

**EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICE  
1998 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD NOMINATION**

Nominee: Major John Woodard, Commander, Atlanta Police Zone Five, which encompasses Downtown Atlanta, the traditional commercial core of the City of Atlanta, Georgia along with Midtown, an extension of the commercial core as well as a resurgent historic residential neighborhood.

Section I: Scanning

Downtown Atlanta has long had a problem with aggressive panhandling and public drunkenness and disorder, situations which lead to a public perception that the area is unsafe. Central Atlanta Progress, an organization of downtown business owners who are committed to enhancing downtown as an area suitable for business, residential uses and entertainment, called this problem to the attention of City Government and expressed a desire to cooperate with the Atlanta Police Department to take action to reduce the incidence of panhandling and other quality of life offenses that harmed the viability of downtown as an economic and residential core for the City of Atlanta. The presence of these panhandlers, as well as a number of petty thieves who commit larcenies from cars and other low level offenses, led to more serious crime in the downtown, such as armed robbery. In one most infamous incident, a visiting police official from another City was in Atlanta on business, he was stopped by a panhandler in front of a downtown hotel and while he was detained by the panhandler, armed men leaped out of a van on a nearby street and robbed the visitor at gunpoint. The unfortunate nature of this incident was underscored by the fact that one of the primary drivers of the downtown economic engine is the convention and conference trade, an industry that will avoid the City if the streets are perceived as unsafe. The quality of life offenses that plagued downtown Atlanta had to be addressed, not only for the benefit of public safety, but also for the continued viability of the downtown area.

Section Two: Analysis

Further refinement of crime and pedestrian flow data revealed six locations where cameras could most strategically be located during the test period, including the entry to Underground Atlanta, the Centennial Olympic Park area and key intersections near the Five Points area of downtown. The selection of these locations was made to maximize the impact of the program on crime and perceptions of safety downtown.

Police crime analysis activities revealed that both crime and the perception of crime downtown were driven by the appearance that **the** area had been ceded to vagrants and aggressive panhandlers and con artists, along with petty thieves. This perception, consistent with the 'broken windows' theory fueled the sense that downtown was unsafe and that the area was fair game for a variety of career criminals and hustlers, who flocked to the area to prey upon visitors, who are seen as the easiest victims, since they don't live here and are not around later to prosecute. This analysis pointed up the urgent need to address the problem and a number of options were considered: 1> a downtown hospitality patrol was formed and funded by a special tax district in the downtown area. This hospitality patrol consists of fifty uniformed ambassadors who give directions to out of town visitors and discourage panhandlers and petty thieves by being extra observers for police. The ambassadors are in radio contact with Atlanta Police. 2> A community court will deal more effectively with chrome low level offenders and monitor each case closely to assure compliance with court orders for treatment (substance abuse, job training, etc.). The community court is now in the final phases of planning and should be up and running in early 1999. Finally, Major Woodard recognized the need for an immediate enhancement to downtown security.

### 3. Response

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The best immediate approach was determined to be a system of surveillance cameras focused on problem^ locations in the downtown area to give police more observation of a broader area of downtown Atlanta. Major Woodard cooperated with Central Atlanta Progress and the City's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and instigated a trial run with the system. With much media attention and participation by partners in this venture, the downtown surveillance program was kicked off in the Spring of 1997, with much positive public response and media attention. Cameras were located at the strategic locations as outlined above and monitored at the Zone Five Precinct located in the CNN Center building. Monitors

used the camera system to spot trouble makers and document their illegal activities for responding officers. The system and the positive publicity it was given sent a clear message to the petty criminals who congregate downtown that their misbehavior would no longer go unnoticed.

#### 4. Assessment

In the year since the surveillance camera system was installed on a test basis, crime has been reduced downtown substantially. The presence of this system, combined with the presence of the downtown ambassador force and Atlanta Police sweeps to pick up career criminals combined to cause the crime reduction. Of equal importance to the system itself is the strong partnership Major Woodard has forged with downtown businesses and residents as the program was planned and implemented.

### Agency and Officer Information

1. At what level of the police organization was this problem-solving initiative adopted (e.g., the entire department, a few select officers, etc.)?
2. Did officers or management receive any training in problem-oriented policing and/or problem solving before this project began or during its execution?
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 resources (financial and/or personnel) were committed to this project, and of those resources, what went beyond the existing department budget?
7. Project Contact Person:

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### OTHER SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

You may include up to ten (10) pages of supporting documents, such as newspaper clippings or magazine articles, in addition to the text, charts, tables and graphs. Unfortunately, videotapes cannot be considered.

Prepare a letter from the agency chief executive nominating the project for the award. Please address the letter to the Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee.

Submit (8) copies of the completed application package (nomination letter, abstract and description, and any supporting documents) postmarked by the deadline of June 11, 1998.

PERF will publish a compilation of the leading projects. By submitting a project, you agree to allow PERF to include your work in the book so that your success is accessible to the entire field.

Send packages to the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), 1120 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 930, Washington, DC 20036, U.S.A., Attention: Herman Goldstein Award.

Direct inquiries to Jim Burack of the PERF staff at (202) 466-7820 x276 or e-mail <jburack@policeforum.org>

CHECK EXAMPLES OF COMPLETED POP PROJECTS AT: <www.PoliceForum.org>. (See below for free agency account)

### POPNET PROBLEM-SOLVING DATABASE

POPNet fills a critical need—providing a central listing on the Internet of problem-oriented policing projects from around the world.

POPNet is located on PERF's homepage: <http://www.PoliceForum.org>.

Although award entries must be made via hard-copy, you are strongly encouraged to submit your entry directly to POPNet as well. Although the questions that appear on POPNet are slightly different from the set of questions asked above, the format is the same. Once you have completed the award package, you will have little difficulty answering the POPNet questions.

Access to POPNet is free to law enforcement agencies and researchers, but an account is required. Please contact Anne Grant via e-mail at <agrant@policeforum.org> or by telephone at (202) 466-7820.

Those submitting projects for the Goldstein award consent to the listing of their project on POPNet.