University of Michigan Technical Assistance Brief
Community Policing

Purpose of the Brief: To suggest approaches linking various approaches to community safety and security, community policing and block club creation and support. The overall goal is to provide guidance to residents associated with the Good Neighborhoods initiative in resources for creating and sustaining comprehensive, locally based safe neighborhoods strategies.

Background:

Since 1983, local community safety strategies have included a combination of community policing, neighborhood watch, and residential citizen's band (CB) patrols. While this combination of services appears optimal, such comprehensive programs have not been evaluated. Instead, individual components have been evaluated. Community policing has been comprehensively evaluated, primarily as a result of federal funding from the U.S. Department of Justice. After a brief background on community policing, the evaluation results are briefly summarized, followed by a brief review of exemplary community policing programs.

Community policing is defined as a policing philosophy that promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and police-community partnerships. Community policing focuses on crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services that includes aspects of traditional law enforcement, as well as prevention, problem-solving, community engagement, and partnerships. The community policing model balances reactive responses to calls for service with proactive problem-solving centered on the causes of crime and disorder. Community policing requires police and citizens to join together as partners in the course of both identifying and effectively addressing these issues.

Trojanowicz (1983) identified essential components of community policing, including:

Organizational Elements:

1. Philosophy Adopted Organization-Wide
2. Decentralized Decision-Making and Accountability
3. Fixed Geographic Accountability and Generalist Responsibilities
4. Utilization of Volunteer Resources
5. Enhancers

Tactical Elements:

1. Enforcement of Laws
2. Proactive, Crime Prevention Oriented
3. Problem-solving

External Elements:

1. Public Involvement in Community Partnerships
2. Government and Other Agency Partnerships

Regional Community Policing Institutes

In 1997, COPS funded the creation of the only national training network of Regional Community Policing Institutes (RCPIs) to provide comprehensive and innovative community policing

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education, training and technical assistance to COPS grantees throughout the nation. RCPIs develop innovative cutting edge curricula on emerging law enforcement issues to challenge and improve traditional training curricula. Topics include but are not limited to:

- Community Mobilization
- Community Partnerships
- Conflict Resolution
- Crime Analysis and Mapping
- Ethics and Integrity
- Problem Solving
- Rural Community Policing
- Strategic Implementation
- Violence Prevention

Between 1994 and 2001, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) provided more than $7.6 billion in grants to state and local communities to hire police officers and promote community policing as an effective strategy to prevent crime. The Iraq War and the domestic US war on terrorism led to a substantial redirection of funds, from a high of nearly 1.4 billion dollars in 1998 to less than half that amount -$635 million dollars - in 2003. A 2001 U.S. Conference of Mayors survey of 281 cities receiving COPS funding reported that

• Nearly nine in 10 of these cities (89 percent) used the funding to hire additional police officers;
• 61 percent used it to upgrade their police department's technological capabilities;
• 58 percent used it to redeploy existing officers in community policing; and
• 39 percent used it to target specific problems.

In the most recent report of awarded COPS grants (2006), the state of Michigan received 21 grants totaling slightly more than 7 million dollars; no grants were awarded to the Detroit Police Department, though other police departments in Wayne County and Southeast Michigan received funding.

Is community policing effective? Best available research from the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) indicates **community policing has a positive, but very modest effect on crime rates.** The 2005 GAO evaluation of community policing programs funded between 1994 and 2001 by the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Grants revealed that:

- o COPS funds contributed to a 1.3 percent decline in the overall crime rate and a 2.5 percent decline in the violent crime rate from the 1993 levels.

- o Between 1993 and 2000, the overall crime rate declined by 26 percent, and the 1.3 percent decline due to COPS, amounted to about 5 percent of the overall decline.

- o COPS contributed about 7 percent of the 32 percent decline in violent crime from 1993 to 2000.

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In contrast to the empirical presentation of very modest (yet statistically significant) effect, law enforcement officers views and opinions of the usefulness of community policing are mixed, ranging from strong endorsement by voices like Bonnie Bucqueroux, former Associate Director of the National Center for Community Policing at Michigan State University's School of Criminal Justice, to strong rejection by others like retired law enforcement officers such as who feel that community policing too often promotes public involvement and community outreach without addressing structural, organizational law enforcement issues that may limit or deter the effects of community policing. Thus, community policing provides a detectable but very modest impact on crime rates, is endorsed somewhat more positively by academic criminal justice departments and policy makers, and has a mixed assessment by current and former law enforcement officers.

Best Practice Approaches:

There have been several compilations of best practice approaches for community policing, including the 2001 US Conference of Mayors' Safer Neighborhoods through Community Policing, Vols I and II. The common themes for best practices involved:

- o dedicated, well trained police officers who took on crime problems that generally had not yielded to traditional policing approaches;
- o neighborhood residents in the identification and analysis of the root causes of the problems affecting them;
- o other city agencies;
- o the private and business sectors, in bringing to bear the resources needed to solve the problems.

Examples/models of each approach:

Model #1: Problem Resolution Team (Lincoln, Nebraska)

The Problem Resolution Team (PRT) is composed of a representative of the Mayor's Office, City Council, Police Department, Law Department, Urban Development Department, Building and Safety Department, and Housing Authority, the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. These are the agencies which have roles in most of the cases handled by the PRT; other agencies, such as the Planning Department, are brought where individual cases require their involvement. The Team meets monthly in the Mayor's conference room. Prior to each meeting, the Team's co-chairs – a top aide to the Mayor and a senior police captain – meet with the Urban Development Department's representative to review the cases on the agenda and prepare for the meeting.

The PRT has six primary functions:

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1. Identifying Problem Properties: Team members nominate specific troublesome properties for consideration as PRT cases. The houses, apartments and other properties nominated are generally the sources of chronic or repeated complaints or problems; the problems are the kind that detract from the quality of life in the neighborhoods in which they are found – drug use, trash in yards, noisy parties, child abuse, structural problems, assaults and abandoned vehicles, among them.

2. Gathering and Sharing Information: The Team assembles existing information on cases (reports, correspondence, police dispatch information, etc.) and Team members obtain missing or needed information, often from their own agencies' records and through visits to the problem property. Team members meet to exchange information assembled on PRT locations and also share information via e-mail.

3. Developing and Carrying Out Action Plans for Specific Cases: In its monthly meetings, the Team discusses possible strategies for resolving or responding to each case selected, and specific tasks are assigned to members on a consensus basis. Each Team member is responsible for coordinating the actions required of their agency in response to specific PRT case needs.

4. Evaluating the Results of Intervention: The Team monitors each action plan and gathers information needed to determine whether the problem is resolved or ameliorated. A detailed file is maintained on each case referred to the PRT, the cases accepted as PRT projects, the activities completed, and subsequent complaints or problems at the target locations.

5. Keeping Citizens Informed: Team leaders telephone, correspond and meet personally with complainants and other neighborhood residents affected by the problem properties that have become PRT cases, giving them ample opportunity to be heard, and providing feedback on the status and outcome of those cases.

6. Recommending Policy Changes
Recent letters from the PRT to the Mayor and Council have contained proposals to inspect single family rental houses and duplex houses and to strengthen exterior maintenance requirements.

Results of Evaluation of PRT
In 1998, an evaluation by the University of Nebraska-Omaha Criminal Justice Department found that, in its first 21 months, the Team had successfully closed 53 of the 63 cases it had handled, and that the Police Department was directly involved in 75 percent of those cases.

Keys to Success
• The PRT must be a priority for the Mayor and the City Council, and the Mayor's support must be communicated to the heads of the various agencies involved.
• The PRT must be a priority for the Police Chief and other top officers. Because the Police Department is involved in most cases, it is essential that the Department play a leadership role.
• The leaders of the PRT must keep its caseload manageable. This means the PRT must be willing to adhere to its criteria for accepting cases, resist political pressure that may be applied on certain cases, and keep its focus on problem properties, not problem personalities.

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• There are administrative duties attached to the PRT and it is essential than an agency staff member be assigned to the Team. In Lincoln, this is handled by a civilian Police Department employee.
• There should be a revolving fund that can be used for needed activities such as clean-ups of health-related problems.
• Team members must be sensitive to "turf" issues.
• The PRT must be given access to the data and information resources needed to handle cases, including Police Department crime data, County Assessor's data on properties, and Housing Authority information on tenants, Section 8 properties, etc.
• For problems in apartment complexes, the PRT must ensure that owners and managers know as much about the problems as does the Police Department.
• Celebrate PRT successes so that the team feels good about the results of its often long term efforts.

Model #2: Neighborhood Resource Team (Miami-Dade County, Florida)

In West Perrine, a predominantly African American neighborhood in metropolitan Dade County just south of Miami, about 9,000 residents occupy a mix of single family homes and public and private apartment complexes. For years, the 16-block, low income area had been plagued with high rates of crime, unemployment, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and health problems. In 1989, a respected West Perrine businessman and community activist was murdered by local drug dealers. While this was just one of a series of crimes which reflected the extent to which the neighborhood had slipped out of control, it became a defining event for residents: They had had enough and were ready to "take back their community."

To begin this process, 27 local pastors banded together, recruited other community advocates, and gained the support of the Miami-Dade Police Department. They started with weekly marches through the neighborhood and formed an interagency task force of state, county and private agencies and citizen activists to identify and then respond to the problems of the community. Progress was slow until February 1992 when then-Dade County State Attorney Janet Reno encouraged the establishment of a multi-agency resource team to be based in West Perrine. The Police Department's Cutler Ridge District (which includes West Perrine), the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, and the local Housing and Urban Development office organized the team, with space for a base of operations provided in Circle Plaza (since renamed Perrine Gardens), one of the area's most troubled public housing developments, and the central focus of the multi-agency initiative.

Organization
The Neighborhood Resource Team began operations with five members: a police officer, a housing representative, a public health nurse, a State social worker and a social worker from the staff of the Metro-Dade Department of Youth and Family Services. Team members were experienced professionals knowledgeable about the resources of their agencies; they enjoyed access to the top officials of the participating agencies who were committed to helping them cut red tape and utilize whatever agency resources were needed to help the neighborhood's families. Team members consist of:

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- o social workers
- o law enforcement officers
- o community development corporations
- o nuisance abatement units
- o human service case manager
- o urban development and planning
- o law department
- o building and safety department
- o health department
- o housing authority (as needed)

The NRT introduced, and continues to use, a two-part intervention strategy:
• **Family-centered intervention** includes a) family assessments conducted by the entire Team in the residents' homes; b) immediate response to emergency needs identified during the assessment process; and c) monitoring and follow-up of cases to verify that needs have been met and referrals have been completed.
• **Community-wide intervention** includes a) a public safety initiative grounded in community oriented policing principles of resident involvement and NRT visibility; b) efforts to change public perception of the neighborhood in order to reduce fear of crime; and c) the channeling of tenants' energies into maintenance, clean-up efforts, and other improvement activities.

An important goal for the Team Coordinator and the other police officers working in the area is to be accessible to residents around the clock. Each carried a cell phone, and the officers' phone numbers were widely publicized in the community.

Long Term Impact on Crime
As a result of the NRT initiative, Perrine Gardens continues to be a safe and well-maintained complex. In 1994 there were 310 burglaries, 180 auto thefts and 90 robberies in the neighborhood. By 1999 burglaries were down by half, auto thefts had been cut to 70 and robberies had been cut to 36. In November 2000, for example, there were just two assaults/batteries, two domestic disputes, two drug offenses, and one tenant was arrested. While officials believe it is important to maintain a police presence in the area, the level of personnel introduced in 1992 and 1993, at the start of the initiative, is no longer required.

Keys to Success
• Top-level political and governmental support spurs a multi-agency initiative in a troubled area such as West Perrine. The NRT concept had the support of the State Attorney, a County Commissioner who was a West Perrine resident and leader, and the Police Director and other members of the command staff, among others.
• There must be support in the community for a multi-agency presence such as the Neighborhood Resource Team. In West Perrine, the call for help came directly from community leaders following the murder of the community activist.
• Partnerships with community organizations that share the goals of community policing are essential. In West Perrine, the Community Development Corporation works very closely with the Police Department and the NRT on day-to-day problems, such as code violations,

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and long term problems, such as affordable housing.

• For an initiative such as the NRT to succeed, Team members must be personally committed to the community in which they are working. Miami-Dade officials agree that the commitment of the police officer chosen to serve as the Program Coordinator and the officer's detailed knowledge of the community was the key to the overall success of the effort.

• Because residents often find it easier to talk about family problems and needs with social service workers than with police officers, initial Team contacts led by social service personnel can often be most productive.

• To change attitudes toward the police in troubled neighborhoods, residents need to know they can reach police officers at any time. Cell phones have made this possible in the West Perrine area.

Resources

The National Center for Community Policing – Michigan State University
http://www1.cj.msu.edu/~people/cp/

U.S. Conference of Mayors (2001). The influence of community policing in city governments: a 281 city survey. Washington, DC: US Conference of Mayors

U.S. Conference of Mayors (2001). Safer neighborhoods through community policing, Vols I and II. Washington, DC: US Conference of Mayors

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