

Recommendation for Herman Goldstein Award

Phoenix Police Department

Jade Park Community Based Policing Project

Abstract

The nominated officers constituted the 93F patrol squad assigned to the northwest area of Phoenix, Arizona. They undertook a project to assist the fledgling Jade Park North Block Watch in cleaning up their neighborhood. The most obvious problem was neighborhood blight in the form of junk cars on the street and on private property. Also three drug houses were identified and targeted.

The project began April 1, 1997. By April 10, all non-running or unregistered cars (a total of 28) were removed from the streets of Jade Park. An additional 19 cars were voluntarily removed from private property. Since April 10, the streets have been kept clear of junk cars by immediate enforcement of any violation observed, and an additional 25 cars were either removed from private property or brought into compliance with zoning codes.

More than 225 Special Service Reports were written and follow-up was done on each one. Neighborhood Services Department cited three trailers as unfit for occupancy.

One drug house was shut down. Three other drug houses have been identified, and referred to the Drug Enforcement Bureau. Undercover buy cases are pending on two of them. Patrol officers of the 93F Squad also targeted these drug houses and most of the 26 arrests made and 87 citations issued during the project were related to these addresses.

Officers of the 93F Squad assisted the Jade Park Block Watch by attending meetings on off-duty time, working alongside the residents on clean-up days both on and off duty, and submitting material for the Block Watch newsletter.

From its tentative beginnings, the Jade Park North Block Watch grew into such a strong and effective organization that it received a Fight Back Grant of \$80,000 from the city of Phoenix in September, 1997. The grant allowed the community and the Neighborhood Policing Unit to more completely address the unresolved problems. It is doubtful that without the dedicated, coordinated efforts of the 93F Squad and the Jade Park Block Watch that this Fight Back grant would have become a reality as quickly as it did.

For Community Based Policing to truly be a "way of doing business" and not just a program, it must be embraced and implemented by the patrol officers on the beat. The Jade Park Project is an excellent example of "fixing broken windows," and it is a paradigm of Community Based Policing implemented at ground level by Patrol officers.

Attachments

Article "Jade Park residents fight back," *The Arizona Republic* newspaper, page one of the Neighborhood section, March 13, 1998.

Scanning

Jade Park is a mobile home community that is bounded by 35 Avenue on the east, 39 Avenue on the west, Mohawk on the south, and Salter on the north. It was originally developed in the 1970s under county zoning. Although the immediate area surrounding Jade Park is now being developed with new medium priced subdivisions (\$80,000 and up) Jade Park has continued to decline. The streets and even the individual lots are littered with junk cars and trash. Some trailers have deteriorated to the point of being unsafe and unlivable. There are at least three identified drug houses and others that exhibit suspicious activity and unusual amounts of vehicular traffic.

An analysis of calls for service in this area indicates that it is not significantly higher than surrounding areas. The real problem is blight and the perception that no one including the City and the police department cares. Officers responding to calls sometimes felt that they were unwelcome in the neighborhood. Some residents of Jade Park have recently formed a Block Watch, but it is slow in getting off the ground. The Block Watch group wants a Fight Back grant, but they were told that funds would not be available before 1998. Dave Reeves, Neighborhood Services Department Field Inspector, has been working in the neighborhood, but progress is slow because, unlike other trailer parks, each of the 344 lots in Jade Park is individually owned.

Analysis

Based on 26 years of police experience, Sergeant Christopher Pollack, supervisor of the 93F squad, believed they could positively affect the environment of Jade Park, especially if they worked with and through the Block Watch group to their mutual benefit. For example, it is a well documented sociological premise that the decline of a neighborhood can be accurately gauged by the number of junk, non-running cars on the streets and residential lots. There exist City ordinances prohibiting them. They just were not being effectively enforced. Furthermore, the New York City Police Department has effected dramatic reductions in all offenses in the last two years, which was attributed in large part to an intolerance for petty street crimes that were formerly overlooked by officers. Likewise, the purpose of Concentrated Neighborhood Patrol is to get officers off the main streets into the neighborhood, and into a proactive rather than reactive mode. Their presence in the neighborhood reduces crime and just as importantly enhances the perception that the neighborhood is safe.

Sergeant Pollack discussed the Jade Park Project in briefing, outlining the problems and specific actions that could be taken to improve the situation. The officers of the 93F squad enthusiastically undertook the project. Because of her experience working as a Neighborhood Police Officer, Officer Shauna Wood #5597 was able to perform a crime analysis of the neighborhood, and she was already familiar with zoning violations handled by Neighborhood Services Department. Therefore, she acted as liaison between the 93F squad and other bureaus and departments.

First, Officer Derek Stephenson, the Neighborhood Police Officer for the area north of Union Hills Road, was contacted. Because of the much larger area that Officer Stephenson must serve, he welcomed extra attention to Jade Park. He introduced Sergeant Pollack to the Block Watch leaders.

In March 1997, Dave Reeves, a Neighborhood Maintenance and Zoning Enforcement inspector, briefed the 93F squad on zoning violations (such as vacant unsecured buildings, tall weeds or grass, trash and junk cars on private property) that could be addressed by the Neighborhood Services Department. They agreed to forward their Jade Park Special Service Reports (SSR's) directly to Reeves.

Next they contacted the DEB officers who had been working the reported drug houses. They had been reassigned to other areas, and they also welcomed any assistance they could offer.

Response

A street map of Jade park was used to assign individual streets to each member of the squad:

Abraham Lane- Officer Jack Nielsen #4906

Lone Cactus Drive- Officer Jim Brown #4930

Quail Avenue- Officer Tony Piasecki #3818

Rose Garden Lane- Officer Steve Berry #5792

Ross Lane- Officer Dan Kock #5857

Monona Drive- Officer Stacie Seitz #6303

Potter Drive- Officer Robert Ramsey #6324

Irma Lane- Officer Jim McDonough #5855

The border streets of Mohawk, S alter, 35 Avenue and 39 Avenue were assigned to Officer Shauna Wood #5597. Because she normally rides 903F (no specific beat assignment), she was able to survey a larger area.

In late March, each officer did an inventory of his assigned street, noting parking, criminal and zoning violations. Photographs were taken of the most egregious violations. Officers were also encouraged to spend their Concentrated Neighborhood Patrol time in Jade Park. They were further encouraged to wave to everyone they saw while patrolling. The simple act of a friendly greeting can make the neighbors' perception of the increased police presence a positive one.

On April 1,1997, Officer Berry, Officer Seitz, Officer Wood and I attended the Jade Park Block Watch to introduce ourselves and discuss ways we could assist them in cleaning up their neighborhood. We did this on our own time because the meeting was held on our day off, and no overtime was authorized.

Sergeant Pollack explained the ordinance regulating junk cars on the street (P.C.C. 36-162.) It was apparent that this discussion hit a nerve because residents complained bitterly about the junk cars on the streets and on the lots. They also complained about a number of semi-tractor trucks and trailers parking in the neighborhood. We promised to cite and/or make educational contact with the drivers of the semis. Field Inspector Dave

Reeves was also present, and he assured them that he could take action against semis parked on private property in a residential zone. Sergeant Pollack emphasized to the Block Watch that writing citations was not the goal; gaining voluntary compliance was preferable. Residents were given the name of the officer assigned to their specific street and told to contact him reference any problems. They were also given Officer Wood's name and Sergeant Pollack's name as the backup contact persons for the neighborhood.

This meeting coincided with a neighborhood cleanup planned for the following two weekends by the Block Watch group and Neighborhood Services Department. There were only 39 neighbors in attendance, and leaders expressed concern that additional help might be needed to help clean up the property of residents who were too elderly or ill to do so themselves. The project showed early signs of success when one resident told us that her neighbor had seen an officer taking pictures in the neighborhood, and she had immediately cleaned up her yard.

Wednesday, April 2, was the beginning of the enforcement phase of the project. By April 10, 1997, every non-running, unregistered vehicle and trailer was gone from the streets of Jade Park. During this period 28 vehicles were red-tagged, 30 Notices of Violation were issued, but only two cars were towed. The huge majority of abandoned vehicles were voluntarily removed from the streets. An additional 19 junk cars were voluntarily removed from private property. At least five semi-tractor drivers removed their trucks and trailers from the neighborhood. Approximately 175 Special Service Reports, including 65 reports of non-running cars on private property, were forwarded to Inspector Dave Reeves.

The first Jade Park cleanup day was Saturday, April 5, 1997. Four residents and Officers Berry and Seitz showed up to help clean up the property of the elderly or ill residents. The officers voluntarily changed their work hours that day to assist at Jade Park. On the positive side, many residents did clean up their own property. Over the next several weeks, five large trailer-size dumpsters were filled twice, and three of them were filled a third time. Officer Seitz worked a second clean-up day on her off-duty time.

Based on officers' knowledge of the area and complaints of residents, several addresses were identified as drug houses. Two trailers in particular, 3513 and 3518 West Abraham, were the source of repeated complaints of drugs, noise and shots fired. After the first Block Watch meeting, one couple who lives at 3517 West Abraham came to Cactus Park Precinct specifically to meet with Officer Nielsen reference the problem. The complaining residents joined Block Watchers on Patrol.

These suspected drug houses were given special attention. For example, many of the cars parked at these homes had expired or M.I. (mandatory insurance) suspended registration. Rather than cite the vehicles and seize the plates, we would wait until the vehicles were driven, then stop them. This was the source of many of the arrests for warrants and/or suspended driver licenses. This tactic occasionally allowed officers to solve several problems at once, as in the case of one particular such vehicle parked in front of 3558 West Ross (a source of repeated problems with drugs and domestic violence.) When Officer Nielsen #4906 finally saw it mobile on 35 Avenue, he stopped it and arrested the driver for numerous warrants and driving on a suspended license. The

M.I. suspended license plate was seized, which meant the vehicle could not be legally parked in violation of P.C.C. 36-162. Therefore, in accordance with Operations Order C-8.5.E, it was impounded for safekeeping. As of this date, neither the driver nor the vehicle has reappeared in Jade Park.

By May 10, 1997, (only a month after the start of the project) a total of 55 ATTC's (traffic citations) were written, 12 arrests made and 15 warrants cleared.

During their Concentrated Neighborhood Patrol of Jade Park, officers noted that some suspicious persons frequenting the drug houses traveled by bicycle. Interrogation of these subjects reinforced what officers already knew: many methamphetamine users have suspended driver licenses and suspended vehicle registration. Officers therefore began stopping these bicycle riders for traffic violations, such as no headlight, failure to stop for stop sign, etc. The riders were interrogated and frequently found to have warrants. When arrested, they usually were in possession of dangerous drugs. Officers Nielsen, Berry and Kock were commended by Precinct Commander Quill and City Councilman Dave Siebert for this innovative enforcement. They were subsequently selected for the Community Based Policing award as a result of that commendation.

On Tuesday, May 6, 1997, Officer Shauna Wood and Sergeant Pollack attended the second Jade Park Block Watch meeting (off duty.) Attendance increased significantly (55.) Our presence was enthusiastically acknowledged. They received an ovation for ridding the streets of junk cars. Officer Berry and Officer Seitz were given certificates of appreciation for their help on clean-up day.

There was a marked difference in the residents' attitudes toward the police. This time when I asked if anyone had a problem that the Phoenix Police Department could assist in resolving, residents readily shared concerns. Each complaint was noted, and a follow-up was done on duty the following day. Whereas before, residents complained of insufficient patrol, they now feel that every police car they see is looking out for their neighborhood.

The residents were not the only ones to undergo a modification of attitude. Rather than perceiving the neighborhood as a problem, officers now viewed Jade Park as a community of nice people who needed and were grateful for the police assistance.

Sergeant Pollack assisted the Block Watch by writing their next meeting notice flyer for them. It included information on zoning violations, specifically junk cars on residential property and offered phone numbers of charitable groups who would haul away the car and give the owner a receipt for a tax-deductible donation. Because there were too many junk cars for Neighborhood Services Inspector Dave Reeves to handle quickly, officers picked some of the worst violators (three and more junk cars on private property) and made educational contacts. Most violations were brought into compliance.

At the June 3, 1997, Block Watch meeting which Officer Wood and Sergeant Pollack attended, City Councilman Siebert announced that Jade Park would receive the next available Fight Back grant. Again neighbors shared their concerns, specifically complaining about juveniles on go-peds, scooters and go-carts creating a hazard by

riding on the streets. They also mentioned speeding vehicles on 39 Avenue and Mohawk Lane.

As officers were leaving the meeting, two juveniles on go-peds rode into the parking lot, so the officers were able to make an educational contact in the presence of the Block Watch members. No enforcement action was taken, but the juveniles were allowed to walk their go-peds home because it was after dark and they had no lights.

The next day, Sergeant Pollack made contact with another resident whose teenage son was reportedly driving a go-cart recklessly through the area. After he explained the enforcement options, she assured him that her son and his friends would never again ride the go-cart in the neighborhood. Later, while on concentrated neighborhood patrol, Sergeant Pollack stopped a juvenile on a motorized home-made scooter. After the juvenile pushed it home, Sergeant Pollack contacted his father and explained the enforcement options. He also assured Pollack that his son would no longer ride his scooter. There have been no subsequent complaints of go-carts, scooters or go-peds.

Several times during the following week, Officer Jack Zollars of Cactus Park Precinct Directed Enforcement Squad, conducted radar enforcement in the area. Additionally, at Sergeant Pollack's request, North Resource Bureau motorcycle officers did some patrol in Jade Park.

Assessment

On July 25, 1997, Sergeant Pollack conducted an inventory of the previously documented violations within Jade Park. There were only three addresses with significant blight and junk vehicle violations. Inspector Dave Reeves was notified of the three remaining hard-core cases. The occasional junk car still appears on the street, but it is dealt with quickly by patrol officers.

The progress made is only a start. The drug houses are still a problem.

Methamphetamine users are like Doritos: arrest all you want, they make more. To better prepare to deal with this problem, Detective Rey Nejo of Drug Enforcement Bureau instructed the 93F squad on how to do a "Knock and Talk." Unfortunately, the greatest hindrance faced by the 93F Squad in dealing with the problems in Jade Park is time. Patrol officers frequently spend the entire shift running from call to call, and they seldom have the blocks of time necessary to sit on a drug house or do Concentrated Neighborhood Patrol. Still, the positive side of the project is that every minute of Concentrated Neighborhood Patrol in Jade Park is more than it got before. Every arrest is one less problem in the Park. Doing what we can is certainly more effective and more personally rewarding than not.

Through this project the Jade Park Community has benefited greatly by the removal of blight and arrests of drug dealers and other miscreants. The members of the community and the officers of the police department have formed a working partnership that continues to this day.

From its tentative beginnings, the Jade Park North Block Watch grew into such a strong and effective organization that they applied for and received a Fight Back Grant of \$80,000 from the city of Phoenix in September, 1997. The neighborhood association used this money for increased zoning and police enforcement. They also funded the installation of 34 new street lights in the neighborhood and summer programs for youth. More neighborhood cleanup days were sponsored with the City supplying dumpsters. Officers and supervisors of the Neighborhood Policing Unit assisted the neighborhood by doing a "Knock and Talk," wherein every residence was contacted by a police officer and a zoning inspector who explained the various neighborhood maintenance codes. The Jade Park Fight Back grant allowed the community to even more completely address the problems still unresolved.

It is doubtful that without the dedicated, coordinated efforts of the 93F Squad and the Jade Park Block Watch that this Fight Back grant would have become a reality as quickly as it did.

Officers Commended: Sergeant Chris Pollack #2041

Officer Jack Nielsen #4906

Officer Jim Brown #4930

Officer Tony Fiaseclri #3818

Officer Steve Berry #5792

Officer Dan Kock #5857

Officer Stacie Seitz #6303

Officer Robert Ramsey #6324

Officer Jim McDonough #5855

Officer Shauna Wood #5597

Project contact person: Sergeant Chris Pollack

Phoenix Police Department

Cactus Park Precinct

12220 North 39 Avenue

Phoenix, AZ 85029

The Phoenix Police Department's 93F Squad is a patrol squad that works out of Cactus Park Precinct. The squad area constitutes approximately 88 square miles of mixed residential, small businesses and undeveloped desert. This project was undertaken at the patrol officer level with the approval of the precinct commander. No additional resources in the form of money or manpower were used prior to the Fight Back grant which was awarded five months later.

For Community Based Problem Oriented Policing to truly be a "way of doing business" and not just a program, it must be embraced and implemented by the patrol officers on the beat. The Jade Park Project is not just an excellent example of "fixing broken windows," it is a paradigm of Problem Oriented Policing implemented at ground level by Patrol officers.

Jade Park Goldstein Award recommendation, 6/3/98
page 15, Sergeant Chris Pollack #2041
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I recommend that the Phoenix Police Department 93F Squad be awarded the 1998

Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

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