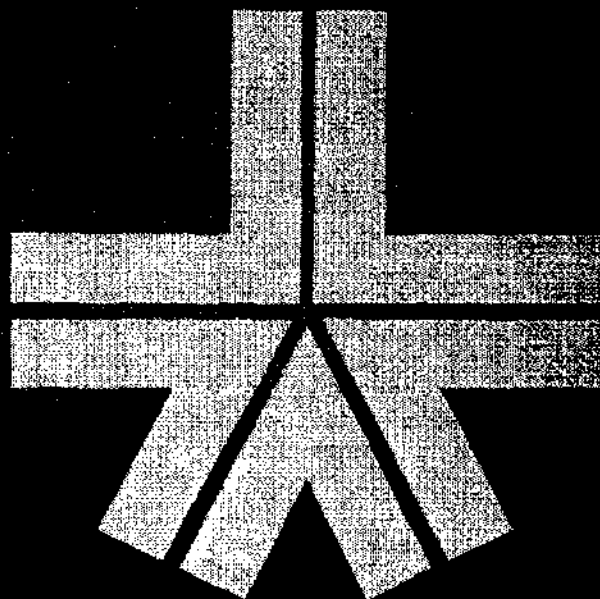


Problem Solvers

95-47



"Cloverdale Project"

Montreal Urban Community Police Service

"CLOVERDALE PROJECT"

Within the district covered by District 12, there is a zone known as "Cloverdale Housing", initially built in the early 1970's for low income families.

Over the years, the area degraded. Buildings were partially occupied; others were abandoned. The initial resident also changed from all white North Americans to a variety of ethnic groups who had serious problems in adopting to the new society they adopted.

Fear of all government services was the prevailing attitude and police services particularly were the prime target of the local population. Crime was on the rise; gangs were beginning to form; police officers dislike and feared patrolling the area. To stop the decaying process, we had to change our traditional method of patrolling this community.

The "Cloverdale Project" was born.



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PROBLEM SOLVERS

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

The Cloverdale area is comprised of a population of approximately 2 000 residents in a 800 tenement unit.

This population is mainly comprised of 50 different ethnic groups are were mainly poor, uneducated, and originated from countries where governments were dictatorial and police services were seen as mainly repressive and played no positive role in the social being of the community.

WHAT WAS THE GOAL OF THE PROBLEM SOLVING EFFORTS?

Initially, the goals were twofolds. First, it was to demystify and create contacts with the local population. Secondly, it was to reduce the amount of crimes in the area.

At the end of December 1992, a total of 2 544 crimes were reported in the District 12 area. 33% of these crimes (833) had been committed in the Cloverdale sector.

FOR WHOM WAS THIS A PROBLEM? WHO AND HOW WERE THEY AFFECTED?

The high concentration of crimes in this area resulted in a feeling of insecurity on the part of the population. A beginning of ghetto was sprouting. People were scared to venture out at night in the streets.

Merchants were victims of hold-ups. This area was also a problem for police because the population continuously refused to collaborate either because of their original backgrounds or the lack of confidence they had in police agencies.

Police officers of the precinct were developing an aversion about answering calls in the area which was getting to be known as high risk patrol due to the lack of the citizen's cooperation.

HOW DID THE SERVICE HANDLE THE PROBLEM IN THE PAST?

The past response was far more reactive than proactive. In other words, one call meant dispatch the patrol car, answer the call and try to solve the crime. There was no concerted effort, no follow up with victims, and no problem solving orientation was in place.

WHAT INFORMATION WAS COLLECTED ABOUT THE PROBLEM?

Most of the information came from the crime statistics compiled by the Police Service. There was also a demand on the part of the president of the local housing cooperative for an increase of police presence in the area.

WHAT STRATEGIES WERE DEVELOPED TO REACH THE GOAL?

The first objective was the demystification and acceptance by the population of the Police Service.

Two officers were detached from their regular car duties and a small local was found for their base in the area.

Their work consisted of responding to the crimes that occurred on their foot patrol and giving out information to citizens whom they met in the course of their daily beat.

Their first aim was to increase their visibility amongst all the residents. Each victim of a crime was systematically visited by an officer so that they could speak to them about crime prevention. This was the initial door of entry to the local population which gave the opportunity to the officers to change the perception of the population towards police services and the social implication.

By the same token, these officers identified and gathered the request of the citizens in terms of security on the streets and local parks. They held a monthly information meeting for the whole community on various themes such as drug abuse, break and entry, car theft and other subjects identified by the community.

A committee of citizens was also formed to better evaluate the needs of the community from their perspective.

WHAT AGENCIES HELPED THE POLICE SERVICE IN ACHIEVING THE GOAL?

We received support from the local city counsellor in terms of lending us a free local in a city building. The Cloverdale housing cooperative president was very instrumental in starting this project and the Lions' Club collaborated with us on a continuing basis.

WAS THE GOAL ACCOMPLISHED?

From a strictly statistical point of view, we can say that the goal was accomplished. The project initially began in February 1993. In 1993, there was a total of 823 crimes reported. After two years of operation, at the end of 1994, only 464 crimes had been reported in the same area for a decrease of 43%.

A better understanding of the laws of the country, what rights citizens have, what services were being offered to them, helped in improving the quality of life of the people of this community.

From a police standpoint, the project was initially looked upon with skepticism by the other officers in the precinct. Most of the officers were still geared with the mentality of repression rather than problem solving.

After two years, we can say that the community officers are well accepted in the area. Communications have greatly improved. The population accepts more readily to exchange with these officers and patrol car officers were equally better perceived by the population.

The citizen's presence at different monthly meetings was on the increase. To name but one: in autumn of 1994, where 200 persons had gathered and each officer with a particular duty in the precinct was present to explain what services he provided to the community.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

As of January 1995, a committee of various organizations of the area was composed of the following: city counsellor, Cloverdale housing cooperative, Optimists' Club, Lions' Club, local School Board representatives, local Merchants' Association, and the citizens who live in the area.

Their aim for the future is to identify further the needs of the community and to attempt to increase the positive occupational time of the young people of the area in constructive projects.