

1998 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN
AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE
IN
PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING
SUBMITTED BY:
BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT

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PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING**

NOMINEES:

Colonel John E. Gavrilis
Major Timothy J. Longo, Sr.
Baltimore Police Department

**PROJECT
CONTACT
PERSON:**

Carmine R. Baratta, Jr.
Lieutenant
Southeastern District, BPD
601 EastFayette Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Off.: 410.396.2422
Fax: 410.396.2172
E-mail: CarmB123@aol.com

ABSTRACT

The Patterson Park Outreach Program is a comprehensive plan established by the Baltimore Police Department to empower neighborhoods by addressing concerns and public safety issues in close working relationship with supportive city agencies. This program is designed to concentrate efforts block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood.

The neighborhoods surrounding Patterson Park were experiencing increases in crime and general deterioration. Crime had risen in this area by 85% in the previous decade. Patterson Park, which was once considered a desirable place to live and visit, was at risk of being terminally degraded..

In January, 1996 Major John E. Gavrilis developed and implemented the Patterson Park Outreach Program. This program is a comprehensive police-community partnership which relies on defining problems, establishing roles and tasks, focusing resources, sharing information, and working as a "team" toward positive results. It incorporates elements of education, structured meetings, oversight, and public awareness. The community, police department, and other city service agencies work together on specific problem issues/areas after they have been prioritized by participants in this process. Problem areas within the outreach area were mapped according to risk level. Clusters of at risk areas were addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. This proved a unique and valuable problem-solving strategy.

In one year's time, the Patterson Park Outreach area experienced dramatic decreases in all crime categories: i.e., Burglary down 35%, Robbery down 17%, Larceny down 15%, etc. The neighborhoods surrounding Patterson Park were now becoming optimistic and people's fear of 'crime were diminishing. Gavrilis was promoted to Colonel in late 1996, and his successor Major Timothy J. Longo, Sr., continued to refine this program

Longo instituted a "community outreach philosophy" in this area by assigning full-time "outreach teams" to work with high risk cluster areas exclusively. A lieutenant oversees the outreach teams, and sergeants supervise officers within designated outreach areas. Longo built upon the successes of the Patterson Park Outreach Program and, in 1998, designated two other communities within his district to be outreach areas. In 1997, the Patterson Park Outreach area enjoyed another year of crime reduction under Longo - 11% for all crimes. Evidence suggests that 1998 will also be a banner year for this area.

Scanning

Baltimore is a major eastern U.S. city and encompasses approximately 90 square miles. Located along a major interstate corridor, Baltimore fronts tidal waters and has undergone a Renaissance period of urban renewal in its downtown. It attracts millions of visitors yearly to its harbor attractions and professional sporting events. Baltimore is made up of many quaint and ethnic neighborhoods. There are approximately 15,000 businesses within this jurisdiction which employ over 300,000 workers mainly in the health, service, financial and education sectors. Baltimore has a population of approximately 700,000 and a sworn police force of about 3,200. The department's enforcement activities are full-service with patrol and the Criminal Investigation Bureau accounting for 80% of all sworn personnel. There are nine police districts throughout the city. This jurisdiction responded to approximately 1.4 million emergency requests for police service in 1995.

In 1994, Thomas C. Frazier became the Police Commissioner of Baltimore. He gave the police department its first working definition of "community policing:" arrest violent offenders, prevent crime, solve ongoing problems, and improve the quality of life. Quite simply, the concept of community policing was now institutionalized and could be measured. In late 1995, Colonel John E. Gavrilis, then Major and District Commander of the Southeastern District, developed a comprehensive plan to empower neighborhoods within a specific section of his district to address crime using Frazier's definition. The Patterson Park Outreach area was implemented in January 1996. Its success is apparent, and Major Timothy J. Longo, Sr. (Gavrilis' successor) has been instrumental in refining this concept to other areas within the Southeastern District.

The Patterson Park Outreach area is primarily residential, comprising nine community groups and two umbrella groups. The groups are organized and work well together. A scenic park is the

focal point of this area offering various activities and recreational programs. A good partnership exists with the police and the citizens. Numerous crime suppression efforts and community policing programs have been implemented with shared input.

Analysis

Historical Perspective: 1985 - 1995. Community pride in its neighborhood is high. But, due to recent social and economic changes, issues have been raised concerning the preservation of the quality of life. Community leaders raised the issue of housing and "bad neighbors" as the reason for deterioration of their neighborhood. Also, police actions in other parts of the city had driven the other crime problems to their neighborhood.

Housing issues raised include an increase in vacant homes, poor landlords, poor tenants and housing code violations (i.e., sanitation, graffiti, rats, etc.). A correlation appears to exist between crime and vacant housing. This is especially evident in the high-risk areas identified by police. Between 1985 and 1995, Index crime had risen in the Patterson Park area by an alarming 85.7% (from 2086 to 3874).

The Patterson Park area is identified in late 1995 as a unique opportunity to address crime, "grime," and quality-of-life issues. The social, economic and psychological implications associated with the general deterioration of this area were alarming to law enforcement officials. Empirical, as well as anecdotal data, indicated that this area was at a "tipping point;" what was once an exclusive residential area bordered on a large popular park was at risk of becoming terminally degraded.

The Patterson Park Outreach Area has a total population of 24,221 with 10,423 housing units based on 1990 Census data. This area includes approximately 450 vacant houses, 750 certificate homes (Section 8), and 120 homes maintained by the City of Baltimore.

Community leaders and residents continued expressing their concerns for this area, and in Gavrilis, they found a sympathetic ear and willing advocate. A unique opportunity was presented - Gavrilis was charged with reducing crime and the fear of crime. Both sides had effectively identified the same mutual goal - improve the area's quality of life. It was Gavrilis who identified the potential for success and created a Board of Directors with police, community groups, and other city agencies. Meetings were held, community - police public forums attended, and the **Patterson Park Outreach Program** was developed. This program addresses both police and community concerns. The program is based, in part, upon the assumption that crime can only be addressed effectively through its root social causes. In short, the community and its police must support each other and work together toward mutually identified objectives. Continual and ongoing communication between these parties is a most essential tenet of this strategy.

Response

The Patterson Park Outreach area was selected based upon its demographics, unique physical attributes (park, neighborhoods), and community/police partnership. The mission statement is communicated quite simply as, "A comprehensive plan to empower the citizens through dedicated city agencies to reclaim their neighborhoods and improve the quality of life." The goals of this program are to stabilize the targeted neighborhoods through increased home ownership efforts, targeting specific crime and "grime" issues and addressing quality of life concerns.

Gavrilis lobbied other governmental support for this program. The Neighborhood Service Center (NSC) was developed in the Southeastern District to serve as a "one stop shopping" location for area residents to seek local governmental assistance. Within each center are high-ranking representatives from every city service agency (public works, housing, sanitation, social services,

fire, police, etc.). The NSC director, Patterson Park Outreach Board of Directors, and Patterson Park community representatives meet biweekly under this program. A representative from each of the nine community groups (within the Outreach area) is allowed to present five of the most serious complaints to the Patterson Park Outreach Board of Directors. These complaints are assigned to the appropriate city agency for action. Complaints are then recorded, investigated, and abated. Follow-up reports are made to community representatives at the next Outreach meeting. Initially, typical complaints lodged in this program included: vacant houses being used for drug activity, poor lighting on streets and alleys, and other crime concerns. Juvenile problems were prevalent.

Some specific interventions developed and implemented by Gavrilis during the initial phases of this model program were:

- 1) Identifying specific clusters within this area (based on crime statistics and occupancy rates) and designating them as "high risk," "medium risk," or "low risk." High-risk clusters were defined as those blocks with 15 or more reported crimes, medium-risk clusters as those reporting between 5 and 14 crimes, and low risk blocks under five crimes per block. These clusters were then color-coded and mapped (i.e., red for high risk, yellow for medium risk, and blue for low risk). (See Appendix A.)
- 2) Systematically focusing police and city agency resources on stabilizing "low-risk" areas and advancing toward the more challenging areas in time.
- 3) Recruiting and training citizen block representatives from each street in the Outreach area to act as extra "eyes and ears" for the police and to organize residents house-by-house and block-by-block.

- 4) Drug Nuisance Abatement was an important part of the Outreach process, and each community would provide a list of "bad neighbor" houses targeted for nuisance abatement action. Civil action against the landlord and tenant would be taken.
- 5) Developing a working relationship with the Community Law Center (CLC) to assist communities with seeking civil redress in housing cases (i.e., irresponsible landlords, condemned properties, sanitation complaints, etc.).
- 6) Assigning a full-time police officer to act as the Outreach officer, coordinating police/community interventions.
- 7) Developing and implementing specific police initiatives directly impacting crime within this area, for instance:
 - a) Bike and motorcycle patrols in and around park;
 - b) Prostitution details and reverse stings around park;
 - c) "Safe Streets" squad conducted sweeps of outreach area to arrest drug users and sellers;
 - d) Assigning a drug enforcement team to concentrate on "drug houses" in the Outreach area and conduct comprehensive enforcement initiatives;
 - e) Recruiting youths and teenagers for the Police Activities League (PAL).
- 8) Organizing and coordinating "Clean Sweep" operations in conjunction with police drug sweeps. Essentially, public works crews and area citizens would conduct a major cleaning and beautification project in a designated area immediately after a major police initiative. For example, streets and alleys would be cleaned, trash hauled away, street lights replaced, and vacant homes boarded. Improving the physical

environment was considered a vital part of maintaining a stabilizing presence in the area. (See Appendix B.)

- 9) Citizens on Patrol groups were organized and trained by police within these clusters. Neighborhood United Citizens on Patrol (NUCOPS) and a unique group "Pooches on Patrol" was also developed. Citizens and their pet dogs would patrol neighborhoods on foot.
- 10) Police, citizen, and media relations were enhanced as the lines of communication were open and free-flowing. The police were actively advertising their efforts in the outreach area, and citizens began marketing their area for the friendly neighborhood it was again becoming. (See Appendix C.)

Assessment In one year, there was a remarkable turnaround. Crime declined substantially within the Outreach area in 1996 from 1995. The number of high-risk blocks dropped to 16 compared with 39 the previous year. Similarly, the number of medium-risk blocks dipped to 51 from 71. In terms of low-risk clusters, there were now 24 blocks up from 14. Of the 237 census blocks comprising Patterson Park, over 60% (144 blocks) experienced a decline in crime.

For the period 1995 to 1996, the total decline in crime was reflected across all offenses. Burglary (35%) and Aggravated Assault (23%) had the greatest percentage drop, while larceny (15%) and Auto Theft (4%) experienced relatively smaller declines. Robbery enjoyed a decline of 17% from 1995 to 1996.

In December 1996, Gavrilis was promoted to Colonel and left the Southeastern District. His successor Major Longo, inherited a viable program, but many residents within the high-risk clusters were demanding relief from "crime shifts" resulting, in part, from aggressive Southeastern District

crime initiatives and bordering Eastern District drug enforcement sweeps. The low and medium-risk clusters within the Outreach area had become much more stabilized and safer during 1996, but the high-risk areas threatened potential undermining of the Outreach concept. Police officials noted that crime, violent crime in particular, was increasing within these high-risk clusters. In 1997 to address the high-risk areas, Community Outreach Teams were formed to enhance the program by Major Timothy Longo.

Community Outreach Teams. Community Outreach Teams are overseen by a lieutenant and are assigned specifically within "high risk" clusters. The Patterson Park Outreach Area has a team assigned to it. A sergeant supervises the Outreach Team and each of two clusters has four officers assigned to it. These teams work exclusively on crime problems and receive their complaints directly from the community residents via a nonprofit community organization entity (Patterson Park Neighborhood Initiative [PPNI]). In October 1997, a formal Memorandum of Understanding was agreed upon between the PPNI and the SED. (See Appendix D.) In addition to developing a working relationship with PPNI, a community policing office was opened in one of these cluster areas. Residents can visit and discuss their concerns in person if they choose. Outreach Team officers are required to attend community and block meetings within the Outreach Area. A more personal relationship has begun to develop between community residents and the officers who serve them. Other law enforcement strategies have been developed as a result of these deployments. In addition to this area being patrolled around the clock by patrol officers, Outreach officers have flexibility in setting their hours to address specific concerns. They can be creative in problem-solving. They can work in uniform or in plainclothes. They are cross-trained to be motorized in squad cars, walk foot, ride mountain bikes or dirt bikes. The Outreach team also has one member who is a

mounted patrol officer. Horses and parks are a natural fit. Overtime deployments of foot and motorized officers are managed through Longo's budgeting and creative resource management.

Outreach team members have developed geographic specific books of known offenders. They have developed working relationships with detectives and officials from the parole and probation departments. They receive updates on recent parolees. They make proactive home visitations (knock & talk) to recent parolees. They develop and sponsor community-youth events within their outreach areas.

By the end of 1997, total index crime for the Patterson Park Outreach area had dropped. Compared with baseline 1995 figures, overall crime in the Outreach area declined by almost 18% and 11% compared with the previous year (1996).

In early 1998, the Outreach Team concept was expanded within the SED to include two other neighborhoods. A model "Chronic Truancy Abatement Program" was developed between the SED and an area middle school. Truants were associated with nuisance crimes and petty larcenies in the areas adjacent to the school. A bicycle rodeo was presented to school youth by the Outreach Teams to introduce them to the more positive aspects of law enforcement officers and to instruct them in bicycle safety and responsibility. Thirty seized bicycles were given away by the police as door prizes during this well-attended event.

The net result of the Patterson Park Outreach Program is that the park is now considered a safe hub to enjoy various activities by the surrounding neighborhoods. In addition to athletic events, the SED has sponsored "Nights Under The Stars," where area youth and parents camp out with police officers and community leaders. Ethnic celebrations, such as the Polish and Latino Festivals, flourish in this natural setting. A recent Blues Festival was successfully held in the middle of this

park. And a national police mountain bicycle competition is scheduled to be held in this venue in September.

And there is reason to be optimistic about the housing stock in this area. The Patterson Park Outreach Area has been included within a comprehensive police grant to provide incentives for police officers to buy a house. These benefits include: reduced financing rates, free tuition at the area's parish school for officer's children, and a marked police car for use while off-duty. In addition, a private non-profit group has been formed to market housing in the area surrounding the park. Most importantly, the level of police / community respect for each other has manifested itself into a model working relationship.

Problem-solving became a joint effort, with all parties sharing input and experiencing positive results.

APPENDIX A
PATTERSON PARK OUTREACH

Patterson Park Outreach

