do with the police. People were most concerned with social ills—things that could and did ultimately result in crime. The next step was to examine how to address those social ills. A substation board of advisors composed of representatives from the police department, fire depart-

ment, schools, the military, businesses, social services and churches was formed to assist the substation volunteers to become aware of and coordinate existing services to meet neighborhood needs. Citizens are responsible for identifying issues and possible solutions, so that solutions are designed and carried out at the grassroots, neighborhood level.

The initial impact of the substation was very apparent, as the neighborhood took on a new face. New residents renovated homes left empty by drug dealers who began leaving. One Saturday, we watched residents of 17 homes pack up in U-Hauls and Ryder **trucks** to **move out** of West Central. Those moving out were not our perfect families; they were people who did not want to live where people cared about them and their activities. Children began playing outside and riding their bikes more often. Neighbors were talking more and helping each other with personal matters. There was a new feeling about living and doing business in the **West Central neighborhood**.

In March 1994, we formed Spokane C.O.P.S.—a single nonprofit organization to coordinate all community policing projects and programs in Spokane.

Less than a year later, citizens from Spokane's Northeast neighborhood called the police department and asked how they could do what West Central was doing, because they were experiencing increased crime in their neighborhood.

As an original West Central Task Force member, I went to several meetings in the Northeast part of the city to assist those citizens in opening their police substation. In the next three years, 13 other neighborhood groups followed suit. Now, Spokane

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has seven police substations and six more under renovation, expected to open sometime this year. With this growth has come an increased need to ensure that each substation maintains autonomy at the neighborhood level.

In March 1994, we formed Spokane C.O.P.S.—a single nonprofit organization to coordinate all community policing projects and programs in Spokane—and I was hired by a board of directors (representatives of the police, businesses, public schools, Washington State University and the media) as the program coordinator.

This umbrella organization is responsible for providing excellent administrative support to neighborhood groups engaged in community policing efforts in Spokane. This includes substations, as well as other programs such as Safe Streets Now, the Police Athletic League, a parents' coalition and others.

The Spokane C.O.P.S. program continues to grow and change today. The model itself is designed to allow for rapid change and growth that stems from the needs of citizens who live, work, own a business or have a vested interest in a particular neighborhood or Spokane's overall quality of life. Citizens have the opportunity, through education and collaboration, to be the empowered body of their own neighborhood. This model does not provide for a board of directors that issues policies and sets procedures. Rather, a board of advisors in each neighborhood educates and empowers citizens and provides help in various areas, but does not issue directives. As program coordinator, I meet monthly with members from each of the groups included under the C.O.P.S. umbrella, along with representatives from other city services, to address citywide issues and share information and expertise on neighborhood-level projects and strategies.

The C.O.P.S. board of directors ensures that all programs conducted under the C.O.P.S. umbrella are in accordance with state and local laws, and police department policies, procedures and community-oriented policing protocols. The board of directors only issues directives that address legal or liability issues for any person or group doing business under C.O.P.S.'s nonprofit status. The C.O.P.S. organization is intended to provide liability coverage, administrative and accounting support, networking, training and collaborative networks to empower citizens to assume primary responsibility for those neighborhood conditions that affect public safety and can potentially result in crime.

If law enforcement agencies try to fix community problems without first asking what they are, they may find their officers in substations waiting for the big problem of the day while working crossword puzzles!

We recommend that any city taking on a similar project follow a similar process. Law enforcement agencies that decide to "do" community policing using the substation model, without first soliciting citizen support, are likely to get little citizen involvement and ownership. If law enforcement agencies try to fix community problems without first asking what they are, they may find their officers in substations waiting for the big problem of the day while working crossword puzzles! Identify your local activists, entities and agencies that will assist in education and consensus-building in specific neighborhoods. Be a vital player in identifying and involving local resources to form partnerships within neighborhoods.

This process is time- and labor-intensive, but well worth the effort. In Spokane, we are seeing less need for police involvement in neighborhoods because of crime reduction and collabora-

tion among the agencies that provide services to address a neighborhood's social ills. Police report fewer calls for service regarding vandalism, theft and fourth-degree assault. This has largely been attributed to the police substations and block watch programs.

Because the entire program is volunteer-driven, program implementation costs the public relatively little. Businesses donate significant expertise, equipment and labor, while the police department helps deliver no-cost volunteer training.

This is not a "canned" or "one-size-fits-all" program. As a grassroots, volunteer program driven by community needs, the program lives and breathes as the citizens do, and political and community leaders share decision-making power with those most affected by decisions.

Spokane C.O.P.S. has demonstrated the value of focusing on the various social needs of neighborhoods and involving many stakeholders in action steps. Because it is not strictly focused on crime prevention or enforcement, the C.O.P.S. program has fostered broad, widespread benefits in Spokane's neighborhoods.

The Diagnosis Before the Prescription

by Gregory Saville, Action Assessment Group, Inc.

There is great concern about crime in North American cities. As a result, crime prevention has taken many different forms over the past few decades. Do we put bigger locks on our valuables? Do we lock up more of our criminals? Do we trim all the hedges and flood our streets with bright lights? Does crime prevention work at all? **Such questions have** helped drive the development of situational crime prevention, and led the Action Assessment Group—a crime prevention planning group—to develop an approach called targeted crime reduction, or TCR.

Situational crime **prevention** is a comprehensive strategy useful to police officers and crime prevention specialists alike. Unlike more complex social prevention schemes aimed at root causes, such as parenting classes, literacy programs and school-based projects, situational crime prevention can be implemented immediately and have measurable results.

The early version of this approach was called crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED); in recent years, however, situational crime prevention has been significantly expanded.

How can police officers effectively use situational crime prevention tactics? The answer is that they can diagnose the problem, or potential problem, before prescribing a solution. This aligns with the analysis phase of the SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) model of problem-oriented policing. The Action Assessment Group calls this diagnosis targeted crime reduction (TCR).

How Does Situational Crime Prevention Work?

In his book titled *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies*, criminologist Ronald Clarke categorizes four types of situational crime prevention tactics: 1) increasing the effort required to commit a crime, 2) increasing the risk taken to commit a crime, 3) reducing the rewards of committing a crime, and 4) increasing the moral guilt that results from committing a crime.

The targeted crime reduction (TCR) method helped address potential crime problems on a new college campus and a proposed town center.

Situational crime prevention tactics include traditional security approaches such as target hardening (better locks, **vandal-resistant** windows) and access control (a limited number of entrances to **buildings**). They also include urban planning tactics such as deflecting offenders (strategic placement of bus stops, street closings) or tackling the things that permit problems to occur (caller ID on telephones to reduce harassing calls, limits on spray-can sales to reduce graffiti).

Other tactics include removing targets (less cash on site, removable car radios), removing inducements (graffiti cleaning, gender-neutral phone lists) and setting rules for property (drug-free school zones, **public park regulations**).

In the right combination, these tactics are a formidable and effective approach for crime reduction. The key is determining which tactics apply to a given situation, and which do not. One way to determine this is to use TCR.

How to Apply Targeted Crime Reduction

To effectively target preventive strategies, Action Assessment Group developed a crime-potential profile. A potential or existing crime problem is examined through crime analysis. The analysis helps to assess what risks exist given existing patterns and what is known from criminological research. This in turn leads to a series of targeted crime-reduction strategies.

We use four stages in our analysis: 1) site visits, including interviews, background information collection and photo surveys; 2) a collaborative research plan, including planning meetings, focus groups, public meetings, workshops and safety audits, in which a small group of people walk through a site to note entrapment areas, movement predictors (a situation that requires pedestrians to take a particular route), crime generators and obstructed views; 3) risk assessment, including crime statistics, victim surveys, local demographics, pedestrian and vehicle movement patterns, and "hotspot" analyses using computerized geographic information systems; and 4) an environmental design review. Two examples where this approach was effectively used are described below.

Action Assessment Group used the TCR approach to assess a proposed new college campus, and found a number of potential risks. These included the location of a distant bus stop, which was an unsafe movement predictor for students (potential for assaults and fear of crime); the awkward placement of parking lots away from main entranceways (potential for assaults and thefts from autos); and poor surveillance of internal "hotspot" areas such as cashier stands, underground parkades and student study areas (potential for robberies, thefts, assaults and fear of crime).

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Diagnosis, continued from page 10

TCR prevention measures included controlling access to the *site* in evenings, deflecting offenders from high-risk areas by creating natural pathways around the campus, redesigning the parking lots to be closer to entranceways, removing targets in key areas and setting rules to limit evening parking lot use. Traditional security, such as patrols, and other CPTED tactics, such as lighting and landscaping, were then added for maximum effect.

In another project, Action Assessment Group applied TCR to a proposed regional town center with shopping, recreational facilities, residences, open space and offices. Conflicting land uses and hotspots, such as a video arcade located next to a children's daycare center, were identified during the risk assessment. The builders were able to correct problems before construction.

For example, a public transit station was proposed adjacent to a commercial shopping complex. Townhouses were located on the opposite side of the shopping complex next to a heavily treed park. Since the shopping complex closes at 9 p.m., townhouse residents returning home from the transit stop at night would be forced around the shopping complex onto long, isolated walkways through the park area. From a TCR perspective, this represented a high-risk movement predictor.

Deflecting offenders by moving the transit station between the park and resi-

dential area was considered, but was impractical in this case. Therefore, through the collaborative research plan, we convinced the mall owners to change the mall's operating procedures to deflect potential offenders. The plan entailed closing off high-risk areas and permitting public access through the mall on secure monitored walkways in restricted areas after closing. This allowed residents safe passage in the evenings and significantly reduced the risks of assault and robberies before they arose.

The Future

Both of these examples used situational crime prevention before the areas were developed. But in many other cases, situational crime prevention tactics are used after problems arise. Police officers can also use situational tactics in problem-oriented policing projects. Targeted crime reduction applies to almost all crime and fear problems. It applies to fear of crime on public transit, internal theft in industrial workplaces, schoolyard violence and fights outside taverns at closing time. It works because it is based on a systematic assessment of the problem at hand.

In a time when many think we should get tough on crime, a measured approach such as this seems soft on crime. We at the Action Assessment Group don't consider the TCR approach as a soft way to stop crime. We consider it a smart way to reduce it.

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request an article. Submission guidelines for project articles are listed on page 12 of this issue.

PERF also welcomes your suggestions for new types of articles, different formats or other improvements that could make PSQ even more valuable for problem-oriented policing practitioners and scholars.

PSQ is a valuable reference and training tool for those involved in police problem solving efforts. PERF wants to make sure that it provides the kind of information that is useful to readers. Send in your suggestions and articles, and help us to maintain this important resource.

With many thanks for your ongoing participation,



Ellen Painter
Editor, Problem Solving Quarterly
1120 Connecticut Ave. NW
Suite 930
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-7820
Fax: (202) 466-7826

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