

**1999 Herman Goldstein Award
for
Excellence in Problem Solving
Nomination**

**Los Angeles Police Department
West Los Angeles Area
Cadillac/Corning Area Project**

CADILLAC/CORNING NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT

ABSTRACT

SCANNING

The area known as Cadillac/Corning is a ten square block area located on the eastside of West Los Angeles Division. The area had experienced an increase in gang activity and narcotic activity. This specific area was saturated by the Playboy Gangster Crips-a violent street gang responsible for a number of crimes including: assault with a deadly weapon, burglary from motor vehicles, narcotic sales, and residential burglaries.

In June of 1997, the problem was selected as a project in which the SARA Problem-Solving Model was to be used. SARA is an acronym that stands for Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment. By December of 1997, the project had advanced to the assessment stage of the SARA model. During the assessment stage, it was determined that our efforts were not making an impact. In January of 1998, we returned to the Analysis stage of the project.

ANALYSIS

In order to identify and clearly understand the problem, the Senior Lead Officer overseeing the area surveyed and interviewed people with insight into the problem. Included in the interviews were community members, patrol officers, and members of other entities within the Los Angeles Police Department. The information gathered from the interviews enabled us to establish the following Problem-Solving Objectives:

- Reduce crime
- Establish a zero tolerance of gang and narcotic activity
- Create a summer youth program

RESPONSE

Using the combined efforts of the Los Angeles Police Department and community members, problem-solving strategies were implemented. Illegal drug operations were infiltrated by undercover officers assigned to the Narcotic Enforcement Surveillance Team (NEST). Uniformed officers from Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH), Patrol, and Metropolitan Division concentrated in the target area. Their goal was to decrease narcotic and gang activity. Various City entities and community members assisted with efforts to deter young offenders from contributing to the problem by implementing a youth program in the area.

ASSESSMENT

Over twenty suspected drug dealers were arrested for sales of cocaine. Seventy-five percent of these dealers were gang members. Overall crime decreased by 17% in the target area. Tenants using or selling drugs were evicted from their apartments. Additionally, between 64 and 100 juveniles avoided gang involvement through their participation in the summer youth program.

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DESCRIPTION

SCANNING

In years past, the West Los Angeles (WLA) Area has had the lowest crime rate in Los Angeles. As a result of its low crime rate, WLA has been traditionally perceived as a peaceful haven requiring minimal police intervention. In recent years, however, the area in WLA known as Cadillac/Corning has invalidated that perception. The Cadillac/Corning area (also referred to as the "target area") has experienced a marked increase in gang activity, violent crimes, burglaries from motor vehicles, narcotic sales, and residential burglaries. The Cadillac/Corning area consists of several square blocks on the eastside of WLA Area-bordered by Robertson Boulevard on the west, La Cienega Boulevard on the east, Cadillac Avenue on the south, and Sawyer Avenue on the north (see map attached). The location is primarily residential in nature, consisting of both single-family and multi-unit apartment complexes. Additionally, the target area is inhabited by a violent street gang known as the Playboy Gangster Crips (PBG) that has been responsible for a majority of the crime in the target area. In January of 1998, the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) WLA Area initiated a community-policing project that targeted the Cadillac/Corning area to address specific crime-related problems.

In order to provide a systematic and long-term resolution to the area's problems, the Department utilized the SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) problem-solving model to identify and strategically attack the problem. The SARA model was used in conjunction with the underlying philosophy reflected in the Mission Statement of the LAPD; that of working in

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partnership with the residential community of the target area to enhance safety and to reduce the fear and incidence of crime.

The Senior Lead Officer (SLO), who is responsible for the coordination of all officers assigned to a particular area, and patrol officers working in the Cadillac/Coming area chose this location for their SARA project because of its high crime and gang activity. Of the 64 square miles that make up WLA, this small pocket was the only area where gangs had taken over and set up a network of illegal narcotic activity.

The initial SARA project in the Cadillac/Coming area was implemented in June of 1997. By December of 1997, during its Assessment stage, it was determined that our strategy had no discernible impact upon the identified problems. The reasons for the initially unsuccessful endeavor are delineated further in this paper. In January of 1998, we returned to the Analysis stage of the SARA model and started again.

Note: Throughout this paper, the efforts representing the first attempt at the SARA model (from June, 1997 to December, 1997) is referenced as "Phase One." The time period commencing in January of 1998 is termed "Phase Two."

ANALYSIS

In Phase One of the Analysis stage, the Senior Lead Officer overseeing the target area noticed an increase in gang activity and narcotic activity.

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In order to identify and clearly understand the problem, the SLO surveyed and interviewed people with knowledge of the problem and those who could provide insight. Among those individuals interviewed were community members, patrol officers, officers assigned to the Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) unit, and undercover narcotics officers assigned to the LAPD's Narcotics Division's Field Enforcement Section (FES). The community members interviewed belonged to a group known as the Model Neighborhood. This group is comprised of residents whose goal is to improve the target area and surrounding areas.

The surveys and interviews of the above sources supported our hypothesis that the Cadillac/Corning problem stemmed from the growing gang population as well as the proliferation of illegal narcotic sales and usage. Furthermore, the main offenders were members of the PBG street gang whose sales of illegal drugs in the target area netted worthwhile profits for the gang members. With all of the narcotics available in such a concentrated area, it was only natural that narcotics users also frequented the area. In order to support their drug habits, many of the users burglarized and committed thefts in the target area.

Representatives from CRASH, FES, and Model Neighborhood, in cooperation with the SLO, formed a committee to work on this SARA project. The committee initially identified the following objectives for the target area: reduction of crime; establishment of a zero tolerance policy of gang and narcotic activity, and to apprehend offenders.

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During the first attempt of this SARA project (Phase One), the problem was underestimated and the community members originally interviewed had limited knowledge of the target area. The committee was unable to gather accurate intelligence as to identifying specific drug dealers, the locations where the drugs were being sold, and the exact time of day that the selling was taking place. Without this vital information, the resulting enforcement efforts were futile. At the same time, WLA patrol officers collaborated with both CRASH and FES units in an effort to identify all the gang members in the area, as well as to gather useful, accurate intelligence as to the illegal narcotic activity. This had minimal impact upon the overall problem during Phase One.

In Phase Two, the committee reconvened and began to assess the reason behind the minimal progress in Phase One. It was surmised that the gang members had infiltrated the apartments and were selling drugs directly from the apartment units, and not on the street as originally believed. A meeting between the apartment owners and the SLO confirmed that drugs were being sold from inside the apartment units. These owners knew about the activity but did not know how to combat the dealers.

The owners also advised the SLO that tenants in the apartments wanted to talk to the police but were afraid of retaliation by the gang members. The SLO gave these owners a phone number to the SLO office so that their tenants could anonymously or confidentially offer information to the officers. Useful information began pouring in.

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The information that was received from the various sources proved to be tremendously helpful in eradicating the problem. It was revealed that although some gang members were selling drugs in the streets, the majority of sales were taking place inside the apartment units. The informants asserted that 90 percent of all apartment-based sales occurred within one small block—the 2000 block of Corning Street. The informants also gave a list of all apartment buildings and specific apartment units where the drugs were being sold.

The officers received information of the gang's lookout configuration to defeat enforcement attempts. The gang members had a lookout system consisting of juveniles on bicycles and gang members on apartment building rooftops who would signal the drug dealers when the police were approaching. Once the signal was given, the dealers would hide (stash) their drugs and utilize pre-set escape routes to evade the police. These escape routes and drug stashing locations were provided to the SLO through the tenant informants.

The informants opined that the primary problem facing their community was, in fact, not gang or narcotics-related activity, but the lack of after school and summer programs for the youth. In response to this new information, a new committee was formed to discuss a revised problem-solving objective. The committee was comprised of representatives from units within the WLA Community Police Station, as well as community and governmental entities. The WLA members were made up of representatives from Patrol, CRASH, Detectives, Narcotic Enforcement Surveillance Team (NEST), and the Crime Analysis Detail. Involved community groups included Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families, and Model Neighborhood.

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Governmental representatives included members from the City Council, the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Los Angeles Unified School District. The committee invited a small group of apartment owners to the meetings to gain additional insight, as well as to give them reassurance of our commitment to their community. Out of that joint-committee, a new set of problem-solving objectives were established: reduction of crime; establishment of a zero tolerance policy of gang and narcotic activity, and; the inception of a summer youth program in the target area.

RESPONSE

In the response stage, the newly formed committee split into two subcommittees. The first subcommittee dealt with the crime problems. This group was made up of WLA Patrol, CRASH, Detectives, the Crime Analysis Detail, and NEST. The second subcommittee dealt with the quality of life issues in the target area. This subcommittee included Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families, Community members, Model Neighborhood, City Council Office, City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Los Angeles Unified School District personnel. The participating apartment owners also met with each subcommittee to provide assistance and to learn from the collaborative effort. The SLO coordinated the efforts of the committee members and their available resources.

Training was provided to the apartment owners to assist them in improving their ability to effectively manage the buildings and to properly screen tenant applicants. A representative from the City Attorney's Office met with the owners and instructed them on applicant screening,

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trespass enforcement, evictions, and abatement. A representative from the **WLA CRASH unit** provided training on identifying individuals involved in gangs, graffiti, **and techniques to keep** gang members away from the apartment complex. A representative from **the WLA FES unit** provided training on identifying drug dealers and users.

The sub-committees executed the following courses of action. NEST provided **undercover** operations **in the target** area. These operations included surveillance and intelligence gathering, as well as undercover narcotics buys. They singled out all of the suspects **who were responsible for** the bulk of the narcotic sales in the target area.

NEST's responsibility was to flush out and arrest all of the offenders and to serve search warrants on locations where the drugs were being sold. Additionally, **WLA CRASH and WLA** Patrol assisted in identifying gang members in the area.

When NEST was not operating, the CRASH unit saturated the target area during the peak hours of gang and narcotic activity. Additionally, the CRASH unit assisted in identifying the gang members and then arrested any of those trespassing at locations where prohibitive signs were posted.

Furthermore, WLA Patrol gave extra patrol to the area when NEST and CRASH were not working. Patrol officers were very proactive, focusing on identification of loiterers, and apprehension of juvenile criminals and truants. They arrested all suspected drug users, and cited

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all traffic violators. Patrol officers also helped with identifying the gang members and arresting them for trespassing at locations where prohibitive signs were posted.

The City Attorney for Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program (CNAP) held hearings with the owners of apartment buildings where the gang members were selling drugs. Discussed were abatement procedures, and the owners' responsibility for the cost and liability that they will incur if they allowed gang members back into the apartments. All tenants who were caught selling drugs within 1000 feet of their residence received eviction letters from the City Attorney's office.

WLA FES and West Bureau Buy Team worked in the target area after NEST, CRASH and Patrol successfully removed the bulk of lookouts and dealers. FES and the buy team posed as customers attempting to purchase narcotics. Once the lookout network had been dismantled and the escape routes were known, many of the remaining dealers were successfully apprehended.

As soon as the majority of the dealers and users were in hiding or in custody, the Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families implemented a community program called Neighborhood Networks 4 Kids in the target area. Their staff met with families and community members to maximize the utilization of available resources to set up and sustain quality programs for youths and their families. Their staff worked directly with the youths, their families, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Los Angeles Unified School District, Model Neighborhood, and the Crestview Homeowner's Association to put together a summer program in the area.

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They implemented a summer program through the cooperation of the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Los Angeles Unified School. Those kids participating in the program started their day at 9:00 a.m. at the Shenandoah Elementary School where the focus of the activities revolved around social services, environmental issues, and economic development. **The** day at the elementary school ended after a free lunch at 1:00 p.m. After leaving the school, the participants were provided with sports activities two blocks away at Reyneir **Park**.

The park remained open until 5:00 p.m. These two programs provided a place **for** young people to develop themselves and enjoy their day without the temptations of gang or narcotics involvement.

ASSESSMENT

After conducting a two-month comprehensive investigation on the gang and narcotic activity in the target area, the NEST unit had singled out fifteen suspects who were responsible for the bulk of the narcotics sales in the target area. All fifteen suspects were identified as leaders of the PBG gang. On May 27, 1998, at 5:00 a.m., the NEST unit, with the help of WLA Patrol and WLA CRASH, executed search warrants on five locations involved in narcotic sales in the target area. The warrants resulted in nineteen arrests of suspected drug dealers for sales of cocaine. These arrests produced the combined seizure of \$1,020 in cash, several handguns, 200 grams of cocaine, miscellaneous other drugs, and narcotics paraphernalia. In addition to the drug-related

evidence seized, items of property were recovered that had been reported as property taken in recent local burglaries in the area.

The City Attorney's Office evicted six tenants from apartments in the target area and held two abatement hearings with apartment owners. Apartment owners evicted thirty tenants and replaced them with more desirable tenants using the newly acquired applicant screening skills. In one case, an apartment owner evicted thirteen of the fifteen tenants living in the building.

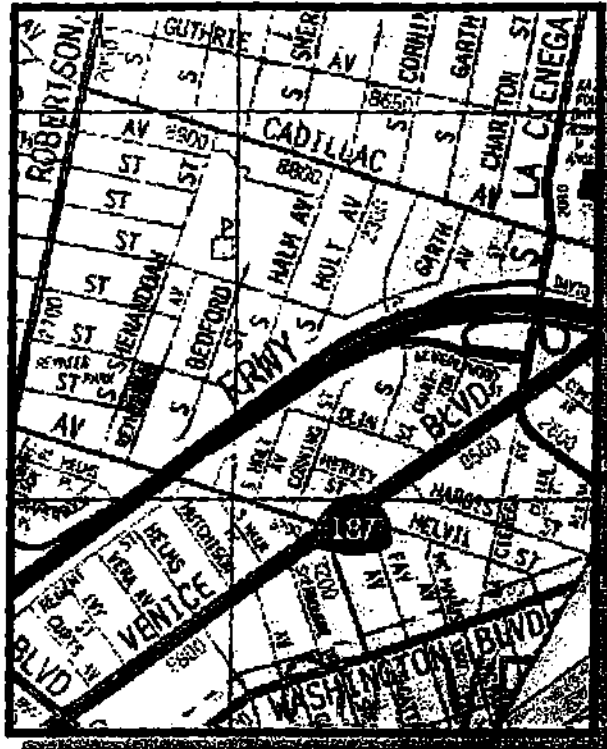
On June 22, 1998, the Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families joined forces with the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Los Angeles Unified School District to start a summer program. This program maintained an attendance of between 64 and 100 juveniles throughout the summer. This program not only kept participants off the street, it also educated them with anti-gang and anti-drug awareness programs. This program helped involve the community residents, including youth, in building a stronger local infrastructure for problem solving and improvement of the quality of life in the target area.

There has not been any obvious displacement of the PBG gang members from the target area into the surrounding areas. The arrests of the fifteen gang leaders have effectively dismantled the gang locally. In order to ensure long-term success, the area will continue to receive periodic attention from CRASH, FES, NEST, and Patrol. Continued emphasis will be placed on arrests of suspected drug users, traffic enforcement, and police presence in the target area.

In the six-month period following the May 1998 arrests, there was a 17 percent decrease in overall crime in the target area. Additionally, there was a 27 percent decrease in burglaries from motor vehicles, and a 25 percent decrease in residential burglaries. It is objectively clear that the Department's completed SARA project in the Cadillac/Coming area has achieved its proposed objectives, and thus, reduced the level of crime and the fear associated with that crime. Additionally, this effort has also markedly increased the overall quality of life for the individuals who reside, work, learn and play in that community area.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

The Cadillac/Coming Neighborhood project was initiated by Officer Andrey Wilkins and implemented by the Los Angeles Police Department's West Los Angeles Area. The West Los Angeles Area supervisors and command staff provided leadership and support for this project by allowing and encouraging the officers to use non-traditional methods of problem solving. Officer Wilkins used the knowledge he obtained in the four-hour Community-Police Problem Solving (C-PPS) training course to assist in his efforts with the project. All of the officers working on the project attended the LAPD's training on C-PPS.



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CRIME/YEAR	1995	1996	1997	1998	TOTAL
RAPE	2	1	0	0	3
ROBBERY	76	49	34	30	189
AGG ASSAULT	39	53	33	39	164
BURGLARY	38	34	57	32	161
B/T AUTO	57	53	42	53	204
PERSONAL THEFT	5	3	6	2	16
OTHER THEFT	50	36	43	30	159
AUTO THEFT	73	63	47	24	207
TOTAL	340	292	261	210	1103