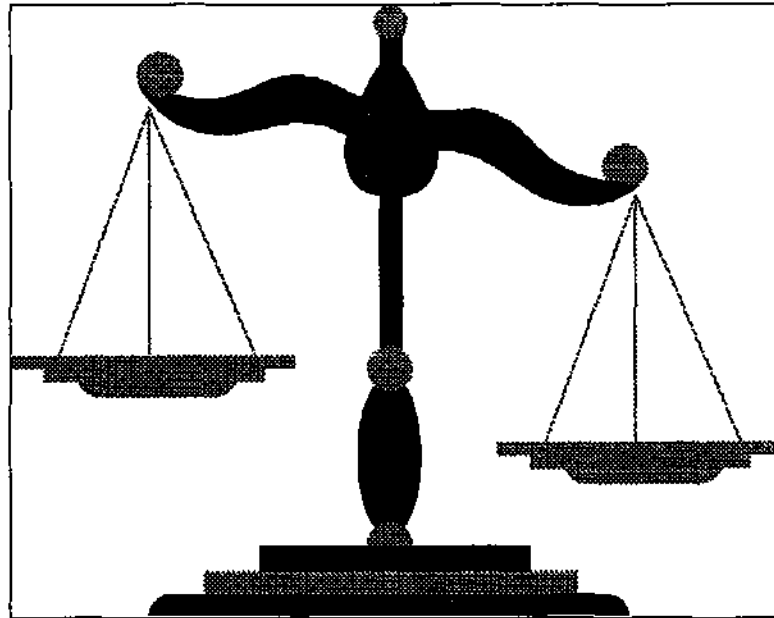


JOLIET POLICE DEPARTMENT

Neighborhood Oriented Policing Team



Project: REVITALIZING A
NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERY STORE

Ofcs. Shawn Filipiak & David Friend

Partnership is the Basis for Problem-Solving

1. ABSTRACT: REVITALIZING A NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERY STORE
Ofcs. Shawn Filipiak and David Friend
Joliet, Illinois Police Department

Scanning: Citizens complain about gang and drug activity around local grocery store; officers observe numerous gang members regularly "hanging out" around store.

Analysis: Grocery store is located in a rented building; grocery store was averaging over a dozen calls for service a month when project was opened; calls included weapons and drug charges; store proprietors did not acknowledge there was a problem and did not wish to cooperate with police; store proprietors, in fact, had begun to employ gang members at the store.

Response:

- Filipiak and Friend, working with City Neighborhood Services, locate store's landlord
- Landlord signs trespass agreement, allowing officers to eject trespassers from private property without landlord being physically present to sign complaints
- Filipiak and Friend, assisted by other officers, undertake concentrated surveillance and enforcement on store property
- Numerous arrests are made for drug possession, criminal trespass, and battery
- Landlord notifies store proprietors that he will not renew store's lease
- Landlord evicts store proprietors, leaving neighborhood without a grocery store.

Assessment:

- Activity, and calls for service, decrease dramatically
- Filipiak and Friend work with landlord to find new tenant
- New store tenant hires neighborhood residents to help renovate the store
- New grocery store, with attached delicatessen, opens.

7. DESCRIPTION: REVITALIZING A NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERY STORE
Ofcs. Shawn Filipiak and David Friend
Joliet, Illinois Police Department

A. Scanning

Ofcs. Filipiak and Friend are on long-term assignment in the Joliet/McDonough neighborhood, one of the most under-resourced areas of the City. The neighborhood borders one of the City's public housing sites and is the territory of a well-known gang.

Citizen complaints, and their own observations, alerted the Officers to a high degree of disorderly and criminal activity in and around a local grocery store. There were obviously many loiterers on the property and, over time, these loiterers had been arrested for illegal narcotics trafficking, assaults and batteries, weapons offenses and other disturbances. The vast majority of these offenders – and victims – were known gang members.

While the grocery store was obviously a problem location, it was also the only one within walking distance (and safely within gang boundaries), so the Officers were sensitive to the negative aspects of eliminating the store from the community. On the other hand, the store was near a primary access route to Downtown Joliet and in an area that was undergoing other commercial development. The Officers therefore felt that they had to take some reasonable, immediate action to reassure these developers and help protect the future of the entire community.

B. Analysis

Filipiak and Friend began their analysis by doing a historical review of calls for service at the address. Thus, in 1995, the Officers discovered" that the problem location had a total of 25 calls for service. By the middle of 1996, however, the location had surpassed the total calls for service for all of 1995.

The problem location was, known throughout the community as a place to purchase illegal drugs. And, as such, foot and vehicle traffic was heavy at all hours of the day and night. Neighborhood residents advised the Officers that these "shady" dealings were condoned by the store proprietors. Residents were particularly concerned because both the narcotics trafficking and trafficking-related incidents spilled out into the surrounding community. Further, because the store was so close to major thoroughfares and therefore very visible, residents were concerned that activities at the store blemished the whole neighborhood's image.

The Officers determined that previous attempts at solving the problem using traditional enforcement had had some short-term results, but enforcement alone had not obtained any long-term improvements. Other officers had long frequented the store property and, when possible, checked individuals for contraband. When loiterers saw the police coming, however, they often ran into the store to avoid being subject to police questioning and detention on public property. Because the store proprietors had

refused to sign a trespass agreement with the City, officers could not detain suspects – much less arrest them – once they were on the store's private property unless the store proprietors signed a complaint against them. It became increasingly obvious to the Officers and the community that the store proprietors' cooperated openly with the gang members loitering around the store, thus making the proprietors part of the problem instead of part of a possible solution.

At a meeting called by a local grass-roots community group, whose membership is largely derived from area church congregations/ community residents made it clear to area officers and supervisors that they considered the store to be the neighborhood's number one problem. From that meeting on, officers were constantly detained by residents who wanted to know what the police were doing to rid the community of this problem location.

C. Response

First, because the store proprietors were so consistently un-cooperative, Officers Filipiak and Friend asked other City government personnel if they could help them to locate the store's landlord(s). The City's Neighborhood Services Department was able to trace the landlord through inspections documents and water bills, and forwarded the current landlord's name, address and telephone number to the Officers.

Filipiak and Friend called the landlord and arranged a meeting with him. When informed of the problems in and around his property, the landlord readily agreed to sign a trespass agreement and expressed his desire to do anything he could to cooperate with the police and the City. The landlord promptly posted signs on his property notifying the public that a trespass agreement was in effect and that officers could question, detain and/or arrest anyone found trespassing in and around the store.

At the same time/ Filipiak and Friend contacted the City's Inspection Department, Business Licensing Department, and City Manager's Office to find out if other administrative approaches might more efficiently or effectively solve this neighborhood problem.

While other City Department's were investigating these other approaches, the efficacy of the trespass agreement was rapidly deteriorating due to interference from the store proprietors. Filipiak and Friend were able to rely on other officers from all three shifts for support in enforcing the trespass agreement signed by the store's landlord. In special circumstances, officers from other units (such as Tactical) had also performed surveillance and enforcement. After several arrests were, in fact, made on store property, the proprietors became openly un-cooperative. Proprietors began to advise officers to stop making arrests inside the store or, in some cases, asked the officers to show leniency towards specific individuals.

Two incidents finally prompted the Officers and the landlord to take drastic action. First, one of the store proprietors was arrested for unlawful use of a weapon after an altercation with a gang member inside the store. Then, two weeks after the proprietors had hired a local gang member as a cashier, the gang member/cashier was shot while sitting in front of the store. Fortunately, the proprietors' lease for the store was due to expire the next month, giving the store's landlord an opportunity to eject the troublesome proprietors swiftly and expeditiously – without having to go through eviction proceedings.

Based on the relationship established between Filipiak and Friend and the store's landlord, they agreed to work together to find a new tenant. The Officers expressed to the landlord their concern for community residents (many of whom were old, disabled and/or had to rely on public transportation) who would now have to travel several miles to do their grocery shopping. The landlord hired a professional realtor to find a tenant willing to re-establish a grocery and work closely with local officers. Filipiak and Friend agreed, with the help of other City government personnel, to assist the landlord in his search for an acceptable store proprietor.

D. Assessment

Within six weeks of closing, a new lease was signed between the store's landlord and a more suitable proprietor. The new proprietor, a local small businessman, employed residents of the

Joliet/McDonough neighborhood in renovating the store; dry-walling, painting, etc. The new proprietor was thus able to create some temporary employment and a great deal of good will throughout the neighborhood. The proprietor used his growing neighborhood contacts to spread his plans for improving the store and the neighborhood to the community. The new proprietor also encouraged Filipiak and Friend to stop by often to convey to the community that the store would be there for the good of the community and not to shelter criminal activity.

Four months after the re-opening of the grocery store, calls for service in the immediate area have remained dramatically lower than 1996 levels. Neighborhood residents are very happy to have retained a local grocery store that is for everyone – not just gang members. Residents have also noted positive changes in the area surrounding the store, and feel much safer walking to and from the store. All officers, not just Filipiak and Friend, find that they are welcome in the store and are credited by the residents with making a significant contribution to the quality of the neighborhood. Although gang members still dominate the neighborhood, their credibility has been severely damaged and their hold on the community has visibly loosened. With continued cooperation between local business owners, the community and the police, Filipiak and Friend are confident that Joliet/McDonough will soon be a thriving neighborhood.

3. AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

1. This project/ ridding a neighborhood of a problem location while retaining the vital neighborhood resource of a grocery store, was initiated by Ofcs Shawn Filipiak and David Friend, one of twenty-four Neighborhood Oriented Policing (NOP) officers on full-time assignment to troubled neighborhoods. The Officers were primarily assisted by other patrol officers and sergeants.

2. The entire Joliet Police Department received problem-oriented policing training from Police Executive Research Forum staff in the fall and winter of 1991-92. Since that time, problem-solving and community internship have each become three-week segments in our eighteen-week recruit field training. Individual officers are given the opportunity to attend both general and specific (e.g., landlord/tenant, prostitution) problem-solving seminars, and a 12-hour problem-oriented policing refresher course is offered annually.

3. Although the Department has no established incentives for officers who engage in problem-solving, officers who do undertake projects are allowed some "flex" time to network with other agencies, attend meetings, etc. It is also well-known in the Department that an officer's problem-solving activity is a significant factor when that officer is being considered for special assignments and promotions. And, finally, officers who submit exceptional problem-solving projects to national

competitions (such as the Goldstein Award) are promised an expense-paid trip to the awards ceremonies (such as the Annual POP Conference).

4. Because the Department has been practicing problem-solving in the field since 1991, Ofcs. Filipiak and Friend drew upon the experience of many other officers and successful projects; particularly concerning the use of trespass agreements.

5. By undertaking a thorough analysis of the problem in cooperation with the community, and assessing the possible impact of their efforts to close down the grocery store upon the community, the Officers moved beyond the immediate crime and disorder problem to address the need to sustain – and improve, if possible – neighborhood conditions and resources. By working with the landlord to locate a proprietor that generated temporary local employment while upgrading the grocery store environment and expanding its services, the Officers contributed to an overall, long-term improvement in the neighborhood's quality of life.

6. Ofcs. Filipiak and Friend, and the other officers who assisted them, undertook this project as part of their regular duties and no additional Department resources were required.

7. Project Contact Person:

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