

SCANNING:

In the northeast quadrant of Rochester, New York, lies the most densely populated and poorest neighborhood in the City. It has been plagued with violence, blight conditions, absentee landlords, abandoned burned-out buildings, drug trafficking, and businesses that have left stores abandoned.

The northeast is comprised of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Jamaican Americans, Dominican Americans, Asian Americans and a minority of Polish Americans. The area has several major companies on the outskirts of its region, but the interior is economically poor. The closest major grocery store is approximately 5 miles away. Until recently, all major grocery store chains refused to place stores in this economically deprived area. "Mom and Pop" stores are the mainstay and are run primarily by Hispanic Americans and people of Arab descent.

In weeks prior to the initiative, the neighborhood had been plagued with a large number of shootings, a noticeable increase in street level narcotic trafficking and an increase in the number of complaints received at all levels. An economic uplift was announced by the Mayor of the City for the northeast area. Part of the initiative was to relocate the Clinton Section (precinct) Police Office to a more visible location and near an abandoned grocery store. Once a commitment to move the Precinct was made, a regional food chain committed to reviving an old store that had been abandoned close to 10 years ago.

The Rochester Police Department, City Hall, and a community group called C.O.N.E.A. (Coalition Of North East Associations) came together during a C-POP

(Community-Problem Oriented Policing) meeting and through consensus decided that Rauber Street was to be the target location for a Community Project.

The C-POP team is made up of Rochester Police Officers, Property Conservation Officers, Department of Social Services Investigator, Community Groups within the geographical area of the Section, Animal Control personnel, and local business associations or representatives.

The C-POP team identified Rauber Street as one of the worst streets in the northeast. Each member based their decision to work on Rauber Street for a variety of reasons: The Police Department felt the street needed to be addressed because of the increase in the number of violent crimes/incidents occurring and the noticeable increase in drug trafficking on the street: C.O.N.E.A. felt Rauber Street needed to be addressed because of the number of complaints it had received from people within the community and the horrendous living conditions the area presented to the people who lived there; and City Hall felt Rauber Street needed to be addressed because it was the street closest to the new development area and an impact needed to be felt in the area.

The preliminary information showed that Rauber Street had the following issues:

1. 13 out of 35 properties were vacant and boarded.
2. 12 out of 47 city lots were vacant (no buildings)
3. 23 out of 35 houses were supported by Department of Social Services
4. Numerous shootings, robberies, and drug sales plagued the street. There had been two homicides one block away, and the motive was control of the heroin and cocaine trafficking in that neighborhood.

ANALYSIS:

Various forms of information were gathered to inform the team what was occurring and what had to be done. The Police Department gathered various reports and data, which included: Field Interview Forms; Calls for Service Runs; Top 25 drug trafficking locations; recent Crime Reports; known Parole and Probation violators living in the area; and outstanding wants and warrants of individuals in the immediate area. Patrol Officers who worked the area were asked for their input and to gather intelligence data on individuals and locations on the street. Department of Social Services researched the number of open cases and the reports of fraud in the immediate area. Property Conservation Officers (a.k.a. building inspectors) reviewed open cases where homes had been cited and properties that had been vacant for more than a year. The community groups reviewed complaints made by citizens in the area. The team, each at different times and at their convenience, did a preliminary visual inspection of the area to observe the blight conditions and what they could address from within their areas of control. The team also identified other issues that were to be addressed by other Governmental agencies or businesses.

Both citizens and police knew Rauber Street as a tough neighborhood. The area had the reputation for drug trafficking and violence. Every night, the police patrol units and vice squad spent a considerable amount of time trying to keep the violence and drug trafficking down. Three groups were known to have disputes over the area regarding the control of the drug-ridden neighborhood: the Latin Kings (a Hispanic gang with ties to major cities), organized numbers of Jamaican immigrants, and local African Americans street gangs. The area was well known for its cocaine and heroin trafficking.

The conditions on Rauber Street drained Police resources; forced business to move out of the area, compelled tenants to vacate otherwise occupied apartments. Houses that were vacant or abandoned were used as havens for drug users; and arsonists torched several buildings. The problems on Rauber Street heightened the fear of the people coming into the City of Rochester, those living in the neighborhood, as well as those who considered moving to the Rochester area. New businesses were skeptical and the ones that were left were closing at rapid rates and moving to new locations.

The historical response to the Rauber Street area was to utilize the vice squad to target certain locations (known to be drug locations) and serve search warrants upon them. The owners of the property would be sent a letter advising them of the narcotics activity at the location and that if there were two convictions in 18 months, the owner could lose the property through seizure by the City of Rochester. Patrol Units would patrol the streets and attempt to move people along, make arrests for "order maintenance" laws that they observed, and investigate the crimes to which they were dispatched. Patrol and the vice squad made numerous arrests, but the criminal element kept coming back.

In analyzing the conditions and activity on the street, several causes were discussed amongst the team. Some of the causes identified were:

1. Historical reputation as a bad area.
2. Absentee landlords.
3. Lack of good tenants to move into the neighborhood. Landlords unwilling to break the cycle of bad tenants renting on the street.
4. Fear by the "good" folks in the neighborhood that fighting back meant retaliation.

5. The blight conditions of the street. Improper lighting, trash, burned out buildings, abandon vehicles, and houses in complete exterior disrepair.

The analysis of the area showed that Rauber Street was the central problem of the neighborhood. Other streets North and South of Rauber Street had problems too, but the incidents and the people involved seemed to center around Rauber Street.

Criminal activity and general quality of life problems existed around the clock. There were no particular days or times that were different from others.

The members of the C-POP team shared their respective department and agency's information with each other as well as with the people they represented. Other community groups within Clinton Sections geographical area assisted in this project for true community cooperation and spirit.

RESPONSE:

In order to help facilitate the SARA problem-solving model, the members of the team used a PROJECT PLANNING method. The C-POP team came together on January 22, 1997, and established a goal:

"Improve the Quality of Life on Rauber St."

The Project Planning model begins with establishing a goal that is clear, concise, and one, with which the team agrees and understands. The next step in the process is to identify various measures of success.

The team stated that they would be successful if:

- The houses eligible for demolition are down in 30 days of our target date.
- Department of Environmental Services completes the street clean up.
- All assistance information is disseminated.
- The team addresses all the houses identified.
- There is positive feedback from the citizens on the street.
- All non-owner occupied locations are inspected.

The next step of the Project was to develop some strategic options. The team began with a discussion regarding the success of an earlier operation on a street called Cuba Place where the different agencies identified the problems, planned the strategies, and executed the plan together. The earlier project was a success in everyone's eyes. The team looked at several options for this Project:

- To have a coordinated effort with all agencies
- To have individual agencies address issues under their jurisdiction at their own pace and time frame.
- To do the project in one day
- To do the project over a period of days or weeks

The team then looked at the resources available and analyzed their impact on the project. The forces were categorized in four areas:

Forces we influence/control:

- Our own involvement and energy
- Media

Forces working for us:

- Other agencies want to get involved
- People in the community want this to happen

Forces we can bring to bear:

- Other agencies

Forces working against us:

- People in the area who don't want to get involved

The team then looked at different variables/evaluation criteria to decide whether the options presented were attainable. The criteria evaluated was:

Time

People Power

Control

Energy

Politics

Skill

Legitimacy/Legality

Risk

Pay Back

Success

Funding

The team decided that the option of "Individual agencies by themselves" was questionable in terms of control, risk, and success. The team decided that this option was not feasible. The team developed their game plan. The primary game plan was "To have

a coordinated TEAM effort on one day". The contingency plan was to hold it on another day.

The team identified a list of agencies to be involved. The agencies to be involved were: Property Conservation; Parole; Probation; Animal Control; Department of Environmental Services; Rochester Fire Department; Rochester Gas and Electric; Cable Company; Health Department; Rochester Police Department to include K-9 unit, vice squad, License and Warrants, Family and Crisis Intervention Team (a team of civilian employees trained in intervention techniques), Mounted, Traffic, Records, Bike Patrol, and regular patrol units; Community groups CONE A and 14621; Drug Enforcement Agency; Frontier (Phone) Company; Rural/Metro Ambulance; Department of Social Services Housing; Department of Social Services Welfare Fraud; Forestry; City Attorney; local Media; Department of Environmental Conservation; Monroe County Sheriffs Office; State Police; and other local town police departments.

The team decided that there should be four distinct teams: Enforcement teams; Secondary Enforcement teams; Informational Teams; and a Resource Team. The team structure was:

Enforcement Teams:

- Rochester Police Officers
- Property Conservation Officers
- Department of Social Services Investigator
- Parole
- Probation

Informational Teams:

- Rochester Fire Department
- Community Groups - CONEA and 14621
- Home-show personnel
- City Grant/Loan Department
- Crime Prevention Officer

Secondary Enforcement Teams:

- Cable Company
- Rochester Gas and Electric
- Animal Control

Resource/Standby Team:

- Health department
- Rural/Metro Ambulance
- FACIT (Family And Crisis Information Team)
- Board-Up crews
- DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency)
- Frontier (Phone company)
- Forestry
- City Attorney
- Department of Environmental Conservation

The team, in a brainstorming session, came up with 85 activities that needed to take place in order for the project to be accomplished. Each task was assigned to a member and the team gave each task a start date and a completion date.

The game plan was multi-faceted. Two months prior to the day of the project, the Community groups distributed fliers throughout the neighborhood with information on spring clean-up asking all residents to do their part. The fliers listed numbers and agencies that would be of assistance to the residents.

The project coordinator reviewed all the information available and identified the "HOT SPOT" locations. The midnight shift on the two nights prior to the actual date strictly enforced the parking regulations on the street. On the night prior to the project, the vice squad completed several search warrants at known drug locations and made several arrests.

Law Enforcement agencies identified all wanted persons in that particular area and provided up to date intelligence and photos that were assembled on a large board for viewing by everyone.

On April 16, 1997, all involved participants, 97 people, assembled at 9:00 a.m. for a briefing of their assignments, responsibilities and expectations. The participants were divided into teams as described earlier in this report. The briefing included a history of why they were there, the goal of the project, each of their respective assignments, the process of how the plan was to be implemented, and communications issues. The briefing also covered areas such as staging points, media issues, restrooms, lunch, timing, and phone numbers. Each team was given a list of each location with all data gathered from all the agencies involved. A photographic display of all wanted persons was available for all participants to view (this was later displayed on the street as the project unfolded). The briefing was completed in 45 minutes and the teams were on scene 15 minutes later.

The Enforcement teams would first address the "HOT SPOT" locations. "HOT SPOT" locations usually included drug locations, locations where people had warrants, or locations where there had been several incidents of violence in the recent past. If the Enforcement Teams observed areas that came under the Secondary Enforcement Teams jurisdiction, they would call that team in. This would include animal cruelty, illegal cable hook-up, or dangerous wiring. If houses were deemed uninhabitable, the Property Conservation officers would cite violations and the board-up crews would seal the home. Once the "HOT SPOTS" were addressed, the Enforcement Teams would systematically go to each house on the street. With consent of the resident, the Teams would enter and inspect the location. If there was no enforcement action needed, the Informational team would address the occupants and offer various items for free (batteries for smoke detectors, light bulbs, smoke detectors, etc.), information on grants, loans, and programs available to the residents from within the community and/or police department. As the teams addressed the various houses, the utility companies checked each location for proper or illegal hook-up. Forestry personnel trimmed trees while the Department of Environmental Services cleaned the street and vacant City lots.

The entire street was completely addressed by all teams at 11:45 a.m. Pizza and soda were provided to all participants, even neighborhood children got in on the refreshments.

The following day, D.E.S. returned and bulldozed two vacant buildings that were City owned.

ASSESSMENT:

The results of the Project were:

1. 5 individuals arrested which included one Felony Indictment Warrant.
2. 2 search warrants were executed.
3. Several decks of heroin were recovered
4. Several bags of marijuana were recovered
5. \$ 100 in cash was recovered .
6. 5 wild/stray cats were apprehended. They were starving and had been left in a house alone for approximately 5 months.
7. 5 dogs were taken into custody. Two of the dogs had to be destroyed because their health was so bad.
8. 7 tickets were issued for unlicensed animals
9. 3 dogs received free rabies vaccines.
10. Property Conservation personnel cited 23 properties.
11. There was one immediate "vacate order".
12. 5 junk vehicles were towed.
13. Two houses were demolished
14. Five repairs/corrections were made to either gas or electric conditions that were deemed hazardous.
15. Six electric meters were removed.
16. 20 D.S.S. cases were closed.
17. 5 smoke detectors were handed out.
18. 7 locations received free batteries for their smoke detectors.

19. Cable company removed wires from 4 houses.

20. 7 locations were boarded.

21.3 dump truck loads of debris was removed from the street.

The impact of this effort could be seen instantly. At night, because lights had been repaired and trees had been trimmed, the street was illuminated. Residents picked up their own yards as City workers cleaned the street and City lots. The number of calls for service in the area since then has dropped tremendously.

Because this project occurred in April 1997, the evaluation process is still taking place. The Community Groups and patrol officers have relayed that they have seen a difference in the neighborhood.

Each measure of success was met. The team and the residents felt the plan did help improve the Quality of Life on Rauber St.. The final evaluation is not complete. A tentative formal evaluation will take place in April 1998. In the months since the project, incidents of violence have been considerably less in that area. Maintenance is still taking place.

Completing the demolition on the same day as the initiative would have enhanced the PROJECT. The visual statement that the demolition would have made would have carried a large message to the criminal element in the neighborhood. There were some suggestions on how to improve the overall Project, but they were minor issues that really did not impact the overall success that was observed.

There was concern that there would be a displacement of the criminal element. The team agreed that the next step of an overall goal to improve the Quality of Life in Clinton Section (precinct) would be to address the streets north of Rauber Street in the same

manner. Once those streets north of Rauber Street had been addressed, the same actions would take place either to the east or west.

The area of Rauber Street will need a maintenance effort to hold the ground that was gained. Without the maintenance effort, which will be considerably less than before the Project, the efforts and gains would be lost.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

Officers who included the ranks of Patrolman, Sergeant, Lieutenant and Captain adopted the Problem Solving/Project Planning model. Several officers of the section, as well as members of the Community groups, had received formalized training in the SARA model and PROBLEM SOLVING/PROJECT PLANNING.

The officers involved in the initial problem solving/project planning did not receive any additional incentives to get involved; it was part of their job description. On the day of the project, some officers were utilized by using overtime money. The overtime was from a "WEED and SEED" grant sponsored by the Federal Government.

Several reports were generated to help the team members and officers to keep on track and focused. An activity list, a data information sheet, and a time line were established for all participants. By giving all participants a copy of each report it created check and balance system for each other. The reports also served as a reminder and tracking mechanism for the project coordinator. The various charts of the Project Planning program were utilized to document the work and be a visual for everyone to see what had been accomplished.

There were very few problems with the initiative. With any project, the follow-up phase is critical. A maintenance program should have been discussed and agreed to when developing the initiative, but it was unknown how much of an impact the project would have. There will be a formal evaluation completed after one year, but the weekly/monthly maintenance efforts might need some additional attention.

- There were 97 people committed to this project. The Police Department had 23 police officers involved in this initiative. The Clinton Section (precinct) utilized approximately 24 hours of overtime from a Federal Grant for 6 officers to be involved. This equates to approximately \$816.00. The only extra money utilized in this initiative was to purchase pizza and soda for 97 people. That money came out of an account in City Hall which was approximately \$300.

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