

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs  
*National Institute of Justice*



---

# National Institute of Justice

---

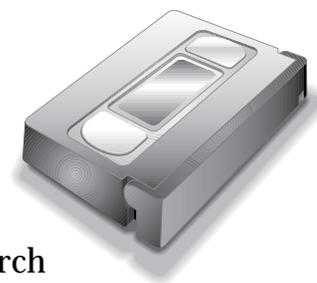
August 1996

# **JOURNAL**

Communities:  
*Mobilizing Against Crime*  
*Making Partnerships Work*

---

# The Latest Criminal Justice Videotape Series From NIJ: *Research in Progress*



Learn about the latest developments in criminal justice research from prominent criminal justice experts.

Each 60-minute VHS tape presents a well-known scholar discussing his or her current studies and how they relate to existing criminal justice research and includes the lecturer's responses to audience questions.

## Law Enforcement

### NCJ 159739

Joel H. Garner, Ph.D., *Use of Force By and Against Police.*

### NCJ 153273

Wesley Skogan, Ph.D. *Community Policing in Chicago: Fact or Fiction?*

### NCJ 153730

Lawrence W. Sherman, Ph.D. *Reducing Gun Violence: Community Policing Against Gun Crime.*

## Drug Abuse Treatment

### NCJ 152692

James Inciardi, Ph.D. *A Corrections-Based Continuum of Effective Drug Abuse Treatment.*

## High-Risk Youth/ Child Abuse

### NCJ 153270

Adele Harrell, Ph.D. *Intervening With High-Risk Youth: Preliminary Findings From the Children At-Risk Program.*

### NCJ 153272

Cathy Spatz Widom, Ph.D. *The Cycle of Violence Revisited Six Years Later.*

### NCJ 156923

Orlando Rodriguez, Ph.D. *The New Immigrant Hispanic Populations: Implications for Crime and Delinquency in the Next Decade.*

### NCJ 157643

Benjamin E. Saunders, Ph.D., and Dean G. Kilpatrick, Ph.D. *Prevalence and Consequences of Child Victimization: Preliminary Results from the National Survey of Adolescents.*

## Sentencing Policy

### NCJ 159740

Kim English, Ph.D. *Managing Adult Sex Offenders in Community Settings: A Containment Approach.*

### NCJ 152236

Peter W. Greenwood, Ph.D. *Three Strikes, You're Out: Benefits and Costs of California's New Mandatory Sentencing Law.*

### NCJ 152237

Christian Pfeiffer, Ph.D. *Sentencing Policy and Crime Rates in Reunified Germany.*

## Violence Prevention

### NCJ 152235

Alfred Blumstein, Ph.D. *Youth Violence, Guns, and Illicit Drug Markets.*

### NCJ 152238

Arthur L. Kellermann, M.D., M.P.H. *Understanding and Preventing Violence: A Public Health Perspective.*

### NCJ 153850

Scott H. Decker, Ph.D., and Susan Pennell. *Monitoring the Illegal Firearms Market.*

### NCJ 153271

Marvin Wolfgang, Ph.D. *Crime in a Birth Cohort: A Replication in the People's Republic of China.*

### NCJ 154277

Terrie Moffitt, Ph.D. *Partner Violence Among Young Adults.*

### NCJ 156924

Robert Sampson, Ph.D. *Communities and Crime: A Study in Chicago.*

### NCJ 156925

John Monahan, Ph.D. *Mental Illness and Violent Crime.*

### NCJ 160766

Michael Tonry, Ph.D. *Ethnicity, Crime, and Immigration.*

Individual titles are available for only \$19 in the United States and \$24 in NTSC Format for Canada and other countries. To order, call the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800-851-3420.

---



See page 13

The *National Institute of Justice Journal* (previously known as *NIJ Reports*) is published by the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, to announce the Institute's policy-relevant research results and initiatives. The Attorney General has determined that publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of the Department of Justice.

Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), a centralized national clearinghouse of criminal justice information, is sponsored by the Office of Justice Programs agencies and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Registered users of NCJRS receive the *National Institute of Justice Journal* and *NCJRS Catalog* free. To become a registered user, write NCJRS User Services, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000, call 800-851-3420, or e-mail [askncjrs@ncjrs.org](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.org).

The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Office for Victims of Crime.

Director's Message  
2

Linking Community-Based Initiatives and  
Community Justice:  
The Office of Justice Programs  
4

## Communities Mobilized Against Crime

Grassroots and Persistent: The Chicago  
Alliance for Neighborhood Safety  
8

Neighborhood Revitalization: Lessons From  
Savannah and Baltimore  
13

Crime Prevention Through Neighborhood  
Revitalization: Does Practice Reflect Theory?  
18

The Federal Role in Revitalizing Communities and  
Preventing and Controlling Crime and Violence  
24

## Communities as Criminal Justice Partners

The Community's Role in Community Policing  
31

What Is Community Prosecution?  
35

Community Defense and the Challenge of  
Community Justice  
41

Community Courts: Prospects and Limits  
46

Toward a Corrections of "Place": The Challenge  
of "Community" in Corrections  
52

### Communities and Criminal Justice: A Powerful Alignment

“It is impossible to overemphasize the enormous importance of people’s doing things themselves.” Saul Alinsky made that observation more than 50 years ago in writing about community organizing, and his words still ring true. The community mobilization he wrote about is particularly evident today in the responses people are making to crime in cities and towns across the country. These responses have attracted a great deal of interest in what the fully realized potential of community involvement—of people “doing things themselves” to fight crime—might be.

This issue of the *National Institute of Justice Journal* is an expression of that interest. It is devoted to a discussion of the role of communities in responding to crime and disorder. It also reports on the emerging, sustained alliances that communities are forging with the various components of the criminal justice system as partners in that response.

The potential within communities is best understood in the accomplishments of the many brave people living in crime-

plagued neighborhoods around the country who through their own concerted action are saying they have suffered enough and are determined to take back their streets. They march, collect signatures on petitions, pressure public officials, organize block watches, open youth recreation centers, establish shelters for battered women, and call the attention of the public to the very real toll that crime exacts on the quality of their community’s life. In short, these organized communities have become powerful, constructive forces for public safety.

The criminal justice system has begun to recognize this power and to discover the potential for working with these communities. The philosophy of community policing, which envisions the community as a partner in problem solving, has led the way in reinventing this core governmental function. Other criminal justice agencies are following this lead. Prosecutors are assigning attorneys to neighborhood-based offices and police precincts to bring legal expertise closer to community

residents. Public defenders are exploring the potential of offering more direct community access to legal representation. The courts are opening up their processes, creating a new legal culture that sees crime as eroding the quality of life of the communities where it is committed. Correctional agencies, which have long dealt with the communities into which offenders are released, are considering the consequences of viewing communities as partners in the imposition of criminal sanctions.

Within the Federal Government, public safety initiatives featuring community involvement as an organizing principle have been set in motion. The investment of Federal dollars in anti-crime programs is now thought most effective if the resources are devoted in part to creating a communitywide, comprehensive response to crime problems affecting a jurisdiction. The private sector has weighed in on a number of fronts, particularly with foundation support for anti-violence programs.

In preparing this issue, we were inspired in large part by the

upcoming conference, "Communities, Crime, and Justice: Making Community Partnerships Work," sponsored by the Office of Justice Programs, to be held in September. Our intention is to offer a stimulus for discussion as conference presenters and other participants make their preparations. For the long term, we hope this issue of the *Journal* will be instrumental in disseminating the innovative practices the authors describe here, in promoting critical examination of the theories underlying these practices, and in contributing to a broad discussion of practice and theory.

The authors represented in this issue speak in distinctive voices, reflecting the perspectives of public officials, community organizers, researchers, and practitioners. Laurie Robinson, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), opens the discussion by presenting the role of the Justice Department and, within it, of OJP, urging us to think boldly and creatively about the justice system and above all to listen to what communities are saying.

The articles are organized into two categories: The first presents the perspectives of the communities themselves; the second illustrates the perspectives of the various components of the criminal justice system. Warren Friedman, executive director of the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, relates the key role his organization has played in involving community residents in community policing. David Kennedy recounts the experiences of two neighborhoods in Savannah and Baltimore that have undertaken broad-based community responses to crime through an emphasis on economic development. Deborah Weisel and Adele Harrell set forth a theoretical framework for understanding neighborhood crime prevention strategies. Catherine Conly and Daniel McGillis analyze the Federal role in supporting communitywide anti-crime initiatives.

The second set of articles relates the ways criminal justice agencies are working with communities and promoting with community involvement. The potential and limitations of community partnership with the

police are examined by Wesley Skogan. Barbara Boland explains how the legal expertise of the prosecutor's office in Portland, Oregon, is being tapped to address quality-of-life issues. Christopher Stone reflects on the issues involved in operating an innovative, neighborhood-based organization in Harlem that represents criminal defendants. David Rottman details the historical roots of the new community-based courts and examines three models. Finally, a theory and rationale for a community-centered approach to corrections are explored by Todd Clear.

We thank the many contributors to this issue, and we wish especially to recognize the work of the concerned, engaged citizens and practitioners whose stories are told on these pages. They would be the first to acknowledge they have not found the definitive answers to the challenges of crime and justice. We recognize, however, that they have defined important new questions, and we applaud their work.

**Jeremy Travis**



# Linking Community- Based Initiatives and Community Justice:

## *The Office of Justice Programs*

*by Laurie Robinson,  
Assistant Attorney General*

**J***ustice in the life and conduct of the state is possible only as first it resides in the hearts and souls of the citizens.*

This inscription over the entrance to the U.S. Department of Justice building is a constant reminder

to those of us at the Department that justice begins in the local communities we serve. Since its creation in 1984, the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) has worked to build partnerships with States and local communities to reduce crime and improve the criminal justice system.

Over the past 3 years— with the strong support and encouragement of Attorney

General Janet Reno—OJP has increased its efforts in this area, developing and funding a wide range of new initiatives to help local communities take a more coordinated, comprehensive approach to crime control and prevention. Through these efforts, many communities are now thinking more strategically about crime. They are bringing together government officials, service providers, business people, and residents themselves to attack crime by identifying crime-related problems and mobilizing a broad spectrum of community resources—including law enforcement, the business community, schools, housing, and medical and mental health care—to reduce crime and restore community vitality.

## OJP's community-based initiatives

Reflecting this Department priority, OJP funding is supporting a number of community-based comprehensive initiatives. For example, more than 76 communities across the country are implementing Weed and Seed programs with financial and technical assistance from OJP and several other Federal agencies. Weed and Seed is a neighborhood-based, multiagency approach to law enforcement and community revitalization in high-crime areas. The Weed and Seed strategy integrates Federal, State, and local law enforcement and criminal justice resources with corresponding human services to weed out crime and prevent it from reoccurring. U.S. Attorneys are integrally involved in this initiative.

Project PACT (Pulling America's Communities Together)—which was launched shortly after Attorney General Reno arrived at the Department—builds on the Weed and Seed strategy.

Its goal is to empower local communities to address youth violence by developing broad-based, coordinated anti-violence strategies—on a jurisdictionwide basis—that incorporate the resources of Federal, State, and local government agencies, law enforcement, schools, businesses, and community organizations.

The 4 PACT sites—Atlanta, Denver, Washington, D.C., and the State of Nebraska—are participating with 14 other jurisdictions in another OJP effort—the Comprehensive Communities Program (CCP). Under CCP, which is funded and administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, communities are developing and implementing comprehensive strategies for preventing and reducing violent crime. Community policing is an important element.

The SafeFutures program of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) focuses specifically on youth violence. Six sites are developing this community-based, multidisciplinary effort to provide a continuum of services and graduated sanctions for at-risk and delinquent juveniles. The programs include a broad range of components, such as afterschool, mentoring, and family strengthening programs; mental health services; gang prevention, intervention, and suppression for schools; and initiatives for serious, violent, and chronic offenders.

OJP also is working with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to help revitalize communities designated as Empowerment Zones (EZ) or Enterprise Communities (EC). Like Weed and Seed, designation as an EZ/EC opens up a wide range of Federal funding and technical assistance opportunities for these communities.

## Improving community services

To coordinate and expand these efforts, the Justice Department has created a Community-Based Initiatives (CBI) Working Group headed by Associate Attorney General John Schmidt and OJP Deputy Assistant Attorney General Reginald Robinson. The CBI Working Group is looking at ways the Federal Government can further help communities attack crime through comprehensive, community-based programs—and also ensure that the variety of initiatives *within* the Department of Justice are well coordinated.

One critical element of any comprehensive crime control effort is community policing. Hundreds of communities have implemented or expanded community policing over the past 2 years as a result of the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program authorized by the 1994 Crime Act. The Justice Department's COPS Office last year awarded more than \$1.5 billion under this program, enabling communities to hire more than 31,000 community police officers to work with citizens in solving the problems that contribute to crime. The program has \$1.6 billion this year, and the President has requested additional funding for fiscal year 1997 to help fulfill his pledge to put a total of 100,000 additional community police officers on our Nation's streets.

To complement these efforts, OJP—through OJJDP—is working with the COPS Office and the Department's Community Relations Service to train community teams in implementing youth-focused community policing. This new program targeting youth violence is being tested in 14 cities and 15 EZ/EC sites.

The Department also is continuously exploring, on a number of fronts, how it can help improve the delivery of criminal justice services to better meet the needs of community residents. For example, to improve our outreach to Native Americans, OJP has created the American Indian and Alaska Native Desk to respond more effectively to the needs of tribes in addressing crime and delinquency in their communities. Native American Desk Director Ada Pecos Melton, a member of the Pueblo of Jemez in New Mexico, is working to ensure that OJP programs are culturally sensitive and appropriate for Native American communities. OJP has asked tribal leaders to participate in meetings on such issues as juvenile justice, crime victimization, and violence against women to ensure that the viewpoints of their communities are represented in our program planning efforts.

Attorney General Janet Reno—in a first for the Department of Justice—also has asked the United States Attorneys to work more closely with their local communities to combat crime through both enforcement *and* prevention strategies and to use their leadership role and resources in new ways to address community problems, in close alliance with State and local officials.

## Community justice

At the same time that communities across the country are mustering broad-based coalitions to tackle crime and youth violence, innovative efforts



Photo by Jack Harrison

are under way to “reinvent” the justice system itself. “Restorative”—or community—justice experimentation is taking place in jurisdictions across the country. Restorative justice is based on an ancient form of justice that traces its roots to the Code of Hammurabi in 2000 B.C. It holds the offender accountable—not to the state but to the victim who has been harmed and to the community that has been disrupted. Restorative justice seeks not to punish for punishment’s sake but to right the wrong, to repair the damage to the extent possible, and to restore both the victim and the community.

Restitution and community service are two common forms of community justice. More and more communities, however, are experimenting with other programs based on the concept of community justice, such as community-based victim-offender mediation

in which victims and offenders discuss the impact of the crime and a means of reparation.

Other jurisdictions are expanding court services provided to the community. The Midtown Community Court in Manhattan is one example. An evaluation conducted in 1994 found that this new concept in court services resulted in more community service, increased completion rates, quicker arraignments, greater community satisfaction, and a reduction in targeted crimes such as street prostitution and unlicensed vending.

A Bureau of Justice Assistance-funded program in Vermont is taking this concept one step further by aggressively establishing restorative justice in a cor-

rectional setting through a two-tier probation system—a “risk management” track for more serious offenders and a “reparations” track for minor first-time offenders. These reparative cases are referred to trained community boards that determine the details of the sentence, which usually includes community service and restitution. Still early in its implementation, the program hopes to directly involve the victim in the process as well.

Community justice also is being incorporated into community policing programs, such as in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where police refer some cases to a Citizen Dispute Settlement program, and into juvenile justice programs, like the program in Australia that replaces formal prosecution with a “family group confer-

ence” designed to shame the offender and explain the full impact of the crime on the victim and the community.

Although these initiatives hold, I believe, enormous promise, we still have a long way to go to attain real “community justice.” The challenge for those of us at the Federal and State and local levels is to be willing to step back and think more broadly—and boldly—about the justice system in America and to start to develop a new framework for how we think, most fundamentally, about “justice”—what it means and what it should mean. We need to think of new ways to combine criminal justice resources, such as teaming community policing officers with probation services to keep better track of probationers and parolees in the community, and to think perhaps in terms of “community justice officers” rather than simply community policing officers.

## Combining justice resources and using new tools

More attention is needed, however, if we are to think creatively about combining justice resources. In order to identify and develop these ideas, we need to end the isolation of our individual disciplines, talk more with each other, and do a better job of sharing information. One key frustration of practitioners in the field is the difficulty of getting information about what is going on in other jurisdictions and finding out about effective and innovative criminal justice programs.

To fill this gap, OJP, through the National Institute of Justice, developed PAVNET—the Partnerships Against Violence Network—an information search and retrieval system available on the Internet and on diskettes. Representing the resources of more than 30 Federal clearinghouses, PAVNET in-

cludes information on promising federally and nonfederally funded programs, sources of Federal and private funds, and technical assistance. We are working to get the word out about this resource so it will be more widely used as a tool for planning and resource sharing.

We need to make better and more widespread use of other technology as well. The computer mapping technology developed under the Drug Market Analysis Program of the National Institute of Justice is just one example. This program uses computers to identify crime “hot spots” and to target resources in the areas where they are needed most. Recent research found this tool effective in reducing emergency calls for service in high-crime neighborhoods; contrary to some expectations, crime was not displaced to surrounding nontargeted areas. Based on the results of this pilot program, computer mapping is now being used more broadly. For example, mapping technology is helping community police officers track crime trends on their beats and community planners examine the nexus of crime trends and social indicators.

## A time for meaningful change

In short, the challenge for all of us is to think creatively about ways we can change the manner in which we conduct the business of providing justice in this country. But there are certain precautions to keep in mind as we approach this task. First, we have to ensure that this change is concrete, that it is more than just “lip service.” In the past, the criminal justice system has had a tendency when encountering problems to respond by repackaging old ideas with new labels and calling it progress. We have

to be careful to avoid this pitfall when we talk about community-based initiatives and community justice.

Second, we have to ensure that we in the Federal Government *listen* carefully to local communities as we work together to implement change. No one individual or organization has all the answers—not the Federal Government, not the research community, not practitioners. If we are to effect meaningful change, this must be a collaborative process.

Third, we need to be cognizant of resource realities. Coordination not only makes common sense, but in these times of lean Federal, State, and local budgets, when resources are an issue at every level of government, it makes economic sense as well. The pot of gold at the end of the Federal rainbow is surely gone. State and local officials, almost without exception, are struggling to find ways to deliver government services while reining in spending. These realities mean we have to think in new ways about how we can use different criminal justice system components in multiple roles.

Attorney General Janet Reno and the leadership at OJP are committed to fostering the development of both community-based initiatives and community justice efforts and to helping combine them into a focused attack on crime-related problems. I hope the upcoming Conference on Communities, Crime, and Justice—and the thought-provoking articles in this issue of the *National Institute of Justice Journal*—will help to launch a new era of cooperation, coordination, and meaningful change so that the administration of justice in our Nation more truly represents the “hearts and souls” of its citizens.

---

*Laurie Robinson is Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.*

# Grassroots and Persistent: The Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety

by Warren Friedman

In the summer of 1994, more than 600 people gathered in the auditorium of the State of Illinois Building in downtown Chicago. With banners proclaiming the names of neighborhoods they represented, the racially diverse audience was celebrating community policing, their role in launching it, and an AmeriCorps-sponsored “Summer of Safety.” Most of those who cheered the words of community leaders, the performances of young people, and the speeches of the police superintendent and the mayor were wearing bright yellow buttons. The buttons stated succinctly the neighborhood safety and community policing strategy goals of the rally: “Organized

Neighbors Make Safe Neighborhoods.”

In another setting, at another time, participants might have asserted that neighborhood safety was not their job. “We pay the cops’ salaries,” was how people often put it. “Let them do it.” But the dialog about the need for a new model of policing that had been going on for years in professional and academic circles was being joined by these members of block groups, community organizations, and church and school committees. The shortcomings of traditional policing were problems in their daily lives.

The conviction that communities have to be organized if people want to be safe grew, in part, as a

reaction to these shortcomings. But it was also the outgrowth of two traditions in Chicago—community organizing and community crime prevention. These traditions merged in the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS), the organization that brought the rally’s enthusiastic participants together and had taken the lead in advocating community policing in Chicago.

## CANS: Its beginnings and its principles

CANS is an independent, nonprofit crime prevention coalition of community organizations citywide.<sup>1</sup> It began more than 15 years ago as a program to build a public-private partnership to combat crime and to strengthen the capacity of community organizations to solve problems. A guiding principle, overseen by its community-based board, is that CANS be run by and for the citizens in Chicago’s communities. Over the years, CANS has offered training, technical and organizing assistance, research, and education to communities around the city.

## Early activism and relations with the police

During its early years, CANS assisted groups in Chicago’s neighborhoods and public housing sites.



Courtesy of the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety

“Summer of Safety” rally, Chicago, 1994.

These groups organized more than 1,000 block watches, apartment watches, and school safety zones. The idea was to convince 25 percent of the households on a block to sign up and work with their neighbors. People often met each other for the first time at these watch meetings and discovered they shared concerns with others—that they were not isolated.

Much of the initial focus was on getting the police to respond quickly to their calls, but basic to the effort was the desire to solve neighborhood crime problems: to get the drug house off the block and the liquor store to stop selling to minors; to make the path to school safer and the business strip less threatening. Participants were eager to work with the police, but they often ran into a stone wall when requesting the cooperation of the department.

Like most big city departments, Chicago's was incident driven. Patrol officers spent their time driving from incident to incident without getting to know residents or gaining a deeper understanding of the community's crime problems. People felt the police did not care about their problems and did not respect the crime prevention work they were initiating. Yet they were the ones who cared enough to get involved, and they were frustrated and angry. In dozens of meetings around the city—held in moderate- and high-crime areas and in black,

white, and Latino communities—people made it clear they wanted something different from the police.

### CANS and community policing

In response to this groundswell from the neighborhoods, CANS issued a report which argued that by reducing the number of calls to which officers were dispatched, their time could be freed up to work with the community to solve persistent neighborhood crime problems.<sup>2</sup> Issued in 1988, the report introduced to the public the idea of community policing, and the CANS Community Policing Task Force ultimately began a campaign to bring it to Chicago.

The message that there was another way to provide police service was brought to hundreds of community groups in presentations around the city. Working with a representative of the police department, CANS

## Evidence of Success: The CAPS Evaluation

A consortium of Chicago area universities evaluated CAPS in the prototype districts after a year of operation. Northwestern University professor Wesley Skogan, a seasoned evaluator of community policing experiments who led the study, noted that the prototypes produced the “single most impressive set of outcomes I’ve seen yet....There is no comparison.”

Compared to areas where the prototypes had not been in operation, there were significant improvements, especially in two high-crime, low-income police districts. Based on residents’ perceptions, major crimes and drug and gang activity appear to have declined. In addition, in two of the three high-crime districts, people perceived that officers treated citizens less aggressively. Trust between officers and the community increased, as did the flow of information between the department and the community. City services also improved. People said they were more optimistic about their neighborhoods and policing.<sup>3</sup>

Task Force members drafted a proposal for a pilot project. In response to the sustained and growing voice, and in the context of the national dialog that encouraged police reform, the mayor announced that the city would embrace community policing. In 1992 the Chicago Police Department launched the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) in five prototype districts.

### The nature and scope of CAPS

CAPS was not conceived of as a small program for a special unit; rather, it was designed to change, from top to bottom, the country's second largest police department. The mission of the entire department was to work in partnership with the community.

Before launching CAPS, the city and the police department did their homework. Other cities' efforts were

### *CANS Trains the Community*

The city-funded project to train the community—Joint Community-Police Training (JCPT)—is the largest and most serious commitment in the country to developing the community’s capacity to play its role in community policing. Eventually, training will be conducted in all 279 Chicago police beats.

JCPT brings neighbors together, trains them to work with each other and the police, and provides them and the officers with experience in the collaborative problem solving necessary to develop leaders who can sustain the process of transforming the police-community relationship.

Through hours of meetings in which the parties struggled to understand each other’s language and concerns, a curriculum was developed by representatives of CANS, the police department, and the city. The orientation introduces residents to CAPS, a five-step problem-solving process, and the community role in both. The training is delivered by both CANS and police officers.

The trainers are preceded in each beat by CANS outreach workers, who introduce the program to groups and by going door-to-door. Their aim is to recruit 50 people to participate in the 2-hour orientation and in problem-solving groups that will work with officers on real crime and disorder problems.

studied to avoid their mistakes and learn from their successes. A major management consulting firm was hired to analyze the department and recommend a strategy. Seventeen hundred officers were trained in problem solving. City services were integrated into CAPS.

As with any effort at large-scale change, there were problems. Much was done poorly; there was resistance and cynicism in the department and skepticism and suspicion in the community. Yet despite the rumors and the shocks that agitated and jarred department personnel and community members, despite the push and pull, despite the maneuvering and power plays, enough of what was being done went right.

The evaluation of CAPS, conducted at the end of a year of operation of the prototypes, produced promising findings, and CAPS is going forward in all 25 police districts. (See “Evidence of Success: The CAPS Evaluation, page 7”) But there are many steps between a promising startup year in prototypes and the long-term, citywide transformation of the department and Chicago’s communities.

After the training of police began, community members realized they also needed to be trained. They knew that unless they learned how to become partners in restoring and maintaining the safety of their neighborhoods, community policing would fail. The consensus of those from the community who had worked to put CAPS on the city’s

agenda was that they needed to know what they were doing. In late 1994, the city contracted with CANS to introduce residents to CAPS and train them in the problem-solving process. (See “CANS Trains the Community.”)

### Grassroots organizing

Training is crucial, but without stable community organizations with adequate resources, even twice the training time may be inadequate to build the volunteer base necessary to sustain and make community policing a powerful crime-fighting and prevention strategy. Because volunteer efforts attract broader participation and are more effective and more likely to be sustained when coordinated and staffed, CANS has worked to bring organizing resources to the community groups on the front line of the struggle for neighborhood safety.

AmeriCorps’ Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) serves in many communities as the organizing staff. CANS commits most of its 23 VISTAs to work with neighborhood groups. They go door-to-door and hold meetings, getting young people and adults together to work on problems. With VISTA’s help, the hard-pressed community-based organizations can do their part and sustain their efforts to overcome entrenched problems and make their neighborhoods safer.

## A citywide coalition to sustain community policing

Having an organizing staff, even when coupled with training, is not enough. Neither are organized communities. Even with Federal funding incentives, enlightened leadership, and considerable rank-and-file interest, it is unrealistic to expect that police agencies will, on their own, develop a version of community policing that truly addresses the needs and concerns of neighborhood residents.

Around the country, there are thousands of creative, courageous, local communities working to make neighborhoods safer. What CANS has added is an informed, organized, and independent community voice, its citywide coalition of community-based organizations—the Community Policing Task Force.

The task force is now working to make CAPS a success. Task force meetings serve as a forum for communities to talk to each other; to find out, for instance, how the regular beat meetings that the department has established are faring. Task force members ask such questions as: Are the meetings well run? Do police and community participate? Who sets the agenda—the community, the police, or both? These exchanges are a critical force for spreading best practices across the city.

## Creating Community Leadership

Twice a year, as part of the development of grassroots leadership, CANS conducts the Leadership Institute for Community Policing. The purpose of the Institute and leadership development in general is to develop informed, skilled community leaders who can work with the Community Policing Task Force and their communities, educate residents, and give informed expression to their concerns.

The Institute brings 30 to 40 community policing activists to a series of six Saturday sessions conducted by CANS staff and guests from academic and other research organizations.

Topics range from the history and theory of community policing to an examination of the community's role in it. Following the sessions, participants take a field trip to examine another city's version of community policing. They have visited Seattle; New York; Joliet, Illinois; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The task force not only tracks the progress of CAPS citywide but also provides a mechanism for expressing the community's views on what is happening and how things can be improved. It is an arena for developing informed, committed, grassroots citizen leaders—residents whose opinions are respected in the community, who can get work done and bring people to meetings and other events. The commitment of these block club and community organization members is crucial to creating a critical mass in the community sufficient to sustain long-term change and safer neighborhoods. No community can play its part without neighbors who understand what it takes to close down a drug house, how the police department works, and where community policing should be going. (See "Creating Community Leadership.")

## Backing neighborhood efforts

CANS devotes considerable energy to practical research. In response to questions raised by community organizations about neighborhood crime, CANS pioneered computerized crime mapping with area universities and the police department. CANS is regularly called on to explain the workings of the department and to help groups strategize about drug markets or other crime problems.

From time to time, CANS also conducts in-depth studies of issues on which it intends to take action. An example is a recent study of relations between young people and the police. Stories circulating in the neighborhoods of police mistreatment of young people were the impetus for the study; CANS wanted to raise the question as a policy issue



and change the nature of those relations.

Nearly 1,000 public high school students were asked about their experience with the police. Young people participated in designing the questionnaire. They discussed the findings, critiqued drafts of the report, and helped to formulate the recommendations. Making the findings and the problems public became the first step in an effort, still under way, to improve relations between Chicago youths and police.<sup>4</sup>

## Promoting the "community" in community policing

Not even a perfect partnership between the community and the police can take the place of strong incentives to lawful behavior—jobs, fairness, healthy families and communities, and hope for the future. Community policing is, however, the most promising neighborhood-level program on the horizon, and it is an essential component of any serious, comprehensive strategy to make America safer.

In 1980 Chicago was one of nine Urban Crime Prevention Programs funded by the Federal Government. It is probably the only survivor of that important but short-lived venture. Fifteen years of hard work and organizing were required to set the

stage in Chicago for the public-private partnership envisioned then. It will

probably take 10 years to establish collaboration as the norm in community-police relations. And it will not happen at all unless the active, informed, and organized community continues to grow and its understanding deepen.

The promise of 100,000 more police is not enough to make neighborhoods safer. Independent, community-based organizations and coalitions must be supported so that the struggle in neighborhoods can be sustained. Residents must be trained, educated, and organized so they can come up with their own answers and do their part. The people in America's troubled and at-risk neighborhoods need more than more police. They need a national commitment and investment in the community side of community policing.

## Notes

1. In addition to funding from the city of Chicago, the State of Illinois, and AmeriCorps, CANS receives funding from a variety of Chicago foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, the Wieboldt Foundation, the Woods Fund of Chicago, the Polk Brothers Foundation, the Lloyd A.

Fry Foundation, and the Beldler Charitable Trust.

2. The report, *Police Service in Chicago: 911, Dispatch Policy and Neighborhood-Oriented Alternatives*, was based on information from the Chicago Police Department, studies funded by the National Institute of Justice, and many conversations with criminal justice professionals around the country.

3. See *Community Policing in Chicago: Year Two*, Research Preview, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, October 1995. The evaluation was supported by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the National Institute of Justice, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. A copy of a Research in Progress presentation given by Dr. Skogan, "Community Policing in Chicago: Fact or Fiction?," is available on videotape for \$19 from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (800-851-3420); ask for NCJ 153273.

4. Friedman, Warren, and Marsha Hott, *Young People and the Police: Respect, Fear and the Future of Community Policing in Chicago*, Chicago: Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, 1995.

*Warren Friedman is executive director of the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS).*

# Neighborhood Revitalization: Lessons from Savannah and Baltimore

by David M. Kennedy

**A**mong the neighborhood-focused, comprehensive crime control and revitalization strategies emerging nationwide are those now under way in Savannah and Baltimore. Both cities have developed programs that combine law enforcement, economic development, human services, and community organizing in attempts to effect major improvements in public safety and the quality of community life. The Showcase Savannah program, begun in 1987, and Baltimore's Sandtown program, begun in 1990, have not been formally evaluated; thus, whether their approach works remains an open question. (See "Results.")

It is still possible, though, to address issues of major interest in considering the prospects for comprehensive community strategies. Do these programs, on their face, make sense? Can they in fact be designed and implemented? How does the oft-endorsed concept of "empowerment" of communities play out in practice? Do the two programs converge in any operational or administrative innovations?

## The logic of the approach

The crisis that sparked the Showcase Savannah program was the same one that struck many other eastern seaboard cities about the same time: crack cocaine. Fear and

disorder spread rapidly in Savannah's poor black neighborhoods. The city's long-time manager was convinced that an effective response would need not only to hone the city's police strategy but also to take on the whole range of economic and social issues that likely lay behind the neighborhoods' vulnerability to crack use and other crimes—poor school performance, high unemployment, low levels of job skills, a high percentage of single-parent families, environmental issues such as trash and abandoned buildings, and substandard housing. The Showcase program, kicked off by city-led community organizing, commenced in 2 of the hardest-hit neighborhoods and expanded to 20 by 1994.

The idea for the Sandtown project came from Baltimore's mayor, Kurt Schmoke, and The Enterprise Foundation, a nonprofit housing organization founded by the late developer James Rouse. They sought an approach that faced squarely all the disparate and depressing pieces of conventional wisdom about troubled minority neighborhoods like Sandtown. If businesses would not locate there because crime was high, there should be plans to deal with crime. If people could not get jobs because they were poorly educated, there should be plans to improve the schools. If kids refused to go to school, and parents did not make them go, there should be plans to prevent truancy and train parents. If

parents could not cope because they were drug addicted and ill, then there should be plans to provide treatment and improve health care. If the neighborhood was unattractive, there should be plans to beautify it. And the city, Enterprise, and Sandtown residents should do all this together. In mid-May 1990 the mayor launched Community Building in Partnership (as the project was formally known) with a large community meeting.

The logic of this approach is, at least on the surface, quite compelling. Showcase and Sandtown are based on the simple but profound premise that, in at least some troubled neighborhoods, crime both *fosters* and *is fostered* by a variety of adverse conditions and systems. This frame shifts the focus of revitalization from arguments about what *caused* the problem—"root causes" factors vs. crime—to the potential of interventions to *correct* the problem. It gives what is probably justified weight to police and criminal justice strategies as important tools to be deployed in revitalization.

## The need for direction

Both cities designed and implemented formal, comprehensive, strategic plans. The initial Showcase plans were more limited than the city manager had hoped: In the "visioning" meetings with residents that he used to launch the planning process, residents focused on imme-

## Results

Neither project is complete nor has been evaluated. In Savannah, statistics and local accounts reveal mixed crime control results. By the end of 1990, for instance, the 14 identified drug hot spots in one Showcase neighborhood had been cut to 3. In the mostly owner-occupied neighborhood of one activist, things are, he says, “75 percent better.” Residents no longer worry much about robbery and burglary, he says, and the drug problem is still an issue but has vastly improved.

In some of the more transient areas of the first two Showcase neighborhoods, things are not as good. “They sell drugs on the corner and out of two houses on my block,” said one active resident. Another, the head of his block organization, suffers from nighttime dealing a few streets over and a brothel across the street. He and his neighbors watch, jot down license numbers, and call the police, but matters are not improving. It is clear, however, that project participants value the connection it gives them with police and other city officials.

Sandtown, for its part, no longer displays the signs of a deeply troubled area. Many buildings are empty, but most are secured; most streets are trash-free; street corners are largely free of threatening groups. In many places there are visible sparks of new spirit: There are stretches of new and newly rehabilitated homes as well as flower gardens and window boxes.

It is still a tough neighborhood, though, with certain streets known for late-night street drug problems. At one community meeting, a woman brought bullets that had ricocheted into her yard after a shootout next door. Overall, however, both residents and police agree that things are better. For what it’s worth, a simple before-and-after look at statistics bears them out: Violent victimization fell 15.6 percent between 1992 and 1993. Residents also cite key victories like the reclamation of the neighborhood’s only large open recreation space from drug dealers.

mediate issues of drug activity and other crime and on infrastructure issues like adequate streetlights and abandoned buildings. He could think of no way to mobilize them around what he saw as more deeply rooted issues like education and employment.

Thus, through the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Showcase Savannah emphasized capital improvements, better sanitation and code enforce-

ment, and public safety. The city set formal standards for streetlighting and garbage pickup, mobilized residents to audit properties for code compliance, and identified and disrupted crack-dealing locations. Then, in the early 1990s, the manager and assistant city manager began trying, on a parallel track, to integrate health, substance abuse, job training, and other services through Family Services Centers located in the neediest Showcase neighborhoods.

In Sandtown the situation was similar, with residents most concerned about immediate crime and infrastructure issues. The mayor and Enterprise officials insisted on a broader vision, but the problem was how to create a strategy that reflected broader concerns and that also came out of, and would win the support of, the community. The city’s answer was to hire nine “community advocates”—local residents who were assigned issues like public safety and education—to go door-to-door, talk to people, and help craft a plan that satisfied everyone.

“People thought that the crime and safety problem could be resolved merely by calling the police,” said the project’s public safety advocate. In fact, the planning process alone took more than a year, but the result laid out a web of mutually reinforcing steps in physical development, public safety, community and human services, education, and community economic development.

The experiences of both cities are instructive with regard to the broad current consensus that revitalization must proceed through community empowerment. If social, education, and economic matters with less immediate salience to residents are central to the long-term success of revitalization, then empowerment cannot be simply a transfer of power or instruction in how to attain felt

community ends. It must also involve teaching communities to understand and act on all their interests. Baltimore's experience also suggests it is possible—in part by using issues like crime, housing, and sanitation as springboards—to interest people in less immediate issues.

## Mobilizing communities

Both cities have demonstrated a capacity to organize their communities and work with them to achieve common ends. It appears, however, that those most actively involved, and those who contribute the most as partners in revitalization, are primarily older and more established residents. In both cities it has been quite difficult to reach renters, young people, and the socially and legally marginal. How much of an impediment to success this is remains an unanswered question.

**“Municipal beat officers.”** Both Showcase Savannah and Sandtown invented, independently of one another, a new role that might be called the “municipal beat officer.” The role combines in one person the functions of community organizer, problem solver, and street-level government liaison. During a recent day, a city-employed Savannah “neighborhood service coordinator” (as they are called) worked in one

neighborhood to make sure a row of vacant houses just rid of drug dealers was still secure, then she talked with a resident about a problem with a neighbor. In a second neighborhood she explored using drainage cuts to slow down speeding traffic. In the evening, she took notes at a community meeting in a third neighborhood. Sandtown's community advocates do similar work.

These “municipal beat officers” may substantially change the character of community-municipal partnerships and the process by which they are formed. The traditional view is that community organizations are an important end in themselves and an essential tool for addressing problems. Much energy is expended in creating and sustaining them. By contrast, in the Showcase Savannah and Sandtown neighborhoods, while a great deal is still done through neighborhood organizations, the outreach workers create a capacity for customizing responses to neighborhood needs, deployments of municipal services, and partnerships with residents to address particular problems. The result is an immediate, fluid, and readily deployed community problem-solving capability.

**Repairing “broken windows.”** The attention of the Showcase and Sandtown strategies to such issues as housing, sanitation, and physical disorder represents a sophisticated approach to addressing such “broken

windows” concerns as poor lighting, abandoned buildings, and trash. The results are immediately visible in both cities.

Moreover, the strategic framework of both projects has led to municipal action that is more carefully crafted and more consciously tied to crime prevention. In Savannah, for instance, after a recent auction of abandoned houses to low-income homeowners, the city manager's office prepared what might be considered a “broken windows plan” for each house: an audit of work that should be done by the city near each house to complement the restoration undertaken by the new owners.

**Community policing a critical element.** The experience of both cities underscores the importance of addressing crime, fear, drugs, and public safety. Revitalization models that simply concentrate on housing and physical infrastructure resources can only go so far. Even with all both cities have done in those respects and even given the strategic “broken windows” application of much of the investment, the two communities are still struggling to attain a level of security acceptable to their residents.

Both projects are incorporating community policing. It is primarily the *operational demands* of the revitalization strategy that have drawn the police into community policing. As a result, in both cities the police play

## Communities Mobilized Against Crime

Courtesy of The Enterprise Foundation



*Above: Building new houses in Baltimore's Sandtown neighborhood.*

*Right: Rehabbing houses in Sandtown.*



more of an “equal among equals” role than the “first among equals” position more typically seen.

### Progress on long-term social and economic issues

Work on public safety, infrastructure, and sanitation is further along in both cities than is *strategic* attention to social, health, education, and economic issues. Neither city is entirely clear on how to advance on

these fronts. In this they are not alone. They reflect the apparent lack of a strong sense of how to improve the social and economic face of troubled communities or how to tie strategies on these fronts to public safety strategies. In these areas the comprehensive community approach least resembles a well-defined, generalizable “technology.”

Showcase Savannah and Sandtown do suggest some promising prospects. Each has a long-term and a short-term strategy, with clusters of

investments in each. First, with an eye to fundamental change, both are investing in long-term child development, family support, educational improvement, and economic development. Many of these measures appear to be grounded in “root causes” thinking; Sandtown, for instance, is investing heavily in Healthy Start. The steps being taken, however, are more focused, integrated, and problem oriented than usual. Sandtown links a variety of measures to make its young people

“school ready,” to improve the schools, to address issues like street safety that may keep young people from attending school, to deal with truancy and poor school performance, and to use local action on all these fronts to build capacity and organization in the community.

This approach is significantly different from the more usual citywide and agency-specific plans to address structural problems. It has the advantage of being comprehensive, inclusive, and of addressing chronic problems (like youth violence) by handling acute ones (like gang conflicts near schools). Its probable disadvantage is not showing significant results for some time, requiring heavy institutional lifting, and using a neighborhood focus that is perhaps not appropriate to a mobile population. And, as always, economic development is especially difficult.

Second, with an eye to immediate improvements, both projects incorporate social services and economic development in a focused, “problem-solving” approach based on the needs of individuals, families,

blocks, and neighborhoods. Sandtown uses regular meetings of community outreach workers to identify and address problems as they arise. A parent’s addiction, for example, may have repercussions in child welfare, employment, public safety, and housing; the project’s structure allows those issues to be recognized rapidly and addressed in a coordinated fashion. In one example that a Showcase Savannah official is particularly fond of, one neighborhood has launched a program using local kids to cut grass and collect trash in the area’s numerous vacant lots: It saves the city money, provides work, and offers the struggling community a much needed win.

## Sandtown and Showcase: laboratories

These projects are early steps toward linking public safety and “root causes” ideas and practices in attempts to improve the quality of life in deeply troubled neighborhoods.

They have made important progress in crime control, fear reduction, physical improvement, social service delivery, municipal/public partnerships, and the creation of a municipal problem-solving structure. They appear to confirm common intuitions about the significance of both public safety and social and economic welfare in revitalizing neighborhoods. They have clearly done some good. It remains to be seen whether the strategies will be sustainable and how successful they will be. But as laboratories for testing many of the most ambitious ideas for addressing crime, fear, and decline, they will continue to warrant close examination.

---

*David M. Kennedy, Ph.D., is a professor in the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government.*

# Crime Prevention Through Neighborhood Revitalization: Does Practice Reflect Theory?

by Deborah Lamm Weisel and Adele Harrell

**T**he neighborhood of Merrill in Beloit, Wisconsin, could be called a typical American community.

An urban area bounded by major thoroughfares, it is characterized by single-family homes—some rental properties, others owner occupied. It is racially mixed: About 55 percent of its 3,500 residents are white and 45 percent are African American. The average household income in Merrill is about \$15,000. The population is young—more than one-third (36 percent) of all residents are under age 18.

## A familiar pattern of urban decay

Merrill is also typical in having experienced the physical decay and deteriorating social conditions that afflict so many urban areas in this country. Once a solid working-class community, by the late 1970s Merrill became plagued by problems related to drugs and gang activity, a high out-of-wedlock pregnancy rate, and high unemployment. Young people had few activities to occupy their leisure time, and residents' fear of being victimized by crime was increasing.

In this all-too-common story, areas once home to stable families, manifesting the vibrant spirit of community associated with the traditional American neighborhood, enter a

downward spiral of decay typified by declining housing stock, the frequent abandonment of dwellings, or a proliferation of properties allowed by absentee landlords to deteriorate and become overgrown with weeds. These neighborhoods gradually begin to show other signs of neglect, such as trash and litter, abandoned cars, and gang graffiti defacing walls.

Most conspicuous in such communities is the absence of normal neighborhood activity: There are no children on the playgrounds and no older people sitting on their porches. Instead, seemingly ubiquitous groups of young men congregate idly on street corners. Taken together, these components too often constitute the visible indicators of rising crime and fear.

## Arresting decay

Although decline began to become entrenched in Merrill, the citizens of Beloit did not sit idly by. They organized to reverse the situation, creating Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS), an organization funded by a community development block grant. Founded in 1979, NHS has two primary missions: to reduce and prevent crime, and to increase homeownership and improve the exteriors of dwellings. Improved appearances hopefully would motivate more people to buy homes in the area.

As its name suggests, housing is a major focus of NHS, but the organizers also built into the program a collaborative component consisting of several community partners. Among them are correctional programs, a youth organization (Beloit Positive Youth Development), the Merrill community center, the local health clinic, the area mental health agency, various city agencies (such as the community development office and the office responsible for municipal codes and compliance), and the area council on substance abuse.

Beloit's approach—mobilizing a broad community coalition to reduce crime through neighborhood revitalization—is not uncommon. Across the country, attention is increasingly being paid to reversing the now familiar pattern of urban decay and the crime that often accompanies it by enlisting the resources of practitioner organizations such as nonprofits, municipal agencies, and community- and church-based groups.<sup>1</sup>

## Linking theory and practice

Concurrently, academic and other research institutions have invested considerable efforts to document the nature and causes of urban decline, the patterns in which it is manifested, its human consequences, and the factors related to success. When

## Components of Successful Strategies: The Typology

The researchers examined hundreds of programs in specific neighborhoods that focused on preventing crime and reversing deterioration. The programs were nominated by experts as models of successful neighborhood revitalization. The communities selected had to be able to document the primary strategies they used and to explain the rationale for selecting them.

The researchers reviewed relevant studies to define attributes and made refinements on the basis of information from the programs. They used both sources to develop a typology or set of attributes characteristic of successful community strategies.

The typology<sup>2</sup> consists of two major categories: 1) strategies based on crime prevention through environmental design (“CPTED”) and active defense of neighborhood spaces, and 2) those approaches involving development of the commitment and capacity of neighborhood residents to act collectively to prevent crime. Within each category are a number of more specific strategies:

### *CPTED/Neighborhood Defense*

Physical improvement

Situation management

Increased active surveillance

### *Collective Action*

Community investment and economic development

Investment in human capital

Community organization

communities like Beloit organize to reduce crime and revitalize neighborhoods, they are guided, explicitly or implicitly, by the theories advanced in these research studies. Finding out which theories underlie and explain successful practice was the goal of a study conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum and The Urban Institute.

Using the findings of these studies and examining hundreds of programs aimed at crime reduction and revitalization, the researchers developed a typology or set of characteristics that define effective strategies. (See “Components of Successful Strategies: The Typology.”) The typology can be used to guide development of subsequent neighborhood-based crime prevention programs. Merrill typifies the conjuncture of theory and practice; it demonstrates how activities at the community level reflect concepts based on research and the practices of other communities that have been effective in reducing crime.

The elements of this typology, which groups strategies into two basic categories, are elaborated in the following sections. Strategies used in Beloit are highlighted.

### CPTED/neighborhood defense strategies

**Physical improvements.** Generally, two reasons are advanced for physi-

cal improvements, which are basic to most revitalization programs. First, they are a way to reduce or remove visual cues that indicate crime is tolerated and that contribute to fear. Second, they can reduce the availability of spaces perceived by offenders as conducive to criminal activity or as poorly defended by legitimate users. Efforts to improve the physical environment include:

- Removing litter and trash from streets, parks, and other public

places as well as around residences; removing graffiti and abandoned automobiles.

- Painting murals, trimming shruberies and trees, and adding plants to increase green space.
- Condemning residences and other buildings, when rehabilitation is not practical, by enforcing building or health codes and nuisance abatement ordinances or by taking title through asset forfeiture laws.



*An orderly environment contributes to a sense of safety.*

- Decreasing density by limiting occupancy, capping construction of multifamily units, restricting conversion of single-family homes to multifamily units, or demolishing buildings to create open spaces.

- Obtaining historical designation to preserve dwellings or increase resources for the often costly maintenance of older houses that contribute to a sense of place.

**Situation management.** Often used in conjunction with physical improvements, situation management is conceptually related to “routine activities theory,” which holds that crime can be prevented by modifying or manipulating the social or physical environment to increase the odds that an offender will be observed or apprehended. Often, potential crime targets are identified

and changes are made to reduce their vulnerability through target hardening.

Variations include activities that regulate behavior and may involve changing pedestrian or vehicular traffic patterns, placing desirable shoplifting targets near checkout counters, or having windows face back alleys or other sites of potential illegal activities. Examples of situation management, all of which were adopted in Beloit, include the following:

- Regulating parking and traffic flow with signs or barriers placed in specific sites to subject prospective offenders to greater risk of being observed and apprehended.
- Controlling access to schools and other buildings, parks, public housing, or other potential “trouble

spots” through use of regulated entry.

- Monitoring the ways people gather, especially in public places, by enforcing loitering, trespassing, and public drinking laws.
- Limiting the hours or modifying the operations of convenience stores, liquor stores, or other businesses, as well as schools.
- Securing buildings, homes, and public spaces by installing or repairing windows and doors; installing bars, locks, or better hardware; replacing wooden doors with metal doors; and increasing and improving lighting.
- Increasing informal police monitoring of specific activities, adding more police personnel, and stepping up enforcement of municipal codes (such as those for traffic or parking).

**Increased active surveillance.** This tactic has the same rationale as situation management, but it is more proactive. In situation management, surveillance is often informal or passive, based on manipulating the routine use of space and time; increased active surveillance involves cultivating neighborhood defenders who serve as crime detectors. Typical examples are as follows:

- Creating citizens’ activities, such as establishing Neighborhood Watch or similar groups, training residents

for citizen patrols, and setting up tiplines and hotlines to report suspicious or criminal activity.

- Training private and public landlords to use leases to control tenants' behavior. Leases can be a civil law tool for eviction based on failure to comply with regulations against making noise, disturbing other tenants, and conducting criminal activity.
- Monitoring the activities of security guards and local law enforcement personnel.
- Placing security cameras in elevators, parking lots, and other sites.

## Developing citizen commitment and capacity

**Community organization.** This strategy involves building community capacity by expanding social networks and institutions that enable residents to act collectively to protect the well-being of their neighborhood. Community organizing increases cohesion by creating a sense of shared goals and norms, overcoming the social disorganization that may contribute to neighborhood decline, and developing resources for the neighborhood. Strategies include:

- Planning—to identify problems to address and solutions to adopt—through the establishment of resi-

dents' organizations and councils, parent groups, and crime prevention councils.

- Organizing such events as marches, fundraisers, rallies, and other special activities that bring residents together, rebuild community spirit, and promote friendships that bond neighbors as they work toward specific goals.

**Community investment and economic development.** These activities are designed to expand economic and social opportunities for residents and local businessowners. They enable residents to improve their standard of living by increasing access to legitimate jobs as well as facilitating property ownership. These activities include:

- Attracting business and economic development through tax credits, concessions on water and sewer costs, and other government-provided incentives.
- Providing homeownership opportunities to low-income residents to increase their investment in and commitment to the community.
- Establishing jobs programs and educational improvement policies in the schools.

**Investments in human capital.** These investments are designed to provide residents with skills and resources to increase their economic and social well-being. In doing so,

they reduce the economic motivation to commit crime and increase people's expectations of labor market access. Typical approaches include:

- Recreational opportunities to deter young people from crime.
- Mentoring and similar programs to enhance at-risk youths' self-esteem.
- Job training to improve work skills.
- Child care services and parenting education, particularly for young parents.
- Counseling and resources for pregnancy prevention (especially for teenagers) and counseling for at-risk youths and their families.
- Health care services, including treatment for alcohol, drug, and mental health problems.

## Program development: selecting and combining strategies

Program planners do not arbitrarily adopt an aggregate of unrelated activities. Instead, they construct programs on the basis of their perceptions, stated or unstated, of the links among elements contributing to neighborhood decline. In Beloit's NHS in the Merrill community, the two primary missions—homeownership and crime prevention—are viewed as related.

## Communities Mobilized Against Crime

Photo by Judy Reardon



*Providing recreational opportunity helps deter young people from crime.*

Homeowners are considered the “eyes and ears” of the neighborhood because they have an investment, which they are willing to protect through crime prevention. This is the reason why the program contains several components that encourage homeownership (an example of “community investment and economic development”). (See “Beloit’s Neighborhood Housing Services Promotes Homeownership.”)

**Organizations rarely use a single approach.** In addition to focusing on housing, NHS functions as a social services referral center and engages in such activities as publishing a neighborhood newsletter and sponsoring workshops on home landscaping and energy conservation. As previously noted, it

serves as a catalyst for collaborative efforts with other organizations. The citizens of Merrill also adopted a number of situation management strategies: lobbying their city council and police department to institute a foot patrol, and again lobbying the council to close a neighborhood tavern where shootings had occurred.

Research confirms that a single approach may not be as effective in achieving or sustaining the level of success as one that incorporates multiple, comprehensive strategies.<sup>3</sup> In Beloit, NHS developed a comprehensive approach by responding to problems and building on resources unique to Merrill. Since the organization is committed to building on “community capital,” the Merrill approach was to adopt programs on

the basis of community interests and concerns and on citizens’ willingness to act. Other communities, with different needs and resources, will tailor their own solutions.

### Practice reflects theory

The strategies used by organizations ranging from churches and community groups to municipal agencies and nonprofits to fight neighborhood crime and deterioration reflect the theoretical categories used in research on crime prevention. In implementing these strategies, program administrators rarely refer to the concepts of social disorganization, economic deprivation, subcultural norms, weaknesses in the

defensibility to place, and the social ecology of urban areas that have been identified by researchers.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, program administrators integrate these core concepts into their programs, tailoring them to fit specific community conditions. This is a considerable accomplishment, especially since they do so while facing the challenges of seeking funding and other assistance and conforming to the constraints often imposed on their programs by sponsoring organizations.

**Theory and practice can inform each other.** Researchers and program planners can both benefit from closer links between theory and practice. Planners may be more effective if they are conscious of the relationship of their strategies to theories of crime prevention and if they are familiar with research documenting successful interventions. At the same time, researchers need to test more explicitly the theories of crime control implicitly reflected in programs aimed at crime prevention and neighborhood revitalization. They then need to examine whether the theories reflect successful practice and to modify them. Moreover, these links and explanations should be framed in an understanding of the specific contexts of the neighborhoods where the programs are implemented and of the participating organizations that shape the choice of strategies.

## *Beloit's Neighborhood Housing Services Promotes Homeownership*

Among the several components of Beloit's revitalization program that encourage homeownership, the most important is the NHS Homebuyers Club. It focuses on the following:

- Reducing barriers that may restrict access to ownership (such as lack of resources for a downpayment).
- Providing guidance about selecting a home, helping prospective buyers decide where to live, and identifying the characteristics of desirable and less desirable neighborhoods (such as age of dwellings and amount of living space).
- Teaching homebuying skills.
- Holding workshops on lending, budgeting, and financial goal setting.
- Conducting real estate field trips to prepare for homebuying.

NHS also provides resources for rehabilitating both houses and rental properties through a loan program and offers rehabilitation counseling.

### Notes

1. The situation in Merrill described here, and the community response, reflects conditions that existed when this study was conducted and that may have changed since then.

2. Other crime prevention classification schemes have been suggested by, for example, Aaron Podolefsky and Fredric Dubow in *Strategies for Community Crime Prevention: Collective Responses to Crime in Urban America*, Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1981; and in *Situation Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies*, ed. Ronald V. Clarke, New York: Harrow and Heston, 1992.

3. Podolefsky and Dubow, *Strategies for Community Crime Prevention*; and Cook, Royer F., and Janice

A. Roehl, *Preventing Crime and Arson: A Review of Community-Based Strategies*, Reston, VA: Institute for Social Analysis, 1983.

4. The categorization of theories related to crime and neighborhood decay is presented in detail in Harrell, Adele, and Caterina Gouvis, *Predicting Neighborhood Risk of Crime*, Report to the National Institute of Justice, Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1994.

*Deborah Lamm Weisel is senior research associate with the Police Executive Research Forum; Adele Harrell, Ph.D., is director of the Program on Law and Behavior at The Urban Institute. The research for their study was supported by NIJ grant 91-IJ-CX-K016.*

# The Federal Role in Revitalizing Communities and Preventing and Controlling Crime and Violence

by Catherine Conly and Daniel McGillis

**A**fter years of being on the defensive against escalating crime and violence, communities across the country have begun to take the offensive, developing ambitious, multifaceted strategies to reclaim and revitalize their neighborhoods. The Federal Government has been encouraging and supporting such cooperation through considerable financial and technical assistance, with the hope that communities will eventually be able to sustain their progress through local public and private resources.

## Federal initiatives to stimulate community-based planning and action

In recent years the U.S. Department of Justice has made a significant investment in community-based efforts to prevent and control crime. In addition, the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Labor, as well as the Corporation for National Service, have made substantial contributions to community planning and program development. (See “Selected Federally Sponsored Community-Based Initiatives.”) Although not necessarily focused on crime prevention and control, programs funded by these other agencies often aim to ameliorate conditions that place community residents at risk for crime and violence.

## Efforts in specific neighborhoods

A number of federally sponsored programs, such as those described below, seek to provide intensive assistance to relatively small geographic areas, such as neighborhoods or housing developments.

**Cleveland’s RAPP House.** The Justice Department’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services is sponsoring the Residential Area Policing Program (RAPP) in Cleveland to provide targeted neighborhoods with intensive community policing and related services. In early 1995 the Cleveland Police Department converted a dwelling into a RAPP House in a neighborhood consisting of approximately 180 mostly multi-family homes. Nine police officers staffed the RAPP House around the clock (three officers per shift) for a 3-month period, after which the local community association planned to maintain many RAPP House activities in conjunction with the local police district. Two additional RAPP Houses were to be put in operation for 3 months each in other troubled neighborhoods in Cleveland later in the year.

After conducting a survey among neighborhood residents to find out their views of local problems and potential remedies, the police worked with other city agencies and the community to crack down on crime in the neighborhood and to

clean up and revitalize the area. For example, the police conducted a sweep of the area’s many drug dealers and had more than 40 junked cars on the streets towed away. The city’s housing department demolished the abandoned house next door to the RAPP House. The resulting vacant lot was used as a play area by youths visiting the RAPP House, which has served as a safe haven for local youths—for afterschool activities or just socializing with each other and the RAPP House officers. The RAPP House also is used for community meetings, parenting classes, and police auxiliary members’ gatherings.

**Weed and Seed program.** The Weed and Seed program, sponsored by the Department of Justice in 36 cities across the country, involves a concerted effort both to arrest and prosecute offenders (weeding) and to develop services—such as safe havens for youths and job training programs—to reduce risk factors associated with crime (seeding).



The Seattle Weed and Seed program, for example, targets the city’s Central District, a community with approximately 14,000 residents

which, in turn, comprises 8 neighborhoods, each roughly the size of the Cleveland RAPP House target area. Weeding by the Seattle Police Department has included intensive sweeps of drug dealers, enhanced community policing, and measures to target police resources on housing projects and other troubled portions of the community. Grants for seeding, awarded by a community advisory council, have supported 14 activities, including afterschool programs sponsored by the Urban League, the YMCA, and Girls, Inc.; job training by local organizations; and community revitalization and business development programs operated by local community development corporations.

Initial results on the impact of the Seattle Weed and Seed program are promising. An extensive survey found dramatic improvements perceived by residents in the Weed and Seed target area in police responsiveness to community concerns, police effectiveness in keeping order, satisfaction with city services, willingness to get involved in the community, and perceived safety on the streets. Residents of a comparison area did not identify these changes.<sup>2</sup>

**Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program.** The Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) program, sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), required that grant applicants prepare

comprehensive strategic plans. These plans emphasized economic development in targeted distressed areas (including tax incentives for businesses that located in them) and

delivery of social services. In December 1994 HUD awarded Empowerment Zone grants to six urban areas (\$100 million each) and three rural areas (\$40 million each).

## *Selected Federally Sponsored Community-Based Initiatives<sup>1</sup>*

### *U.S. Department of Justice*

Community Policing Programs  
Project PACT (Pulling America's Communities Together)  
Operation Weed and Seed  
Comprehensive Communities Program  
SafeFutures: Partnerships to Reduce Youth Violence and Delinquency

### *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*

Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Program  
Family Investment Centers  
Public Housing Drug Elimination Program

### *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

Community Partnership Demonstration Program  
Community Demonstration Grants  
Family Preservation and Support Program  
Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program  
Community-Based Family Resource Program

### *U.S. Department of Education*

Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program  
Community Schools Youth Services and Supervision Grant Program

### *U.S. Department of Labor*

Youth Fair Chance Program  
Job Corps Program

### *Corporation for National Service*

AmeriCorps  
National Civilian Community Corps  
AmeriCorps VISTA Program

## Communities Mobilized Against Crime



*This park was cleaned up to eliminate drug use.*

In addition, HUD designated 95 localities as Enterprise Communities; they pursued community development goals similar to those of the Empowerment Zone grantees but received only \$3 million each. Another four communities received \$25 million each, and two others—Los Angeles and Cleveland—were designated as supplemental Empowerment Zones and received \$125 and \$90 million, respectively.

### Initiatives focused on entire cities and metropolitan areas

In contrast to these programs, some Federal initiatives have focused on larger jurisdictions. A prominent example is Project PACT (Pulling America's Communities Together),

funded in two metropolitan areas (Atlanta and Denver), one city (Washington, D.C.), and an entire State (Nebraska). These demonstration jurisdictions may, in turn, develop highly targeted antiviolence efforts in specific neighborhoods. Project PACT organizing committees in each demonstration site have brought together a cross section of community members and leaders from government and the private sector, encouraging much needed coordination across local, State, and Federal governmental initiatives, nonprofit group and community organization activities, and other programs operating in these jurisdictions.

The PACT programs may over time develop the capacity to serve as a valuable broker for resources and cooperation in their jurisdictions.

The PACT initiative also seeks to coordinate Federal resources in Washington, D.C., across the many participating agencies (the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy) to assist in local planning and implementation.

### Other Federal support roles

In addition to providing funding, Federal agencies have played a number of other supportive roles. (See "Joining Forces with the Private Sector: The National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention" for an example of public and private cooperation.)

#### **Encouraging full-scale community involvement.**

As a condition of funding, many Federal programs require that communities assemble multidisciplinary planning teams that combine various professional disciplines (e.g., law enforcement, public health, and housing) and include a mix of government and private-sector representatives, community leaders, and residents.

These teams assess community needs and resources, develop program strategies, monitor implementation, offer regular opportunities for communication with residents, and seek additional sources of funding. For example, the Project PACT

planning team in Denver designed and now oversees the area's Comprehensive Communities program, an approach funded by the Justice Department to provide multifaceted responses to combat crime in 16 cities. PACT planners also have been instrumental in recruiting local foundations to support other community-based violence prevention and control programs.

**Providing incentives for colocation.** To better coordinate Federal initiatives, some Federal funding opportunities assign priority to projects that locate services in communities where Federal programs already exist. For instance, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has specified that four of the six sites receiving funding under its SafeFutures program (a comprehensive effort to address risk and protective factors affecting young people) must be Empowerment Zones or Enterprise Communities. Moreover, through funding mechanisms such as the Ounce of Prevention program, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has promised to give special consideration to grant applications that propose projects in EZ/EC sites.

**Providing technical assistance.** Federal sponsors are providing community-based planners with information on planning and implementation processes, program models, evaluation methodology,

and related topics. Ideally, Federal technical assistance will help to create and bolster local capacity. After participating in several federally sponsored training workshops on community policing, participants in Denver's Comprehensive Communities program created a consortium of local experts to provide training and technical assistance on that topic to law enforcement agencies throughout the metropolitan area.

**Communicating information.** The Partnerships Against Violence Network (PAVNET) is a key example of information exchange and communication. Developed with funding from the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, under the leadership of the National Institute of Justice and the Department of Agriculture and with information provided by more than 30 Federal clearinghouses, PAVNET presents information on promising anti-violence programs as well as on funding and technical assistance resources. One of its distinctive features is its availability through the Internet.

In addition, several recent publications inform communities about the array of Federal funding opportunities related to the prevention and control of crime and violence. In May 1995 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention produced a *Matrix of Community-Based Initiatives*, which summarizes major public and private commu-

nity-based crime prevention and economic development initiatives nationwide. In September 1995 the President's Crime Prevention Council released *Promoting Responsibility: 50 Programs that Help Communities Help Their Youth*. It lists important questions for community planners engaged in designing crime prevention strategies and describes 50 Federal crime prevention initiatives.

**Conducting research and evaluation.** In addition to sponsoring evaluations of major federally sponsored programs, Federal funding agencies are helping to ensure that community-based planning and implementation can access the most current research information on community crime prevention and control. For instance, Federal agencies have supported materials development and technical assistance for risk-focused prevention models, the core components of Project PACT, the Comprehensive Communities program, and the SafeFutures program.

## Continuing challenges for Federal involvement

Since many of the programs presented here are being carried out simultaneously in the same site, there is a continuing need for: 1) coordination among Federal agencies to avoid duplication and to

### *Joining Forces with the Private Sector: The National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention*

Pooling and leveraging resources is the mission of the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention—an unprecedented partnership of communities, private foundations, corporate grantmakers, Federal agencies, and other experts in violence prevention. Established in 1994, the Collaborative grew out of the philanthropic sector's search for a way to work collectively on the issue of violence. As its name suggests, the Collaborative advocates a coordinated approach that includes the widest possible participation, engagement of diverse disciplines, and integration of multiple perspectives.

**Local and national orientation.** The Collaborative subscribes to the belief that the most powerful force for countering violence is the power of the community. For this reason, the need for local communities to define their issues and devise targeted solutions is paramount. But as the name also suggests, the Collaborative's vision is also *national*. It will serve as a national forum for advocating violence prevention, raise and leverage funds from national and local sources, provide technical and evaluation assistance, and promote information sharing among local initiatives.

The emphasis is on low-income communities, rural and urban, with populations of at least 100,000. In addition to the Department of Justice and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 15 foundations and corporations have joined the Collaborative to date. Among others, they include the American Express Company, the California Wellness Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the William C. Graustein Memorial Fund, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. In the 3-year period ending in mid-1998, the Collaborative anticipates that up to \$15 million may be leveraged for violence prevention.

**Work under way.** Community foundations in 12 sites nationwide received support in April 1995 for a 15-month period of planning, during which local collaboratives were

established to assess community needs and resources and to develop comprehensive goals. The sites are:

Flint, Michigan  
Knoxville, Tennessee  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
New Haven, Connecticut  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
New York, New York  
Oakland, California  
Rockford, Illinois  
San Antonio, Texas  
Santa Barbara, California  
Spartanburg, South Carolina  
Washington, D.C.

Local violence prevention strategies will be put into operation on the basis of these goals during the next 2-year implementation phase when national support will be matched on a 2-to-1 basis by the communities themselves. Depending on the site, strategies will include cultivating youth leadership, integrating government services, effecting change in housing and law enforcement policies, and preventing domestic violence.

The collaboratives directing the local initiatives are interdisciplinary and multisectoral; in most sites they encompass stakeholders in the faith, business, public health, mental health, and law enforcement communities. In several the local media also are involved.

**Next steps.** A cross-site evaluation of the planning and implementation phases will be conducted by the COSMOS Corporation. In an ongoing process of discovery, the Collaborative will disseminate information about effective strategies. An education campaign aimed at private funders will be launched to increase their interest in supporting violence prevention and to introduce them to prevention strategies.

**Continued on page 29**

Continued from page 28

**Knoxville—an example.** The East Tennessee Foundation's project, situated in and around Knoxville, serves two primary sites: rural Cocke County and one of Knoxville's inner-city neighborhoods. The broader region served by the foundation is marked by problems of poverty; the city neighborhood site has high unemployment and relatively low educational levels. As in many other parts of the Nation, fear of crime heads the list of problems cited by opinion surveys, and this perception is backed by data on increases in crime, particularly youth crime.

The initial focus of the project will be development of strategies to prevent interpersonal violence, with proto-

types created for rural and inner-city communities. The first step will be to fund "listening projects" modeled after a process in which someone from the community interviews and gathers information from residents. All stakeholders will be involved in the project, among them families, youth groups, churches, social service agencies, and law enforcement officials. The strategy will emphasize development of social competence, problem-solving skills, and a sense of self and purpose among young people.

*Further information may be obtained from the National Funding Collaborative at 815 15th Street, N.W., Suite 801, Washington, DC 20002 (phone 202-393-7731; fax 202-393-4148).*

ensure that gaps in services are filled cost-effectively, 2) evaluation to sharpen understanding of specific program contributions, and 3) flexibility in the Federal response to local concerns.

**Coordinating across Federal agencies.** Communication among Federal agencies currently engaged in community development and crime prevention and control is being addressed in a number of different forums, although much remains to be accomplished. The President's Crime Prevention Council, for example, was created by Congress in 1994 to coordinate Federal crime prevention programs and to encourage community-based crime prevention. It is chaired by Vice President Gore and includes high-ranking officials from a number of Federal agencies.

Coordination also is occurring at the agency level. For instance, the Department of Justice formed a

Community-Based Initiatives Working Group to integrate information on departmental programs. Similarly, individual Federal programs are being coordinated on a multiagency basis. For example, Project PACT has been supported by an Interdepartmental Working Group consisting of representatives from the Departments of Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Finally, multilayered coordination is also a key feature at the site level. Regional boards help coordinate the activities of several EZ/EC sites, while local EZ/EC boards develop and manage community-level activities.

**Developing benchmarks for evaluating the Federal role.** It is important to study these community-based strategies so they can be refined over time. The development of measurable benchmarks could be

helpful for assessing progress in such areas as: 1) Federal interagency coordination, 2) coordination between Federal agencies and local agencies and organizations, 3) the establishment of practical, multifaceted plans for combating crime, 4) the implementation of such plans, and 5) the extent to which the processes and effects of implementation are objectively evaluated.

**Responding flexibly to community needs.** Community-based organizations often express concern that the Federal Government's categorical funding streams and complex regulations impede the development of many important community ventures. Efforts are under way to make Federal approaches less directive and more flexible. EZ/EC approaches, for example, include tax incentives, flexible block grants, waivers and flexibility with existing Federal resources, and priority consideration for discretionary funding.

Photo by  
Eugene E. Hebert



## Conclusion

The Federal initiatives discussed here have considerable potential to help American communities combat crime and violence. As might be expected, programs centered on relatively small areas can provide intensive law enforcement and related services for the areas, but it may be difficult for them to affect the overall array of referral services available to needy individuals. At the other extreme, city or metro-wide programs can bring together agency leaders and funding sources to ensure that a range of services geared to reducing crime and risk factors is available across the jurisdiction, but they usually cannot also provide intensive attention to any one specific neighborhood.

Ultimately, policy planners will need to work at the various jurisdictional levels—ranging from small neighborhoods to cities and States—simultaneously and in a coordinated fashion to maximize the particular

*Cleaning graffiti and trash from the streets can help deter crime and revitalize neighborhoods.*

benefits of each level. Such multiple approaches have begun in some jurisdictions. Together, if managed effectively, the programs could constitute a “full-court press” against crime and community decay in a single city. The Federal Government can give this strategy its fullest force

by continuing to facilitate the development of comprehensive, community-based programs and by encouraging teamwork among all players.

## Notes

1. For further information on these programs and related ones, see Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Matrix of Community-Based Initiatives*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, OJJDP, May 1995.

2. Institute for Social Analysis, *Baseline Data Collection Effort for the National Evaluation of the Weed and Seed Initiative: Final Report*, Washington, D.C.: U.S.

Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, August 1995.

---

*Catherine Conly and Daniel McGillis are both researchers at Abt Associates Inc. in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

# The Community's Role in Community Policing

by Wesley G. Skogan

**D**iscussions about community policing often involve a number of assumptions about the role that the community will play. These assumptions often appear on reflection to have been arrived at too casually. It is usually anticipated that citizens will be eager to step forward to work with police. Discussions of problem solving frequently assume that police and residents will engage in joint as well as coordinated efforts to tackle neighborhood problems. There even is talk about the role that police can play in fostering the development of community organizations and mobilizing the organizations in problem solving and community-building activities.

It is also widely assumed that crime *prevention* is probably more dependent on the community than on the police side of the community policing equation and that in the final analysis, the police play an ancillary role in maintaining social control. In this view, the police can keep their part of the bargain by being more "customer oriented." They will be more effective when citizens' priorities help shape their agenda, and the subsequent buildup of trust will rebound in the form of greater police-citizen cooperation and mutual support.

## Challenges in sustaining community involvement

Although the community side of community policing is as critical as any, many cities have experienced difficulty getting neighborhood residents involved. The Vera Institute of Justice found in its NIJ-sponsored study of community policing in eight cities that "all eight...sites experienced extreme difficulty in establishing a solid community infrastructure on which to build their community policing programs."<sup>1</sup> The researchers concluded that, of all the implementation problems these programs faced, "the most perplexing...was the inability of the police departments to organize and maintain active community involvement in their projects."<sup>2</sup> They found that the list of problems in sustaining community involvement in policing was long.

**Police-citizen cooperation.** Above all, police and citizens may have a history of not getting along with each other. Especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods, there too often is a record of antagonistic relationships between residents and the police, who may be perceived as arrogant, brutal, and uncaring—not as potential partners. Residents may fear that more intensive policing could generate new conflicts be-

tween them, including harassment and indiscriminate searches.

This concern about police behavior was documented in a recent study of community policing in Chicago. It revealed that Hispanics and African Americans were almost three times as likely as whites to think that police serving their neighborhoods were impolite and more than twice as likely to think they treated people unfairly. Among Hispanics, about 35 percent felt police were not concerned about the problems facing people in their neighborhoods; 25 percent of African Americans but only 15 percent of whites also felt this way.

**Organizational involvement.** Organizations representing the interests of community members also may not have a track record of cooperating with police. Low-income and high-crime areas often lack the organizational infrastructure needed to get people involved. Since their constituents often fear the police, groups representing low-income and minority areas may be more interested in monitoring police misconduct and pressing for greater police accountability to civilians, not in getting involved with them.

Research that has examined participation in crime prevention programs has revealed that in disadvantaged

neighborhoods it is not easily initiated or sustained. Crime and fear stimulate withdrawal from, not involvement in, community life. In crime-ridden neighborhoods, mutual distrust and hostility often are rampant; residents may view each other with suspicion rather than neighborliness, and this undermines their capacity to forge collective responses to local problems. Because they fear retaliation by drug dealers and neighborhood toughs, programs requiring public meetings or organized cooperation may be less successful in areas with high levels of fear.

**Understanding community policing.** It is also difficult to get out the community policing message. Nothing in the past has really prepared many Americans for this new police mission. Residents are unlikely to understand community policing's goals and tactics. Vera Institute researchers found in their eight-city study that none of the cities had recognized the need to train residents in their appropriate roles. They concluded, "[A]ny potential for the success of community policing will be limited if major commitments to community education and training are not forthcoming."<sup>3</sup>

There also may be no reason for residents of crime-ridden neighborhoods to think anything about community policing except, "here today, gone tomorrow." Too often their past is strewn with broken promises

and programs that flowered but then wilted when funding dried up or newspapers looked the other way. They are rightly skeptical that it will be any different this time, especially when they discern that the police officers they deal with are not fully committed to the program.

**Victims' experiences.** Research indicates that people with direct, personal experience with crime are much more dissatisfied with police service (when other factors are held equal). The experience that crime victims often have with the criminal justice system has been referred to as "the second wound." During the 1970s there was a great deal of interest in providing better police service to victims, and in many places victims of domestic violence and sexual assault continue to receive specialized treatment. Few community policing programs, however, seem to feature services for victims.

**Community diversity.** Some of these problems multiply when program boundaries imposed by police departments bundle together diverse communities. Suspicion and fear may divide the area along race, class, and lifestyle lines, leaving residents and the organizations that represent them at odds with one another. They will probably point fingers at each other over who causes what problems, and the police are likely to be pressured to choose sides. Groups contending over access to housing, municipal services,

infrastructure maintenance, and public-sector jobs and contracts also may find themselves battling one another over policing priorities and for the ear of the district commander.

Community policing then threatens to become politicized. In an evaluation of community policing in Houston, researchers found that the program favored the interests of racially dominant groups and the established interests in the community. This was reflected in turn in the impact of the program, whose positive effects were confined to whites and homeowners.<sup>4</sup>

The Houston experience illustrates that policing by consent is difficult in places where the community is fragmented by race, class, and lifestyle. If, instead of trying to find common interests in diverse areas, the police deal mainly with elements of their own choosing, they will appear to be taking sides. It is easy for them to focus community policing on supporting those with whom they get along best and share a similar outlook. As a result, the "local priorities" they represent will be those of some in the community but not all. Critics of community policing are concerned that it can extend the familiarity of police with citizens past the point where police professionalism and commitment to the rule of law control their behavior. To act fairly and constitutionally and to protect minority rights, the police

must sometimes act contrary to majority opinion. As one criminologist notes, community policing must develop a process by which officers can be given sufficient autonomy to do good without increasing the likelihood of their doing evil.<sup>5</sup>

## Can it work?

Can community policing live up to the expectations of its supporters? Can the public get involved and see clear benefits from the program? The answers to these questions are not clear, for few systematic evaluations of community policing have examined the role of citizen participation in any detail. Most of my observations are drawn from an ongoing evaluation of a community policing program in Chicago.

**The support of the public must be won, not assumed.** Police need to be responsive to citizens' concerns, and they have to be able to deliver on community policing's commitment to neighborhood problem solving. Responsiveness requires organizational design: There have to be regular and widely recognized channels by which the public can articulate its concerns and priorities, and there has to be assurance that someone who is responsible for responding at the police end is listening carefully. In Chicago the mechanism is beat meetings. These small gatherings are held all over the



Photo by Judy Reardon

*Ministations help police to be more “customer oriented.”*

city on a regular schedule; they bring together residents and the officers who work in their area to discuss community problems.

The capacity of the police to deliver on commitments they make to deal with those problems has been greatly enhanced by the city's effective integration of community policing with the efforts of other city service agencies. Beat teams are able to command quick attention to problems they identify as priorities. People will come back to meet with police again if they see that concrete things happen as a result of their attendance.

**Train citizens, not just police.** The public needs to know what they can expect from the police and what they themselves can contribute to coordinated neighborhood problem-solving efforts. They have been trained in the past to call 911

quickly when a crime occurs, but now the range of issues the police may get involved in and the repertoire of responses they can bring to bear has greatly increased. These are sophisticated concepts, and community policing may require some aggressive marketing so that citizens will understand their new powers as consumers of the wide range of products now being offered by customer-oriented agencies. The public also has to understand that theirs is not just a passive role and that “police-community partnerships” are a two-way street. When they discuss possible solutions to neighborhood problems, police are going to ask what resources and personal commitments residents can bring to the table.

Once they are trained, residents are in a much better position to make informed judgments about their priorities, be they programs for

victims or more aggressive action against abandoned cars. Untrained citizens are likely to define their expectations of police in traditional terms and expect more patrols and arrests to solve their problems for them. Trained residents are more likely to understand how they can confront the parents of troublemaking youths, picket irresponsible landlords, boycott merchants who refuse to clean up their alleys, and use their clout to extract resources from the city for neighborhood problem-solving efforts—all things that the police *cannot* do.

**Get organizations involved.** One of the conclusions of the Chicago evaluation is that it is difficult to sustain autonomous citizen action, even with the support of the police. Community policing needs community organizations. Organizations develop agendas that keep their energies focused even when key leaders tire or turn to other affairs. They provide a locus for identification and commitment, and they provide important social benefits for participants. This commitment and solidarity can in turn sustain the membership during tough moments or in the face of extraordinary demands on their time. Organizations are needed to turn people out for

meetings even when the weather is bad. They also lend supporters of community policing the political capacity they may need if the program flounders, threatens to get off track, or needs protection from its opponents.

Public forums and organizations are also good places to confront diversity issues. We have observed organizations working in support of community policing struggle to build their political base in parts of their district that they previously had ignored. We have seen citizens rise in beat meetings to ask where minority residents of their beat were and how more could be encouraged to attend the gatherings. District-level advisory committees that represent all major factions have brought together leaders of warring groups in a forum that encouraged them to identify concrete problems and solutions acceptable to all. Sometimes this took a year because the political interests they represented were real and truly conflicting ones. Community policing programs, however, are not immune from the forces that often impede the development of effective collective responses to community problems.

## Notes

1. Grinc, Randolph M., “‘Angels in Marble’: Problems in Stimulating Community Involvement in Community Policing,” *Crime and Delinquency*, 40, 3 (July 1994):442. See also Sadd, Susan, and Randolph Grinc, *Implementation Challenges in Community Policing: Innovative Neighborhood-Oriented Policing in Eight Cities*, Research in Brief, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, December 1995.
2. Grinc, “‘Angels in Marble’”: 437.
3. *Ibid.*:455.
4. Skogan, Wesley G., *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Cities*, New York: The Free Press, 1990.
5. Mastrofski, Steven, “Community Policing as Reform: a Cautionary Tale,” in *Community Policing: Rhetoric or Reality?*, eds. Jack Greene and Steven Mastrofski, New York: Praeger, 1988:47–67.

*Wesley G. Skogan, Ph.D., is a professor of political science and urban affairs at Northwestern University. He currently is conducting an evaluation of Chicago’s community policing program, with support from NIJ grant 94-IJ-CX-0046.*

# What Is Community Prosecution?

by Barbara Boland

**M**ore than anything else, community prosecution is an organizational response to the grassroots public safety demands of neighborhoods, as expressed in highly concrete terms by the people who live in them. They identify immediate, specific crime problems they want addressed and that the incident-based 911 system is ill suited to handle. The typical problems involve quality-of-life and disorder offenses, although in high-crime areas these issues are overtaken by more serious crime.

The new prosecutorial response, which for the most part is arising outside existing organizational structures, is exemplified in an experiment in the district attorney's office of Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon. The Portland experience illustrates the extent to which community prosecution is a radical departure from conventional notions of dealing with crime. Similar experiments are being conducted in other jurisdictions.<sup>1</sup>

## Impetus and beginnings

Late in 1990 the district attorney for Multnomah County assigned one of his most experienced senior deputies to work for 1 year on a neighborhood-based prosecution project in Portland's inner-city Lloyd District.



*Beautification is one approach to addressing quality-of-life crimes. Community prosecution is an organizational response to such crimes.*

Just across the Willamette River from the city's vibrant new downtown, the district in the past decade had undergone sweeping change that transformed the previously declining industrial/residential area into a major commercial district.

During the transformation period, government and civic leaders became concerned that criminal activity in the district could seriously reduce the economic benefits promised by investment. Citizens' perceptions that the district was not as safe as other areas were confirmed by crime data and compounded by gang and drug problems in adjacent neighborhoods.

**Call for a neighborhood prosecutor.** In keeping with the city's strong civic traditions, Lloyd District business leaders mobilized a response by forming a business association and creating a public safety committee. The committee's broad base of support included the district attorney and representatives from the Portland Police Bureau. After studying the safety issue, the committee drafted an action plan that listed specific strategies and tactics, such as better lighting and coordination of private security. A message that clearly emerged was the need for intensified public law enforcement, with a call for more officers and a more visible police presence. The

committee, however, made an unusual request—for assignment of a special prosecutor to the district.

The committee wanted this prosecutor to address its concern about the lack of consequences in the downtown courts for criminal activity that adversely affected district business. So resolved was the committee that it came up with private money to pay for the prosecutor. This proposal raised the issue of service inequity, but because safety in the Lloyd District was determined to be important to the city's economy, the district attorney approved a 1-year pilot project on condition that public funds would be forthcoming if it succeeded.

**The movement spreads.** Simultaneous with these developments was a similar movement in the adjacent North and Northeast (North/NE) neighborhoods, which were among the city's most crime plagued and drug infested. Here, the business community was joined by community activists and rank-and-file citizens. The coalition's "rescue plan" called for a vigorous law enforcement response. Although the plan did not include a request for a special prosecutor, a year after the Lloyd District project began, the district attorney dispatched a county-financed neighborhood prosecutor to work with citizens in North/NE.

The idea caught on. The business association serving downtown Portland launched a similar project, funding a pilot Neighborhood District Attorney (NDA). Two more NDAs were sent to other parts of the city and county, and a sixth went to work for the regional transit authority. This brought the district attorney very close to his goal of complete county coverage with public funding.

### What citizens really want

When citizens who are concerned about crime state their demand that something be done, they invariably express this demand in traditional law enforcement terms. This was so in Portland, where drafters of the North/NE rescue plan unequivocally stated their wish for more police, even specifying exactly how they wanted the additional resources used. The same was true of the Lloyd District committee, which asked for a more visible police presence. The special prosecutor was to focus on repeat offenders, an approach well within the traditional scope of the prosecutor's role. Initially, the attorney to be assigned envisioned the job in conventional case processing—arrest and conviction—terms.

**Grassroots concerns.** Conventional notions about crime and prosecution were countered by what was learned

from experience. The Lloyd District special prosecutor quickly saw that people's concerns were more immediate than he had imagined. They wanted something done about prostitution, public drinking, drug use, vandalism, assaults, littering, garbage, and "car prowls" (thefts from cars). None of these problems fits traditional notions of serious crime, and (with the exception of car prowls) none is even included in official police counts of crime.

The situation at Sullivan's Gulch in the Lloyd District illustrates this type of concern. In this natural depression where two railroad lines intersect, transients hop off trains and camp illegally. The number of illegal campers had exploded by the late 1980s, and they regularly ventured into nearby commercial/residential areas to buy liquor, drink, urinate publicly, and fight. The problem was particularly troublesome to the business community because it coincided with the efforts to revitalize the Lloyd District. None of these problems is a serious crime, yet they raised serious concern among citizens.

### Disorder, fear, and crime

The concerns about Sullivan's Gulch are a classic example of the association of disorder with crime and fear of crime that was first brought to light more than two

decades ago in research on foot patrols. Reintroduction of this tactic in a 1970s policing experiment was found to have no measurable impact on crime, yet citizens reported feeling safer. They felt safer because public order increased as the foot patrol officers, along with citizens, established implicit rules of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after the experiment, the now widely referenced “broken windows” thesis was published. Stated in brief, it holds that “serious crime flourishes in areas where disorderly behavior goes unchecked.”<sup>3</sup> That disorder escalates into serious crime was confirmed in subsequent studies.<sup>4</sup> This research validates the concerns of Lloyd District citizens about seemingly minor offenses like the ones in Sullivan’s Gulch.

### What NDAs do

The approach initially envisioned—a courtroom focus on specific cases and categories of crime—quickly gave way as attorneys assigned to specific neighborhoods saw their jobs would extend beyond prosecution. In fact, the project name was changed from Neighborhood Prosecutor to Neighborhood District Attorney to reflect this realization.

In general, NDAs work with citizens and police to help come up with ways to control the types of street behavior and low-level disorder that

## Cleanup at Sullivan’s Gulch

Grass now grows on the former site of “cardboard condominiums,” the name given to the illegal campsites that once made Sullivan’s Gulch in Portland a disorderly and unsightly place. Not only has the problem been solved, but camps as large as the ones here have not reappeared in other areas. Sullivan’s Gulch was once a place where unruly behavior threatened to escalate into crime and spill over into commercial and residential areas from this gully where railroad lines meet.

Community prosecution provided the solution. On the basis of citizens’ views of the underlying problem of transients’ illegal camping, the NDA reasoned that increased police visibility and arrests were not likely to work in the long run. Stepped-up, targeted patrol and crackdowns might work for a time, although most likely the problem would reappear when police moved on to other areas. Nor was permanent commitment of new resources an option, given the competing demands on the police.

The goal became one of clearing up the illegal camping problem. A long-term plan involving an initial police sweep and a city cleanup was adopted. The NDA negotiated a team effort of citizens and police to post signs which read “No Camping” on one side and listed addresses of shelters for the homeless on the reverse. He also enlisted citizens to patrol the gulch at regular intervals and to notify police of the reappearance of any camp sites. Essentially the solution was to persuade campers to disperse. The police began to use this tactic, rather than arrest, and citizens themselves followed suit.

threaten neighborhood safety. An important part of the NDAs’ role is to provide answers, feedback, and explanations—especially explanations of legal constraints that prohibit the police from doing what citizens think they ought to do to deal with certain conditions. The NDAs’ core activity, however, is devising alternative responses.

**Using the law in new ways.** The alternatives include using the law in innovative ways (e.g., resorting to civil remedies), reconfiguring resources (e.g., getting people to work together in new ways), and conducting behind-the-scenes negotiations to bring diverse parties to the table.

To do all this, NDAs must wear many hats: facilitator, legal counselor, negotiator, problem solver, and community advocate. What NDAs do *not* do is litigate. The way the problem at Sullivan’s Gulch was resolved typifies the approach. (See “Cleanup at Sullivan’s Gulch.”)

**Problem-oriented prosecution.** The NDAs’ work is like community policing in being problem, rather than incident, oriented. It departs from community policing in addressing problems that tend to be longer term and larger in scope. In a sense, the case file never closes. Once a problem is brought under control, NDAs continue to monitor

### Portland's North/NE Neighborhood DA

Covering roughly one-fourth to one-third of Portland's land area, and including about one-third of the city's half-million residents, the North/NE area fell prey to gang and drug problems following the introduction of crack.

The NDA, equipped with a cellular phone and a truck that served as his office, was assigned to North/NE in 1992. By the time he arrived, citizen groups and community police officers were hard at work combating drugs and gangs and dealing with "liveability" issues. His first task was to provide citizens and police with easy access to the district attorney's office.

In North/NE neighborhoods less seriously affected, problems centered on classic disorders, such as public drunkenness, drug use, prostitution, visible trash, abandoned automobiles, and illegal dumping. One of the first successes, in the Kenton neighborhood, came when the NDA helped curb chronic public drunkenness in the business district. Using police-generated data that identified a handful of alcoholics as the source of several hundred calls for service, he simply persuaded local liquor stores not to sell to them.

In higher crime neighborhoods, disorderly behavior became intermixed with drug and gang activity. "Problem properties"—drug and gang houses associated with crack dealing—were the major problem.

Civic activists and police agreed that what the NDA had that they most needed was legal expertise, and he quickly established himself as a resource. Sometimes this meant providing legal advice on proposed strategies before they were launched. Sometimes it meant having a representative of the district attorney's office accompany the police to "knock and talk" sessions. (This tactic involved visiting problem properties to advise drug dealers living there that complaints were being investigated.) Sometimes it meant developing new legal tools, such as the citizen-driven search warrant.

the situation themselves or through a network of citizens and police officers. Part of the job, in other words, is to "stay on it."

#### An approach, not a "program"

The work of the NDA unit is not guided by clear-cut procedures that apply uniformly to all situations. In

other words, it is not a program. To be effective, the new approach requires a highly flexible organization that allows NDAs to shape responses and strategies to meet the different needs of different neighborhoods. What concerns residents of one neighborhood may be irrelevant to another. Moreover, neighborhood conditions change over time, and street behaviors are dynamic and constantly changing,

making prescribed operations of no value. Organizational capacity to adapt is essential.

The work of the NDA in North/NE is illustrative. He has devised innovative uses of the law to deal with "problem properties" in which gang and drug activity are involved. These include enabling property owners to make it easier for police to arrest trespassers, using civil eviction, and drafting city ordinances to close down nuisance properties. (See "Portland's North/NE Neighborhood DA.")

#### New tools

Neighborhood DAs could easily occupy themselves full time with ad hoc requests for legal advice, but their most valuable contribution is coming up with new options—new legal tools citizens and police can use when conventional ones fail. This approach typically requires facilitating coordinated action by various agents and drawing on input from citizens and police. Even solutions arrived at by informal negotiations, however, need to be solidly grounded in the law.

The "citizen-driven search warrant" devised by two NDAs to deal with low-level drug dealing in owner-occupied houses in North/NE is one example. Owner occupancy meant that eviction through enforcement of landlord-tenant laws was not possible. In the targeted property, there



Photos courtesy of the Office of the District Attorney for Multnomah County, Oregon.

*Sullivan's Gulch before and after cleanup.*

were no code violations, and all taxes had been paid, eliminating these avenues of redress. Moreover, the police had not been able to make an undercover buy.

The solution took the form of a citizen-neighbor informant recruited by a police officer. Using a drug observation log sheet developed by the NDA, the informant observed the house for several weeks and recorded suspicious activity. At the same time the officer conducted random surveillance to verify the accuracy of the observations and obtained corroborative data from police reports.

The information was used to obtain a "telephonic search warrant." When the informant telephoned the police officer to report a probable purchase, the officer in turn phoned a judge, who immediately au-



thorized a search of the house. After the search produced 100 retail-size packages of marijuana, the residents were indicted and the case was assigned for prosecution.

Standard operating procedures were developed for citizen-driven search warrants, and the new tool now is used on a regular basis in North/NE and other parts of the city and county.

## The emerging organizational response

What the Neighborhood District Attorneys in Portland are doing is first and foremost citizen driven, in both initiation and response. The critical element in providing what citizens need is connecting the legal expertise of the district attorney's office with what goes on in the street. The attorneys who work in the field re-

peatedly note, “You don’t see this downtown.” It is when they come to see what the police see and to know what citizens know that their focus broadens from the narrowly defined task of assessing legal culpability in a particular case to the broader question of how to take all the circumstances of a neighborhood problem into account.

NDAAs have learned that a singular focus on case-by-case adjudication of guilt is not always sufficient because even if the culprit is removed, the problem persists. In such situations the NDA will capitalize on community initiative, facilitating development of public safety strategies by the police and citizens. And because street behavior is dynamic and difficult to predict, the most successful of these strategies will be multifaceted. They require trying everything within reason, monitoring what happens, dropping what does not work, and adjusting tactics as the situation unfolds. Only

a network—of police, citizens, the local government, and “downtown justice”—can get this job done.

In this new approach to reducing crime, the flexibility needed to get the job done requires a new organizational arrangement. More than anything else, this consists of the direct, two-way communication NDAAs have created to link themselves to citizens and police—the people who understand better than anyone the problems they face.

## Notes

1. In Portland, community prosecution deals largely with quality-of-life issues and low-level “disorder” crimes, but elsewhere there are similar organizational responses to serious, violent crime. In New York County (Manhattan), the district attorney’s office has established community prosecution units for violent crime as well as quality-of-life crime. In Washington, D.C., the

U.S. attorney’s office first introduced community prosecution to deal with homicide and now is extending its reach to all types of crime. Suffolk County (Boston) and Marion County (Indianapolis) have adopted neighborhood-centered initiatives to respond to serious crime as well as disorder.

2. Kelling, George, et al., *The Newark Foot Patrol Experiment*, Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation, 1981.

3. Wilson, James Q., and George Kelling, “Broken Windows,” *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1982):34.

4. Skogan, Wesley G., *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Cities*, New York: The Free Press, 1990.

---

*Barbara Boland, a Visiting Fellow at NIJ, is a consultant in prosecution issues.*

# Community Defense and the Challenge of Community Justice

by Christopher Stone

**F**or public defenders, the transformation of the other parts of the criminal justice system from a series of offender-processing machines to a set of community justice services presents both a welcome opportunity and a challenge. The machines were designed to respond to 911 calls, make arrests, produce convictions, and punish offenders. Ironically, their efficiency can improve even while crime soars. Public defenders working in such a system sometimes conceive of their mission as gumming up the works, although a more objective assessment would recognize them as primarily another link in the offender-processing chain.

Community justice services, by contrast, aim to identify and solve the problems that foster crime and injustice. The transformation from machine to service is most advanced in police departments, although it also is under way in prosecution, court management, and corrections. For defendants, if the change means new opportunities to solve structural problems that have compromised public defense for the past 30 years, the community justice movement may be the best thing to come along since the Supreme Court in *Gideon v. Wainwright* recognized indigent defendants' right to counsel.

## The Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem

The Neighborhood Defender Service (NDS) of Harlem was an experiment aimed at developing and testing new ways of organizing and deploying public defenders that can solve problems of justice in the community while providing high-quality representation at a cost government can afford. Begun in 1990 by the Vera Institute of Justice in partnership with the city and State of New York, the 5-year project operated alongside the far larger Legal Aid Society, New York City's institutional defender.

NDS has differed from traditional public defenders in its relationship to its client base, staff structure, and priorities. The 5-year demonstration period has ended and the future of

NDS is uncertain, dependent on its obtaining alternative funding.

**Client base.** Like any public defender, NDS has represented individuals accused of crimes who could not afford private lawyers. But while traditional public defenders are based at courthouses to handle court business, NDS has been based in the community. Instead of waiting for the court to assign NDS to represent clients, NDS has encouraged Harlem residents to call the office any time, the way more affluent people would call their attorneys. This relatively minor change in intake procedure has given NDS a few more hours before a client is in court to gather information and, more significantly, has created a wholly different attorney-client relationship that continued to pay dividends long after the case was over. It is the public defender's equivalent of a commu-

Courtesy of Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem



### Community Education

Many traditional defense firms encourage their lawyers to become involved in community education or mentoring, but very few organize community education programs for prospective clients. Having based itself in Harlem, the NDS staff felt compelled to help the children of Harlem avoid the problems its clients were confronting.

The result was a formal program for high school students to train them in keeping conflict with police officers from escalating into arrests or violent confrontations. By drawing from cases involving students whom NDS had defended, the discussions and role-playing of the 10-session curriculum were anchored in reality. More important than content was the commitment of the office to use its daily case work as the raw material for a course of positive instruction in the community.

nity police officer exchanging the 911 queue for a neighborhood beat.

**A team approach to staff structure.** In contrast to the usual practice of assigning each client a single attorney, each NDS client has been represented by a team. Each team has consisted of attorneys, community workers, an administrative assistant, an intern, and a senior attorney who served as team leader. One attorney has had principal responsibility for each case, but everyone on the team was aware of the activity in each of the team's cases. If a client ever had another case, it was handled by the same team.

NDS adopted this structure to increase efficiency by making extensive use of nonlawyers and to ensure continuity of representation over time. In addition to producing these benefits, the structure also unexpectedly heightened accountability. In traditionally structured offices only the attorneys know what they are or are not doing on a case, and they answer principally to themselves.

At NDS, team members, whether lawyers or not, challenged each other in a common effort to represent each client as well as possible.

**Shifted priorities.** In a traditional defender office, the highest priority is given to cases about to go to trial, with little priority given to cases just begun, and none given to former clients or anyone who does not have an active criminal case in court.

NDS turned this priority system on its head, assigning the highest priority to investigating and advocating for clients at the start of their cases, sometimes even before arrest. Teams were held accountable for the amount of work accomplished early in the case—in the first 4 weeks. Community workers gave priority to helping former clients avoid problems on probation and parole that might otherwise produce new cases.

Changing priorities in professional organizations is difficult and is one source of resistance to community justice. For public defenders, assign-

ing priority to trials reflects their pride in this work more than their judgment about what benefits the most clients. NDS also took pride in winning trial cases, and trial work still received a higher priority than many other stages of representation; but however, trial work was removed from the pinnacle of NDS office culture, just as arrests and convictions have been demoted as part of community policing and prosecution reforms.

### Serving families and communities

At the start of the project, no issue produced more disagreement among staff than the ability to serve clients' families. Some of the notions held by well-intentioned, committed defenders illustrated how little even some good defenders in traditional offices know about their clients and the communities from which they come. Within a few months, however, the whole staff came to know Harlem as a series of interconnected family networks, and NDS became essentially a family service. (See "Community Education.")

**Help for a relative in trouble.** Those who planned NDS expected that people arrested in Harlem would call NDS from precinct houses or would ask a friend or relative to call. But the great majority of calls came from parents, grandparents, spouses, and children who

were trying on their own to get a lawyer for a relative who had been arrested. NDS also regularly received calls from relatives asking for help in arranging voluntary surrenders to the police. From the start of a case, this meant there was often an insider who could help obtain information, assist in locating witnesses, and ensure the client appeared in court.

Relatives usually called out of concern for the person's safety as he or she entered the criminal justice system. Some callers understood the value of a lawyer in protecting a defendant's legal rights at this early stage, and some hoped that a lawyer could get a defendant out quickly. But most hoped that NDS could insulate their relative from unspecified harm during initial processing. Just by being there, NDS was providing a service for families.

### **Mediation between neighbors.**

NDS was able to deal with the social realities of neighborhood disputes that court-based prosecutors are rarely familiar with. These relatively minor disputes can often be mediated outside criminal courts, but they are taken to court because the parties know of no other way to resolve them. There is the shop owner who just wants a teenager from up the street to apologize, the woman who is angry at her boyfriend, the desperate young man who wants the boys down the block to stop picking on him. The wrongs these people

suffer are real, but in order to get help from the criminal justice system, they may exaggerate the crimes. Then the system takes over and the complainants lose control.

Traditional criminal justice processing ignores these problems. It moves the cases along, crafting plea bargains to crimes that neither the victim nor the defendant believes occurred but that neither the defense nor the prosecution has time to investigate. NDS could not ignore this social reality, and as a result, much of its practice grew into helping the traditional system dispose of the fictitious cases with its eyes closed so that others could mediate the real disputes.

**Noncriminal matters.** The legal problems that result from an arrest are not exclusively matters for the criminal courts. A parent arrested may lose custody of children, a family whose son is arrested for selling drugs may be evicted, or a person may be injured as a result of police misconduct during an arrest.

Traditional defenders confine themselves to defending their clients, and they generally assume that clients face the most serious consequences in the criminal courts. By contrast, NDS represented its clients in any matter arising out of a criminal accusation.

Early on, NDS represented a woman accused of abusing an infant foster child. Although medical evidence

eventually proved her innocent, for more than a year she faced attempted murder charges and termination of parental rights over her two children in family court. Her NDS team represented her in both courts—itsself a novel practice. But the real novelty was her lawyers' acceptance of her view that the family court case was more important than the criminal case.

The decision to sacrifice strategic advantage in the criminal case for the sake of the family case was a turning point in the practice of law throughout NDS. The teams became more flexible and responsive to the wishes of clients and their families. Thus, a young client might choose to plead guilty and do time on a drug charge to give his mother, also a client, a better chance of winning her eviction case. NDS teams acquired expertise in counseling clients about such choices because NDS first learned how to litigate the noncriminal cases and then to listen to client and family concerns.

### **Cost-effectiveness**

The creators of NDS believed the project would produce faster case disposition, less pretrial detention, and less jail and prison time. This would happen because by working on the case earlier and knowing the client and community better, the community defender would bring more information into the process at an earlier stage in ways that would

### *The Tradition of Community Defense*

None of the features of community defense originated with NDS. There always have been lawyers for the indigent providing elements of what might be called community defense, just as for decades individual police officers have been trying to engage in what is now called community policing. Shortly after the 1963 *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision, lawyers for the poor began organizing community-based legal services that provided both civil and criminal representation.

Several lawyers tried to provide *comprehensive* legal services although that proved impractical because of differences in the kind of funding for criminal and civil legal services. Even in the absence of comprehensive legal services for poor communities, neighborhood-based public defense was still a possibility in cities with decentralized courts, such as Chicago and Boston, where neighborhood-based offices became laboratories for expanding the meaning of public defense services.

The Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem was a new stage in the development of community defense services. Like the Chicago and Boston experiments of the 1970s, NDS maintained aggressive outreach—including placing posters in subway stations, widely distributing business cards, and participating in community social and educational events—and put heavy emphasis on investigation and social services. In funding, operations, and goals, NDS was more integrated into the criminal justice system than its Boston and Chicago predecessors. The increased cooperation was possible because of growing interest in community justice on the part of the local and State governments and the promise of savings in other parts of the criminal justice system.

lead judges and prosecutors to end cases more quickly with less severe sentences.

To test that hypothesis, the outcomes of NDS cases begun during its first 2 years of operation were compared with cases handled by the traditional system.<sup>1</sup> The findings revealed that NDS clients did receive significantly shorter sentences, but they were not released at their first court appearance in significantly greater numbers than clients

of traditional defenders, nor were their cases concluded significantly faster. When translated into dollars, the savings from shorter sentences were considerable: 150,000 bed-days or about \$10 million—more than twice the entire budget of the program—for the cases NDS began in its second year.

The failure of NDS to significantly reduce detention decisions at the initial bail hearing can be explained by the fact that New York City de-

tained very few defendants before trial, so a community defender would need to make a great difference to have any impact. Moreover, NDS was present at the initial hearing in only about half the cases because the defendant engaged NDS only after the hearing. This suggests the need for representation from the start if there is to be a substantial impact.

The failure to speed time to disposition suggests that defenders have less influence on pretrial delay than planners initially believed. Experiments conducted in the mid-1980s had shown that early provision of defense counsel produced some reduction in pretrial delay and in the number of appearances per case,<sup>2</sup> but “early” defense in those experiments had been provided from the first bail hearing. The NDS experiment suggests that community defenders who start even earlier may not produce any faster resolution of cases than defenders who are present from the initial court appearance.

The real cost-effectiveness of NDS comes down to the impact on sentencing. Whether the result came from plea negotiations or sentencing advocacy, it reflects the cumulative benefit of all the services community defense provided: deeper understanding of clients through continuity of representation and better investigation, better presentation of sentencing options through greater connection to community

*People expect both safety and justice and do not want to sacrifice one for the other.*

resources, and greater ability to represent residents' support for a less severe sentence than a prosecutor might seek. (See "The Tradition of Community Defense.")

**Safety and justice**

Whatever the future of NDS, its experiences can inform the development of public defenders and the community justice movement in general. Community policing focuses on the underlying problems in communities that generate high crime. If prosecutors, judges, and corrections officials do the same, they will find opportunities to forge alliances with defenders whose clients share an interest in eliminating problems that produce crime.

Equally important, defenders can remind their colleagues that communities experience problems with justice as well as with crime. The treatment of families and individuals by the criminal justice system in heavily policed urban communities often is disrespectful and sometimes criminal. Community defenders need to identify these problems and devise strategies for solving them. NDS has refined some familiar ideas of how to do so and contributed a few of its own.

In the broadest terms, the lesson that emerges from the last 5 years of work in Harlem is that people expect both safety and justice and do not want to sacrifice one for the other. Community justice services of every kind represent the best hope of delivering both.

**Notes**

1. Sadd, Susan, and Randolph Grinc, "The Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem: Research Results from the First Two Years," New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 1993.
2. Fazio, Ernest J., Sandra Wexler, Thomas Foster, Michael J. Lowy, David Sheppard, and Juliet Musso, *Early Representation by Defense Counsel Field Test: Final Evaluation Report*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1988.

---

*Christopher Stone is president and director of the Vera Institute of Justice, Inc.*

# Community Courts: Prospects and Limits

by David B. Rottman

This country once had what were, in effect, community courts. The attachment between the courts and their communities grew weak as urban areas expanded. But the trend is growing again to build attachments between communities and courts. Although the history of community courts is complex, it suggests the parameters within which future courts will develop.

Prospects and limits for community courts are seen in the few existing models for comprehensive court and community collaboration. The contrasting examples of “Peacemaking” in the Navajo Nation’s court system and the Midtown Community Court and Red Hook Community Justice Center in New York City are discussed here as touchstones for exploring the possibilities of community-focused courts.

## Court centralization and its legacy

From the start of this century to its middle, the agenda for court reform was set by Roscoe Pound, dean of the Harvard Law School. Pound was keenly aware of the ties that once bound courts and communities in an era when limitations on transportation prevented litigants from traveling without great inconvenience. Gradually, physical distance became

less of a barrier to access, but the real change came in the shift away from the dominance of the homogeneous, rural community. Pound wrote that the type of community that emerged was one in “which our legal institutions had no experience.”<sup>1</sup>

**Factors promoting the shift.** Cities required new types of courts, notably ones specializing in business law, juvenile offenses, and small claims.<sup>2</sup> Legal specialization and professionalization were the twin engines of change. New types of disputes and the increasing involvement by lawyers as judges and as advocates led to the creation of different types of courts.

Their number and variety proliferated accordingly; in 1931, 556 courts were serving the citizens of Chicago.<sup>3</sup> That expansion was of greater concern to reformers than the prospect of estrangement between courts and communities. As a result, 65 years later, a single court with a main courthouse and 10 satellite locations serves the city of Chicago. The pattern of consolidation of trial courts into a single location was repeated many times. The rationale was efficiency and coordination, but one result was that courts became less visible to the community.<sup>4</sup>

There were other, less evident motives for consolidation. Reformers

like Pound wanted to sever the link between the courts and local politics; they used court unification, along with specialization and professionalization of the law, to do this. They also wanted to eliminate jurisdictional overlaps and thus prevent litigants from “shopping” for a sympathetic judge and court.<sup>5</sup>

## Steps toward a renewed community focus

During the 1960s and 1970s, the national commissions on crime promoted a quest for the justice system’s community roots by espousing citizen participation. Harbingers of a renewed community focus can be found within the traditional court structure from the 1960s onward. Court-watching programs, judicial disciplinary commissions, and permanent court advisory committees flourished. The primary goal of most of these early efforts was limited to serving as “conduits of information” between the courts and the community.

**Court devolution.** More recently, in response to pressures to provide better service, courts are decentralizing facilities. Some have adopted the ATM machine as their model: A court system permitting access at many remote locations enables people to file forms or pay fines and

fees. This enhances convenience, but it does not constitute collaboration with the community.<sup>6</sup>

**Citizen participation.** If by the mid-1980s opportunities for citizen participation in the courts were not plentiful, they were expanding. (See “Community and Court Involvement Varies in Purpose and Type.”)

During the 1990s, the widespread adoption of community policing encouraged extension to the courts of similar approaches. The underlying premises for involving the community with the courts are that urban social problems manifest themselves as problems for the courts and that, in turn, fair adjudication of cases requires consideration of the context for understanding these problems that only the community can provide.

**Community-focused courts.** A community-focused court is a more expansive effort still, requiring ongoing collaboration between a trial court and one or more community groups either for a specific purpose or in a major aspect of the court’s adjudicatory scope. This definition does not generally encompass programs that consist primarily of court outreach, such as public education. On the other hand, court “inreach” (e.g., court monitoring) comes closer to meeting the definition, particularly if its objective is to forge a more broadly based connection between court and community.

## Court and Community Involvement Varies in Purpose and Type<sup>7</sup>

### Program Purpose

Better court practices

Better public access

Increased public knowledge of courts

### Program Types

- Citizens’ advisory committees
- Futures commissions
- Public opinion and exit surveys
- Community volunteer panels
- Court-watching programs
- Teen courts
- Judicial evaluation programs
- Citizen sentencing panels
- Telephone hotlines
- Divorce workshops
- Day-care facilities
- Information kiosks
- Courthouse tours
- Citizen guides
- “Meet your judge” programs
- School outreach
- Media outreach
- Public service announcements

### The unique community of a court

Why has a genuine community focus been so slow to reemerge in the Nation’s trial courts? Courts lack law enforcement’s easy affinity with the community that has allowed community policing to achieve

prominence. When people talk about their police force, they have in mind a local entity with a distinct image, a high-profile official in charge, and a set and knowable boundary. Police officers are visible, entering every neighborhood of their jurisdiction. Courts do not have this clear identity.

**An indistinct image.** To most people, the term “the courts” conjures up an amorphous image of the judicial branch in which local, State, and Federal jurisdictions merge without distinction. Courts are remote and mysterious, and while police chiefs are known in their communities, the chief judge is not. Furthermore, the organization he or she heads consequently lacks a human face. Lack of knowledge about what the courts do—and about which court does what—is pervasive.

This amorphous image is supplemented by the public’s ambivalent opinion of the courts. Survey research reveals a judiciary that has great confidence in the courts but a public that consistently rates them lower than other public institutions (although not lower than the other two branches of government).<sup>8</sup> All this makes collaboration between courts and communities difficult.

## What is the community of a court? Three models

Some different models exist for a community-focused court today.

**Navajo Peacemaking.** In the late 19th century, traditional Navajo approaches to resolving disputes were superseded by the imposition of a court system rooted in Anglo-American adversarial justice.

Subsequent reforms recreated a role for Navajo traditions and principles in the judicial process.

The infusion of Navajo values is most evident in the Peacemaker Division of the Navajo Nation judicial branch, which emphasizes nonadversarial processes in dispute resolution. The formal components are a peacemaker, who is an individual of recognized ability and wisdom, the disputants and their extended families, and the use of Navajo religious ceremonies. Peacemaking, however, often operates within the framework of such familiar proceedings as intake interviews and subpoenas, and the resulting agreements can be incorporated into court orders.<sup>9</sup>

Peacemaker sessions follow a similar pattern: Ground rules are established, prayers are said, all people present are involved in investigation and questioning, a problem-solving statement is crafted, a summary is prepared by the peacemaker, commitment is made and solidarity is achieved, and, finally, prayer is said again. Sessions average 2 or 3 hours but can last for several days, and they address problems ranging from marital discord to land disputes. The objective is healing. There are no winners and losers.

Peacemaking depends for its authority on the community, as manifested by the extended families and clan membership of disputants and

peacemakers. Peacemakers are selected by the disputants from the individuals so designated in their local areas. Most importantly, however, peacemaking depends upon, and also reinforces, the complex matrix of ties and responsibilities woven into the larger Navajo community by clan, kinship, and tradition.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Midtown Community Court.**

The Midtown Community Court (MCC) in New York City exemplifies the renewed interest in bringing high-volume, short-duration criminal cases back to communities through satellite and branch courts. MCC, however, adds a significant community component. The community is viewed as having a major stake in how well the courts adjudicate cases involving quality-of-life crime. In turn, the court’s ability to better adjudicate such cases is seen as heavily dependent on the active involvement of community groups. Consequently, community groups provide opportunities and supervision for sentences to community service and offer social services within the courthouse, augmenting the traditional—mainly governmental—providers. The treatment, health, support, and educational services are available to local residents as well as offenders. In addition, a community advisory board was formed and a mediation program was established to address disputes within the community.

Courtesy of Midtown Community Court

The geographic boundaries of MCC embrace 3 of Manhattan's 21 police precincts, which together account for 34 percent of all misdemeanor arrests in the borough. Times Square and the Theater District are near the court building (on 54th Street), as are the neighborhoods of Chelsea and Clinton. The area's population, which numbers about 120,000, ranges from immigrant working class to professional middle class.

Research evaluating MCC is using an abstract, less geographically based definition than is appropriate for policing.<sup>11</sup> MCC's environment contains a business community that extends from some of the country's largest and most powerful organizations, such as the New York Times and owners of some of the world's most valuable real estate, to a multitude of small retailers whose financial situation is often precarious. The economic and political clout of the residents is dwarfed by some of these institutions.

The community is also distinct because it includes sections of the city, like Times Square, that are perceived as territory common to all New Yorkers and to many non-New Yorkers. This communal ownership and membership make it particularly relevant to think about community in a way that embraces the people who work in, shop in, or otherwise use the area served by the court, without disregarding the greater stake that residents have.



But only 7 percent of the criminal defendants live in the court's community. Court proceedings are limited to misdemeanor arraignments, which are not spectator events because court language consists largely of penal code numbers punctuated by acronyms. Because no witnesses, civilian or police, are called and no jurors sit in judgment, there is no obvious drama.

Although MCC is not located in a major residential area, conceptually it is, however, an integral part of a larger community effort. Its establishment coincided roughly with the ongoing revitalization of the Times Square area. A comment by a participant in a focus group session of community leaders reflects the sense of multiple change agents and the integration of the court into them:

Everyone acknowledges that the Times Square area is better, but it's very hard to assess who gets

the credit. Is it because of the Times Square BID [Business Improvement District], or is it because of the Midtown Court? And when you go on Lower Ninth Avenue, below 40th Street, there it's not only the Times Square BID, but it's the Fashion Avenue BID and it's the 34th Street Partnership that maybe caused changes—around Penn Station, around Macy's.

This court is a community court, most fundamentally because of its contribution to the broader array of partnerships and collaborations among local organizations and residents' groups in Midtown Manhattan that are dedicated to the general betterment of the area.

**The Red Hook Community Justice Center.** The community court concept is to be given different expression in a criminal justice center to be located in the Red Hook section

of Brooklyn, New York. Planners responsible for the Midtown Community Court are seeking to design a court that will respond to social problems prevalent in Red Hook, an area very different from Midtown Manhattan.

Surrounded by water on three sides and an elevated highway on its fourth side, Red Hook is an isolated community served by two police precincts. Decades of declining population have left a marginalized community of low-income residents, most of whom (more than 70 percent) live in an old, massive public housing complex.

The plan is for a justice center that “significantly expands traditional notions about the role of courts and tests the extent to which they are capable of serving as catalysts for change.” Features will include the use of local agencies to supervise community service sentences, general reliance on residents’ groups as partners with the court, and the presence in the center of services not currently located in Red Hook, including child care, law-related education, drug treatment, GED classes, job training, and job referral, as well as a variety of programs designed to fit the needs of young residents.

The court component will be tailored to specific kinds of disputes common in Red Hook. Traditional barriers between the State’s various lower trial courts are being disregarded to offer a comprehensive

jurisdiction in which much of the court business generated in Red Hook will be resolved there. Family cases will include those arising from domestic violence and at-risk youths. Civil cases will cover landlord-tenant disputes and small claims and will use mediation as well as traditional court processes. Criminal cases will be mainly quality-of-life misdemeanors and violations.<sup>12</sup>

### The future of community courts

These disparate models belie some commonalities useful for organizing a community-focused court. First, a community-focused court practices restorative justice. Emphasis in these models is on the ways in which disputes and crimes adversely affect relationships among community residents. A just resolution of a dispute addresses all concerned, including the community at large. Second, a community court treats parties to a dispute as real individuals rather than abstract legal entities. Third, community resources are used in the adjudication of disputes.

Community-focused courts will assume various forms, depending on the composition of the community and the nature of the problems brought before the courts. In MCC, for example, defendants are rarely residents and the emphasis is on quality-of-life crime. In Red Hook,

it is anticipated that defendants will be community residents, but family and civil disputes will be addressed as well. Navajo Peacemaking addresses a more expansive range of disputes, and its methods are distinct from the adversarial processes that MCC and the Red Hook Center must use.

**The potential process.** The potential exists for community-focused courts to offer a means to improve the performance of judicial institutions, respond to concerns about racial and ethnic bias, and increase public trust. Courts and communities have drifted apart largely because, with the best of intentions, reformers sought to distance courts from local politics. A move back inevitably reintroduces politics, although not the classic partisan variety. Rather, the courts will reflect the varied interests and conflicts inherent in any community, and for this reason the “community” of community courts will not be simple or homogeneous.

The potential for developing community-focused courts also depends to some extent on the legal profession. People want the opportunity to represent themselves in a wide range of disputes and to speak in lay terms. The demand is not met by adding more legal aid centers and more pro bono work by attorneys. What people want challenges the professionalization of the courts and their domination by lawyers—forces

*If there are to be community-focused courts, there must be court-focused communities.*

that originally contributed to the drift from community ties. Court and community collaboration today consequently depends on balancing the role of lawyers and the formalism they bring that militate against the influence of extralegal factors on the one hand and public expectations for user-friendly, problem-solving courts on the other.

Ultimately, the challenge of creating community-focused courts may lie with communities themselves. The low level of public knowledge about courts is a formidable obstacle to collaboration between courts and communities. For this obstacle to be overcome, organized community interests need to view the courts as a resource and as a vehicle for change. In other words, if there are to be community-focused courts, there must be court-focused communities.

Notes

1. Quoted in Tannenbaum, Frank, *Crime and the Community*, Boston: Ginn and Co., 1938:30.
2. See Friedman, Lawrence, *Crime and Punishment in American History*, New York: BasicBooks, 1993.
3. Glick, Henry, and Kenneth Vines, *State Court Systems*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973:25.

4. Johnson, Earl, *Courts and Communities*, Williamsburg, VA: National Center for State Courts, 1978.

5. Colonial-era legal philosophy and the anti-Federalists in the early 19th century stressed the virtues of local jurors as both factfinders and as the expression of the community's conscience. See Abramson, Jeffrey, *We, the Jury: The Jury System and the Ideal of Democracy*, New York: BasicBooks, 1994, chapter 1.

6. Planet, Michael, "Future Directions in the Practice of Court Management," in *Handbook of Court Administration*, eds. S. Hays and C. Graham, New York: Marcel Dekker, 1993:503.

7. The prevalence of various programs is assessed in two recent surveys, "The Court-Community Relations Survey," conducted by the National Center for State Courts in 1993, and "The Survey of Strategies to Improve Public Trust and Confidence," conducted by the American Judicature Society in 1994.

8. Two recent examples of surveys on the courts are the American Judicature Society's *Results of a National Survey of Strategies To Improve Public Trust and Confidence in the Courts*, Chicago, 1994, and the State-specific *Reinventing*

*Justice 2022*, Boston: The Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1992.

9. Caution is needed in seeking to abstract Peacemaking from its cultural and religious matrix. Justice Austin of the Navajo Supreme Court notes that studies of Navajo institutions often read "like Tony Hillerman novels. The characters are Navajos, but they do not think like Navajos, speak like Navajos, or act like Navajos." Austin, R., "Incorporating Tribal Customs and Traditions into Tribal Court Decisions," paper presented for the Federal Bar Association 1992 Indian Law Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

10. See Bluehouse, Philmer, and Jim Zion, "Hozhooji Naati'annii: The Navajo Justice and Harmony Center," *Mediation Quarterly* (1993).

11. The evaluation is being conducted under NIJ sponsorship.

12. Information on the Red Hook Community Justice Center is taken from a concept paper submitted in March 1996 by the Fund for the City of New York.

---

*David Rottman, Ph.D., is associate director of the Research Division at the National Center for State Courts.*

# Toward a Corrections of "Place": The Challenge of "Community" in Corrections

by Todd R. Clear

The new "place" orientation in the criminal justice system and in criminological research already has had major implications for crime policy and practice. This is perhaps most evident in policing, where the rediscovery of crime "places" has informed a community-oriented, problem-solving approach that has in many departments completely altered the nature of the profession.<sup>1</sup>

While the place orientation has now become familiar in law enforcement, it is less so in correctional practice. The term "community corrections" has been current for some time, predating by far today's discovery of place by other disciplines within criminal justice, but this currency is deceptive. In corrections, the term "community" does not stand for the problem-solving focus but instead often merely indicates that an offender happens to be living outside a correctional facility. This raises the question of what community corrections might learn from the place movement in criminology and law enforcement.

This article reviews some of the most important lessons of the place movement from other disciplines and proposes implications for correctional programming. The lessons of this movement in criminology and law enforcement pose five main challenges for corrections.



Courtesy of the Community Policing Consortium

## Five "crime and place" challenges for corrections

What may be called the place movement in fact comprises a broad array of initiatives and ideas. Some are theoretical, involving alteration in the way criminal behavior is viewed to include understanding of the context of criminal events. The movement would reconceptualize burglary, for example, to include not only the offender's motive but also other aspects of the crime situation, such as the vulnerability of the victim and the presence or absence of guardians. Some aspects of the movement are very practical. For example, the police are called on to engage in specific crime prevention activities with groups of community members who have defined a crime problem. Because the array of practical and theoretical manifestations

is so broad, there are numerous implications for corrections.

**Mission.** Since the devaluation of rehabilitation in the 1970s, corrections has been befuddled about its mission. Along with the devaluation of correctional treatment came a growing "get-tough" movement that has dominated correctional policy. It can be argued that by the 1990s the correctional system has taken a posture of unreconstructed punitiveness: Talk of correctional innovation today includes chain gangs, "people's prisons" with hard labor, harsh "boot camp" regimens for youngsters, and an end to such "amenities" as television, smoking, and weight lifting. All these approaches focus on the offender (or potential offender), and their goal is to convey an anti-crime "message" so reproachful that no law-abiding citizen would dare commit any transgression.

A place orientation recognizes that the criminal motivation of offenders, the focus of corrections practice today, is only one possible crime prevention target. “Routine activities theory” suggests consideration of two additional components—the existence of suitable targets and the absence of capable guardians.<sup>2</sup> Neither of these components of a crime is dealt with through an exclusively punitive focus, especially one that is excessively punitive.

A place orientation would call upon corrections to accept a subtle but crucial shift in its mission. Incorporating a place orientation takes the offender out of the center of the picture and inserts instead a concern for community safety. This opens up corrections to a larger variety of interventions that promote safety for all citizens, including offenders (who also live in the community). It even requires that the success of corrections be linked not merely to alleviating the suffering that citizens experience as a result of crime but to a larger (and considerably more attractive) pursuit of quality of community life.

This mission also shifts corrections’ accountability. A punitive orientation fixated solely on offenders addresses human suffering in a way that distorts interaction between correctional workers and their clients. In this perspective, accountability is measurable primarily in terms of the varieties and levels of misery result-

ing from crime. By contrast, a community safety mission is more concretely anchored in and oriented to achieving favorable results. The test of accountability becomes whether a particular action is better at improving community safety than alternative actions.

This mission shift also opens up a wider range of intervention targets. The corrections system can broaden its focus beyond the supervision of offenders to include such actions as working with victims, organizing community groups, and developing crime prevention strategies for specific crime problems. The central question becomes “What short- and long-term approaches promote a safer community?” Any answer has to recognize that offenders are members of the community and important consumers of safer streets.

**Geography.** Central to the idea of place is the orientation of criminal events in time and space. A major advance in this regard is geocoding of crime problems—the concept of crime “hot spots” comes directly out of the technology of geocoding.

The distribution of offenders who are released under correctional authority in communities and the situating of their activities in time and space can follow the same logic that applies to hot spots: When concentrations of offenders live in defined areas, concentrations of correctional resources can be provided.

In the same manner, areas of communities where large numbers of offenders work also can be correctional targets.

The idea of geographic alignment of resources is consistent with today’s correctional practice of risk assessment. In this thinking, places can be seen as posing a risk as well. In police work, for example, 10 percent of all locations generate fully 30 percent of calls for service,<sup>3</sup> and in corrections, up to 70 percent of offenders in a State prison system come from only seven localities.<sup>4</sup> Risk is thus related to place. Moreover, the place to which a person is paroled determines parole success independent of what the personal characteristics of the parolee might be.<sup>5</sup> In short, place-related classifications and workload arrangements should profitably augment offender-based classifications now widely used in correctional practice.

By thinking in terms of geography, correctional practitioners also may begin to consider dynamic risk factors. It is well known that offenders who are mobile are more likely to reoffend, but in some cases changing addresses may actually reduce risk. Moreover, the risk-generating potential of locations could be lowered if changes could be made in neighborhood characteristics (e.g., number of abandoned dwellings) and resources (e.g., number and type of local jobs).

**Crime prevention.** The place orientation that has become central to contemporary thinking about crime prevention also can be incorporated into correctional practice. The example of sex offenders illustrates how: With this type of offender, relapse prevention includes identifying family members, employers, and neighbors who are asked to be sources of information about the behavior of the offender, especially as it relates to “signals” of reoffending. This approach is consistent with corrections’ “routine activities” theory of the need for capable guardians. Corrections could expand the concept of “guardians” to other types of serious offenders who live in the community.

In the same way, correctional researchers can pay closer attention to situations in which reoffending is likely to occur, and correctional officials can place greater emphasis on altering or monitoring the offender’s entry and exit into these situations. Crime problem solving in which the community’s expertise is incorporated into crime prevention planning also can become a corrections technique in localities where there are concentrations of offenders. Similarly, design approaches can be applied by having correctional staff work with communities that are experiencing high levels of crime to identify ways that physical structures can be modified to deter criminal activity.

The implications of these approaches are to shift the attention of community corrections from intervening solely in offenders’ lives and toward implementing a spectrum of strategies for local crime prevention. But how does the community corrections worker identify the appropriate strategies? The answer has a great deal to do with the final two challenges: involvement and coordination.

**Involvement.** Today, correctional managers carry out their work with precious little involvement of anyone except perhaps energetic judges and (occasionally) volunteers. As a result, corrections is the object of a deep-seated community distrust, nourished by misunderstanding built upon ignorance. A focus on place can help change this by promoting local correctional initiatives that are ideally suited for involvement of victims, offenders, and community members.

*Victims* are part of a place orientation for several reasons. First, they are usually victimized near where they live, and they continue to live there afterward. Their understandable fear and resentment can be a major impediment to making a community safer and are a first priority for correctional staff. Using such approaches as restorative justice,<sup>6</sup> correctional officials can empower victims to reestablish control over their environment and feel safer.

*Offenders* are an untapped crime prevention resource. Too often, they are seen solely as targets of State control, but most offenders who live in high-crime areas have a personal stake in community safety. At the risk of oversimplifying, it can be said that offenders are familiar with criminal activity in the community, have links to situations promoting criminality, and have knowledge unavailable to the justice system about ways to confront crime. This is why some of the most successful crime prevention projects are run by ex-offenders.

*Community* involvement has changed the face of policing. The same could be true for corrections. The too-frequent call to “lock ’em up” is partly a response to an alienated public that discerns no accountability on the part of offenders or corrections system officials. When community members feel they can shape correctional policy by direct participation, they also will feel less estranged from the decisions made by officials, and they will feel inclined to shape their participation to be meaningful rather than antagonistic.

Involvement has two benefits with regard to place. First, it locates community corrections staff in the world of the people affected by the corrections process—offenders and the community. In so doing it resets the balance of corrections to include aspects of community safety that

*Corrections of place emphasizes community safety; the staff would be experts in crime prevention, not just offender management*

transcend mere supervision of offenders. It makes the lives of the people who live in the same location as offenders substantively meaningful in the corrections agenda. Second, it activates resources available in a given place and focuses them on correctional aims. People's time and effort become capital that corrections may tap.

**Coordination.** Social and justice system initiatives must be coordinated with corrections' community safety concerns. This coordination can begin by collocating correctional services with these other services. Demonstration projects in which probation and parole services have collocated with community police services, neighborhood prosecution offices, and even public schools are now under way and show great promise. Connecting services this way can strengthen the impact of the correctional activity while placing the corrections function within the larger context of public services affecting the lives of offenders and their families.

The image generated is of a geographically localized, multifunctional service delivery system in which several agencies, including those of the justice system, are working in collaboration to make the community safer.

Coordination within geographic locales is perhaps the ultimate realization of a place orientation to

justice services. The long-range intention would be for service strategies to evolve to meet local conditions and to emphasize approaches to community safety that most powerfully enhance the quality of life in the area.

### Impediments to a corrections of place

This application of place to corrections has powerful implications. It depicts local corrections systems in which all offenders who come from one community would be dealt with in that place. The emphasis of all correctional work would be on community safety, and the staff would be experts in crime prevention, not just offender management. Citizens, victims, and even offenders would collaborate to determine correctional policy, and these policies would be implemented in coordination with other services.

What is wrong with this picture? Several problems need to be resolved before there can be a true "community" corrections.

**Difficult offenders.** There will be limits on the types of offenders with whom communities can work. High-risk offenders will continue to require some form of control. Moreover, effective assessments are needed to determine the suitability of specific offenders for specific community-based activities. Over

and above any desire to reintegrate offenders, there must be practical ways to assess and control the risk of reoffending, especially serious reoffending.

**Tradition.** The correctional focus on case management of individual offenders is so deeply ingrained in penology that a broader conceptualization will require exceptional effort and some time. In existing practice, there also may be an antagonism between correctional workers and offenders that will be difficult to overcome.

**Standardized services.** Much correctional innovation in recent years has emphasized standardization of practice in risk assessments and case management systems. Standardization has its benefits, but it does not readily take community variations into account. A corrections of place requires flexibility that runs counter to this trend.

**Workload.** Most correctional systems are responsible for supervising a large number of offenders with limited staffing. If staff are not relieved of some direct case management responsibilities, it is hard to imagine how they will be able to take on added responsibilities.

**Inequality.** Perhaps the biggest impediment to change is extreme inequality in crime problems and anti-crime resources from place to place. In general, localities hardest

## Promising Starts in Community Corrections

- Vermont: Community boards assist in determining the conditions of supervision for offenders sentenced to probation and placed on parole.
- Madison, Wisconsin: Probation officers are aligned with police officers in teams to provide close monitoring of high-risk offenders.
- Spokane, Washington: Probation officers no longer have case management contact requirements; in their place, they are involved in a project that helps offenders buy their own homes.
- Portland, Oregon: Probation offices are housed with local neighborhood prosecution offices and work in tandem with selected offenders.
- New York City: Neighborhood justice centers (such as Manhattan's Midtown Community Court) provide an array of services to offenders, including access to postconviction program alternatives.
- Minneapolis-St. Paul: Probation staff operate a program in which victims and offenders meet to promote reconciliation and restoration of both to the community.

hit by crime are the least capable of assembling resources to combat it. They have the fewest organizations and the smallest human and social capital, and their residents are the least able to mobilize and organize. Some way will have to be found to reorient resources toward these localities.

### For the future

A list of some of the community corrections initiatives now under way appears to make evident that a corrections of place will not be an exact replica of place movements in other aspects of criminal justice.

They are, however, promising beginnings and they exemplify the way place is being rediscovered in corrections. (See "Promising Starts in Community Corrections.") The possibilities in these and other initiatives are nearly boundless and suggest the coming of truly "community-based" corrections.

### Notes

1. Goldstein, Herman, *Problem-Oriented Policing*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990.
2. "Routine activities theory" holds that crime occurs for three reasons:

The offender has a motive, the target is suitable, and capable guardians are absent. See Felson, Marcus, "Routine Activities and Crime Prevention in the Developing Metropolis," *Criminology*, 25 (1987):911-931.

3. Spelman, William, "The Criminal Careers of Public Places," in *Crime and Place: Crime Prevention Studies*, vol. 4, eds. John E. Eck and David Weisburd, Albany, New York: Harrow and Heston, 1996:115-142.

4. Clines, Francis X., "Ex-Inmates Urge Return to Areas of Crime to Help," *New York Times*, December 23, 1992.

5. Gottfredson, Stephen D., and Ralph Taylor, "Person-Environment Interactions in the Prediction of Recidivism," in *The Social Ecology of Crime*, eds. James M. Byrne and Robert J. Sampson, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1986.

6. Umbreit, Mark, *Victim Meets Offender: The Impact of Restorative Justice and Mediation*, Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press, 1994.

---

*Todd R. Clear, Ph.D., a Visiting Fellow at NIJ, is a professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University.*

# Selected OJP and ONDCP Publications About Communities, Crime, and Justice

Listed below are some recent Office of Justice Programs and Office of National Drug Control Policy publications related to issues of communities, crime, and justice. These publications are free, except as indicated, and can be obtained from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service: telephone 800-851-3420, e-mail askncjrs@ncjrs.org, or write NCJRS, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000. Please note that when free publications are out of stock, they are available as photocopies or through interlibrary loan.

These documents also can be downloaded through the NCJRS Bulletin Board System or at the NCJRS Anonymous FTP site in ASCII or graphic formats. They can be viewed online at the Justice Information Center World Wide Web site. Call NCJRS for more information.

## Community Involvement

*Evaluation of Boys and Girls Clubs in Public Housing*, NIJ Research Preview, 1995, FS 000100.

*Innovative Community Partnerships: Working Together for Change*, OJJDP Program Summary, 1996, NCJ 147483.

*Matrix of Community-Based Initiatives*, OJJDP Program Summary, 1996, NCJ 154816.

McGillis, Daniel, *Beacons of Hope: New York City's School-Based Community Centers*, NIJ Focus, 1996, NCJ 157667.

Sampson, Robert, Ph.D., *Communities and Crime: A Study in Chicago*, VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 156924, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24.

## Responses to Drug Abuse

*The National Drug Control Strategy: 1996*, ONDCP Report, 1996, NCJ 160086.

*Responding to Drug Use and Violence: A Directory of Public- and Private-Sector Drug Control Grants*, ONDCP, 1995, NCJ 153429.

*Rising Above Gangs and Drugs: How to Start a Community Reclamation Project*, OJJDP, 1995 (third printing), NCJ 133522.

## Responses to Youth Violence and Delinquency

Inciardi, James, Ph.D., *a Corrections-Based Continuum of Effective Drug Abuse Treatment*, VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 152692, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24.

*Bridging the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems*, OJJDP Bulletin, 1995, NCJ 152155.

*Combating Violence and Delinquency: The National Juvenile Justice Action Plan*, OJJDP Report, 1996, NCJ 157105; OJJDP Summary, 1996, NCJ 157105.

*Curfew: An Answer to Juvenile Delinquency and Victimization?* OJJDP Bulletin, 1996, NCJ 159533.

*Evaluation of Violence Prevention Programs in Middle Schools*, NIJ Update, 1995, FS 000094.

*Gang Suppression and Intervention: Community Models*, OJJDP Research Summary, 1996, NCJ 148202.

*Gang Suppression and Intervention: Problem and Response*, OJJDP Research Summary, 1996, NCJ 149629.

*Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders*, OJJDP

Update on Programs, 1995, NCJ 153571 (6 pp.); NCJ 153681 (255 pp.).

Harrell, Adele, Ph.D., *Intervening with High-Risk Youth: Preliminary Findings from the Children-at-Risk Program*, VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 153270, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24.

*Intensive Aftercare for High-Risk Juveniles: A Community Care Model*, OJJDP Program Summary, 1996, NCJ 147575.

*Intensive Aftercare for High-Risk Juveniles: Policies and Procedures*, OJJDP Program Summary, 1996, NCJ 147712.

## Community Policing

*Community Policing and D.A.R.E.: A Practitioner's Perspective*, BJA Bulletin, 1995, NCJ 154275

*Community Policing Strategies*, NIJ Research Preview, 1995, FS 000126.

Sadd, Susan, and Randolph M. Grinc, *Implementation Challenges in Community Policing: Innovative Neighborhood-Oriented Policing in Eight Cities*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1996, NCJ 157932.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Ph.D., *Reducing Gun Violence: Community Policing Against Gun Crime*, VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 153730, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24.

Skogan, Wesley, Ph.D., *Community Policing in Chicago, Fact or Fiction?* VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 153273, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24.

## Prosecution and the Courts

Anderson, David C., *In New York City, a "Community Court" and a New Legal Culture*, NIJ Program Focus, 1996, NCJ 158613.

Finn, Peter, *The Manhattan District Attorney's Narcotics Eviction Program*, NIJ Program Focus, 1995, NCJ 153146.

## CPTED

Gordon, Corey L., and William Brill, *The Expanding Role of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Premises Liability*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1996, NCJ 157309.

Smith, Mary S., *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Parking Facilities*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1996, NCJ 157310.

Taylor, Ralph B., and Adele V. Harrell, *Physical Environment and Crime*, NIJ Research Report, 1996, NCJ 157311.

**U.S. Department of Justice**

Office of Justice Programs

*National Institute of Justice*

*Washington, D.C. 20531*

---

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use \$300

BULK RATE  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
DOJ/NIJ  
Permit No. G-91