

Vision Statement

*for the
Buffalo Police Department*



The Honorable Anthony M. Masiello
Mayor

R. Gil Kerlikowske
Police Commissioner

This report is designed to provide:

- an overview of the current method of delivering police services in Buffalo,
- a direction for the department as it prepares for policing in the next decade and
- guidelines on how changes in the department will be made.

It is not intended as a plan but serves to provide guidance and parameters as

the members of this organization develop specific models, goals, and evaluation for policing our community. Policing is an extremely complex and multifaceted mission involving hundreds of employees with thousands of daily interactions between citizens and police officers. Neither a Mayor nor a Police Commissioner can mandate or direct a large urban police force to transform the way police service is delivered to the community.

History

Over the last 20 years, five attempts at reorganizing the Buffalo Police Department have failed, leaving it with many good people, but a 1960's view of law enforcement. Now a new administration and a new Police Commissioner from outside the organization hope to move the Department from its reactive, non-analytic, incident driven system toward a professional, accountable, responsive-to-community-needs model: an attempt to compress twenty-five years of police evolution.

In spite of the recommendation of a consultant study of the Department in 1972 and the recommendation from a variety of other studies since then, the city did not make the difficult and critical changes necessary to improve the department and keep it abreast of modern police procedures. As a result of this neglect, the necessary and important changes needed will be more difficult to implement. What other communities have accomplished incrementally over a twenty-five year period, as policing operations and management systems changed, must now be accomplished in Buffalo in a shorter time frame. The Buffalo Police Department will need to change rapidly to catch up to the profes-

sional police standards of today and to meet the complex challenges of local crime and social disorder pressure of our community. In a time of computers and fax machines, we operate with manual typewriters and carbon paper. Some other examples of changes in policing that have been implemented in other communities but not in Buffalo are:

- Failed to consolidate turn-of-the-century precincts to larger districts.
- Lack of systematic and recurrent investment in training and education of officers and command staff.
- Lack of investment in modern police technology, such as computerized reporting and crime analysis.
- Failed to develop alternative responses to all 911 calls in order to relieve officers so that they can respond to more serious calls.
- Failed to change the two-officer patrol cars to mix of one officer and two-officer cars to meet changing demands on police services.

The eleven precincts are inadequate. The facilities do not meet even elementary police standards, let alone those of cleanliness or safety. The dilapidated buildings present a public image of unprofessionalism and lowers morale.

To professionalize the police, other departments have instituted planning and research divisions which conduct crime analysis and short and long-range planning. They have established committees across ranks and functions to identify and solve problems. And they have decentralized authority and decision-making. Buffalo has not implemented these administrative or operational measures in a meaningful way.

Sophisticated crime analysis, problem identification/solving, pushed down decision-making authority and evaluation of police methods and strategies, have all been placed into use in police departments in many sections of America. To the levels necessary to provide professional policing in Buffalo-this

has not been done.

Finally, the Police Commissioner and command staff, those who are held responsible for the operation, management and delivery of police services, have lost much of the authority to carry out those responsibilities. Decisions about officer assignments, patrol allocation and hiring and firing are governed by official bodies, laws and contracts external to the organization.

These several paragraphs are by no means intended to portray every circumstance over the decades that lead to the "state of the department" today. Nor are they meant to place blame. There is no one individual or group responsible for where we are as an organization today - but where we are today, is not nearly as important as the direction we are now moving in. But before we set the course for the department we must describe the myths and realities of the most important consideration in policing - CRIME.

Grime

Crime is the most important topic on the American agenda today. National polls have placed concern about crime by our citizens at its highest level ever. The media is enthralled by it and our President and Congress are making policy and spending decisions everyday, that will affect taxpayers for decades. Academic institutions, columnists, and "experts" on every crime topic are quoted on a daily basis. We are in an "information overload" category with what is occurring. The police are being pushed and pulled to "do something" about crime - NOW! If we were to build gallows on street corners for the execution of criminals, there

would be people who would say that is not enough. Right now, people who live in public housing are considering signing away their constitutional protection against unreasonable search and seizure in an effort to become safer.

Therefore, it is vitally important that policy makers be informed about facts on crime and that these important policy decisions receive adequate input from those concerned and affected. The implementation of changes in criminal justice and policing must include careful evaluation so that we can determine if, in fact, what we are doing is working. What are some of things that we know influence crime:

The F.B.I. tells us that "...the factors which are known to affect the volume and type of crime occurring from place to place are:" (F.B.I. Uniform Crime Reports)

- Population (density, etc.)
- Variations of population, particularly, youth concentration
- Stability of the population
- Transportation
- Economic conditions
- Cultural factors, etc.
- Family conditions, divorce and family cohesiveness
- Climate
- Effective strength of the law enforcement agency
- Administrative and investigative emphasis of law enforcement
- Other components of the criminal justice system (prosecution, courts, probation, corrections)
- Citizen attitudes toward crime
- Crime reporting practices of the citizens

Of this multitude of factors about crime, only a few are reported to the police!

Changing a Police Department

The urban police department of today is a very complicated organization. Decades ago police departments performed their tasks based on what we believed to work. It was only after rigorous evaluation and examination that clear and convincing evidence was presented that shattered those beliefs. For instance, we now know conclusively that:

- The mere number of police officers does not result in a reduction of crime. Their training and assignments are as important as the overall number.
 - Rapid response to all calls for police service is an inappropriate basis for organizing an entire police force and does not result in the apprehension of criminals. Most victims call someone else first and most delay reporting the incident on average for about 20 minutes.
- The vast majority of calls for the police are for services not related to crime and of those involving crime, only a very few are considered "in progress" or *of* an immediate serious threat. Alternative methods to handle the avalanche of "911 calls" must be implemented, if we are to free up the police to concentrate on both the protection of the public and the prevention of crime.
 - Police buildings are not related to protecting citizens, the quality of police service, or a quick response to an emergency call. Police buildings keep officers inside instead of in our neighborhoods.

Process for Change

Why should we make changes in the Buffalo Police Department? Very simply, what we are doing now is not working; and not because there are not very dedicated, energetic, and bright people within this organization. But our "style and method" of providing police services is, by any measure, antiquated and ineffective.

For these and many other reasons replete in the literature of organizational change, we cannot transform the Buffalo Police Department in an unacceptably hurried manner. Nor will any Department Directive cause us to magically change from the model described earlier into the organization of the future. As someone once described, "changing a police department is like bending granite." But what is true for law enforcement, is very clearly patterned after the examples of any organization in change. Hospitals and colleges have just as difficult a task in managing change as does a police department.

There are some important benefits of

the resistance to change, one being that it results in a much needed discussion of the planned changes and the "buy-in" by those affected. Although we are all interested in the end result, the process is of equal importance to the outcome. That is why our changes will be founded upon the input and participation of our members. This means an end result that is both lasting and substantive.

With the South District's reorganization, the Police Department has proven that it has the ability to continue to move forward to full City-wide reorganization. The Department has shown its total commitment to the project and has begun to make a number of other departmental changes that will be of additional benefit to the safety and well-being of the citizens of Buffalo. City-wide reorganization will also give the Department the managerial and budgetary flexibility to move out of the early 1900's and into the 21st century! Police reorganization can only help to provide a more secure and less fearful place to live.

Community Policing

Community policing means "good police work." It means smarter police work. It is doing more than responding to calls and solving crimes. Community Policing is defined by actions and outcomes but is framed by these precepts;

- It is a philosophy not a program. Just having officers walking a beat or riding a bicycle is not community policing.
 - It recognizes the shared responsibility and interdependence of the police and the community in making Buffalo a safer and more livable city.
- It is a method of policing that recognizes limited resources and applies innovative strategies to create and sustain healthy, vital neighborhoods.
 - It coordinates with efforts made by private, nonprofit, and public agencies to bring a comprehensive approach to Buffalo's problems of crime and disorder.
 - It reflects the values of: community participation; problem solving; decision making by officers; police accountability; and deployment of police officers in neighborhoods.

The Department must be transformed to support a new, proactive approach to preventing crimes before they occur. That transformation involves changes that are both fundamental and sweeping. It means forging new partnerships among residents, business owners, religious and community leaders, and government services to solve long-range community problems.

The members of the Buffalo Police Department have a unique opportunity to be part of historic changes taking place in this City; and we know that we do not have to do this alone. We have the support of an entire administration that is dedicated to improving the quality of life and safety for everyone within our borders. It also means shared responsibility for the well-being of our neighborhoods. Solving crimes, making arrests and seizing drugs will always be the most essential part of the mission of the Buffalo Police Department. However, preventing crimes is the most effective way to create a safer environment.

The Buffalo Police Department was awarded funding through the Supplemental Hiring Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to hire 27 additional

police officers, whose duties must be directed toward community policing. What will be the guiding principles of the transition to community policing?

- The changes must be driven by the members of the Department and the close cooperation and interaction with the community.
- The culture of the Department must be redefined to emphasize and reward behavior that makes a real difference in fighting crime and solving neighborhood problems.
- Crime control and prevention must be recognized as equal components in any strategy to provide safety in our community.
- Our Department must reinforce integrity and ethical behavior among all members at all times.
- Isolation between the community and the police must be eliminated and responsibility for the safety of Buffalo's neighborhoods must be shared by police and citizens alike.

This is the vision that Mayor Anthony H. DiSiciliano and Police Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske have for the Buffalo Police Department. A restructured Buffalo Police Department will be more responsive to the needs of all the citizens of Buffalo and provide a working environment for its members that recognizes their dedication and contribution.