

NEIGHBORHOOD SECURITY PROJECT

(City of Wilmington)

NCJRS

MAR 20 1978

ACQUISITIONS

A Project Evaluation

Submitted to the

Prevention Committee

of the

Governor's Commission on Criminal Justice

by

Thomas R. DeCamp  
Monitoring/Evaluation Unit - GCCJ

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## PROJECT INFORMATION

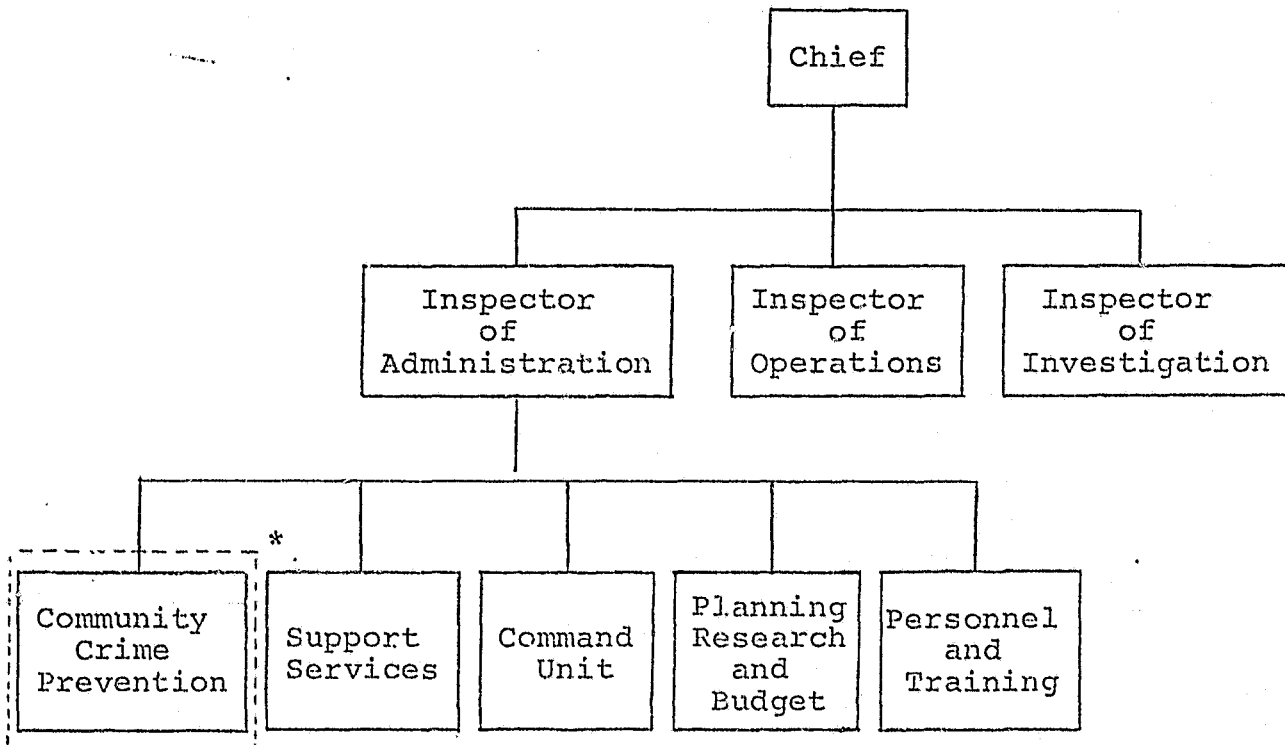
### General

Grant Number: 76-013  
Grant Title: Neighborhood Security Project  
Implementing Agency: Wilmington Bureau of Police  
Project Director: Captain William Lynch  
Grant Period: 7/1/76 to 7/31/77

### Budget

Category	Allocations		Expenditures
	Federal	Match	
Personnel/Benefits	\$15,497 (o/t)	0	\$15,497
Supplies	0	\$ 651	\$ 651
Equipment	\$ 1,503	\$1,237	\$ 2,740
Total	\$17,000	\$1,888	\$18,888

### Organization



\* Project Services were provided by officers from the Community Crime Prevention Unit.

## I. Introduction

On March 10, 1976, the Supervisory Board of the Governor's Commission on Criminal Justice approved an award of \$18,888 (federal and match) to the City of Wilmington. The purpose of the grant was to prevent crime by educating the citizens of Wilmington in the latest crime prevention techniques. The responsibility for this task was delegated to the Crime Prevention Unit of the Wilmington Bureau of Police. The unit contained eight positions which were filled by 11 officers at various times during the year. Each officer conducted, either individually or with a partner, a varied number of meetings during his assignment to the unit. Overtime monies were used to support project personnel and compensation was based on time, grade and the number of hours worked.

The project contained four distinct components. First, the Neighborhood Watch Program involved organizing community groups in specific areas of the city. Through these groups, the officers hoped to stimulate the membership to assume an active role in crime prevention. Secondly, a Senior Citizen's Program was developed to make the elderly less attractive as victims to the prospective criminal. Thirdly, youth exchange sessions were initiated to open lines of communication with local youth groups through the use of "rap" sessions. The fourth component was the formation of an Auxiliary Police Unit which would patrol various neighborhoods and report crimes or suspicious activity.

Crime prevention programs can be characterized as:

(a) passive - presentations made only on request and printed materials available only if picked up by the citizen; (b) active - police services are advertised and public forums are actively solicited; or (c) advocacy - the police interact with private and government organizations to promote crime prevention through environmental design (e.g., structure, landscaping, lighting, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

The operation of the Wilmington Neighborhood Security Project encompassed the first two categories. At the outset of the project, requests for police assistance were frequently generated by residents experiencing specific problems in their neighborhoods. Usually these problems involved gangs of youth harrassing residents, destroying property, and at times, threatening entire communities. Following a request, community crime prevention officers would meet with the residents at formal neighborhood watch meetings. As the grant progressed, the emphasis shifted from public initiated requests to predominately police motivated meetings. It appeared that, as the immediate problem of a neighborhood subsided, local urgency for police assistance also decreased.

## II. Performance

The project contained four basic components, each with its own specific objective. Of these, all but one was achieved. Each objective is presented and discussed in terms of its accomplishment.

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<sup>1</sup>Police Burglary Prevention Programs, United States Department of Justice, September, 1975, p. 6.

#### A. Neighborhood Watch Groups

Objective: To organize and instruct at least 1400 citizens in crime prevention techniques.

Accomplishments: As of July 31, 1977, 16 neighborhood watch groups were formed. Eight of which were developed during the grant period.<sup>2</sup> Two hundred and fifteen (215) meetings were held with these groups involving 3,313 persons. Of the eight groups formed during the grant, two are presently inactive while the remaining six require regular police participation.<sup>3</sup> The initial meeting of the police with the neighborhood watch members followed the bureau's standard presentation. The first hour and 25 minutes consisted of a description of; a) the current crime problem (10 minutes), b) the concept of neighborhood watch (10 minutes), c) a lock display (20 minutes), d) an explanation and assignment of operation identification materials (10 minutes), e) a problem solving discussion (20 minutes), and f) closing comments (15 minutes). During the meeting, residents exchanged phone numbers, were encouraged to look out for each other, and asked to talk up the program to their friends. Meetings were scheduled at different members' homes each month and a unit leader was assigned to set up security surveys. Following the presentation by the police, the meetings usually turned to the specific problem(s) of

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<sup>2</sup>The Wilmington police had operated a neighborhood watch program two years ago as one of seven components of their crime specifics program. The eight groups mentioned above are new groups that were formed during the new neighborhood watch program.

<sup>3</sup>The concept of neighborhood watch was based upon citizen participation and cooperation. After a neighborhood watch was formed, the group became responsible for perpetuating itself. Only when existing groups became threatened by inactivity or a particular problem beyond its control, was further police participation required.

the neighborhood. The usual remedy suggested by the police involved a two-fold program emphasizing enforcement by the police and the need for neighborhood cooperation. Residents were informed that without their assistance, the police could be of little help. Residents were urged to report suspicious activity, identify offenders, take license numbers, but of utmost importance, not attempt to make any arrests. The membership was cautioned that under no circumstances were their efforts to take the form of vigilantism and that actual contact with the offender was the responsibility of the police. Exhibit I depicts the names, dates of formation, core membership and activities generated by the eight groups formed during the grant following police contact.<sup>4</sup>

#### EXHIBIT I

Wilmington Neighborhood Security Program  
Block Watch Groups Formed During Grant  
July 1, 1976 to July 31, 1977

Name	Mo/Yr Formed	Number in Group	Activities Generated Following Police Contact
Trinity Vicinity	Dec. 1976	33	No Record
Saint Hedwigs	Sept. 1976	No Record	No Record
Canby Park Association	Sept. 1976	90	Court Monitoring
1401 Maryland Avenue	Oct. 1976	14	Control Juvenile problem around apartments
Woodlawn Trustees	Oct. 1976	75	No Record
Colonial Heights	Oct. 1976	No Record	No Record
Forty Acres	Oct. 1976	39	No Record
Wawaset Park	May 1977	71	No Record

<sup>4</sup>Data to document the activities of the eight groups formed prior to the project was not available. The groups consisted of the King Street Businessmen, Greater Southwest Community Group, Buttonwood Street Group, Brandywine Street Group, La Borinquena, Concerned Neighbors of Prices Run Park, South Wilmington, and Midtown Brandywine.

#### B. Senior Citizen Meetings

Objective: To instruct at least 900 senior citizens in crime prevention techniques.

Accomplishment: The project held 31 meetings involving 1,114 persons.<sup>5</sup> All but two meetings were held within the city limits of Wilmington. Emphasis was placed on informing senior citizens on how to avoid street muggings since these represent a particular hazard to the elderly.

The format of the presentations basically followed those made to the neighborhood watch groups and was modified only slightly to accommodate the concerns of the more elderly audience.

#### C. Youth Exchange Sessions

Objective: To conduct rap sessions with at least 600 youth.

Accomplishment: A total of 222 sessions were held involving 6,080 youth (duplicate count). Six of the sessions were conducted outside the city limits. Most of the contact with these youth was stimulated through the local schools and community groups. The sessions were conducted with as few as one and as many as 300 youth at one time.

#### D. Auxiliary Police Unit

Objective: To organize and train auxiliary police officers who will conduct high visibility patrols.

Accomplishment: A unit of 40 auxiliary officers was formed and 25 individuals received training given by the Wilmington

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<sup>5</sup> Although it was unknown whether all the participants were elderly, it is logical to assume that they were, since the meetings were held in senior centers, residential apartments for the elderly and other similar locations.



Bureau of Police. According to police, a controversy developed over the equipment to be carried by the auxiliary officers (night stick/mace) and because of this the unit never became operational. As a result, no high visibility patrols were conducted.

Further investigation revealed that the former Director of Public Safety, Norman Levine, requested a legal opinion from the City Solicitor's Office regarding the use of auxiliary officers. The opinion, rendered September 20, 1976, pointed out the need for the City to obtain liability insurance for the auxiliary officers. It also raised the question of control and the responsibility of the city should it authorize the auxiliary officers to carry weapons. It would seem that both the questions of liability and control were pertinent factors which brought about the disintegration of the auxiliary police component.

### III. Impact

Determination of program impact was precluded due to the vagueness of program and project objectives as well as the illusive nature of the concept "prevention". The inability of the project to capture useful data relating to crime rates in controlled situations as proposed in the subgrant application and the lack of specific follow-up procedures contributed to an inability to determine project effect. The subgrant application indicates that neighborhood security is believed to be intrinsically good in preventing crime.

"It is unknown just what percentage of these crimes (robbery/burglary) would have been prevented by citizens

schooled in crime prevention techniques. However, it is felt that an educated and involved public will reduce the total number of crimes committed and insure a secure neighborhood."<sup>6</sup>

The Wilmington project is based upon the premise that;

a) an informed citizenry is better capable of protecting itself against crime, and b) participants will follow the suggestions provided by the police. While the project contends that persons schooled in crime prevention techniques are more able to avoid potential crime situations, there was no effort made by the police to determine if any of their suggestions were implemented or resulted in behavior changes by the participants.

Crime rates for the City of Wilmington were examined to determine if there had been any change since the project began. Totals were collected for all crimes by month for July 1, 1975 through June 30, 1976 and compared with the grant period July 1, 1976 through July 30, 1977. Overall, the number of crimes for the year decreased by 16% and each month showed fewer crimes committed on a month by month comparison. The Neighborhood Security project might have been one factor in this decline, however, its contribution cannot be isolated from other programs operating within the City such as Wilmington's Split Force Patrol.

In speaking with police personnel and neighborhood participants, it was learned that the value of the project rests in the lines of communication which the project opens between the two.

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<sup>6</sup>"Neighborhood Security Program", subgrant application submitted to the Governor's Commission on Criminal Justice, December 18, 1975, p. 8.

As a result of the meetings, residents become more comfortable with the officers and feel more confident in speaking with them than with a stranger over the phone. People who are ordinarily reluctant to call the police will confide in the officer(s) with whom they have become acquainted during the meetings. As a result, the police become aware of a community's particular situation, solutions can be proposed before a problem escalates, and the bad kids in a neighborhood become identified.

#### IV. Project Continuation

The project should be commended for its success in securing continuation funding. Upon completion of subgrant 76-013, the project was picked up by the City of Wilmington. It is currently operating under their auspices at an annual cost equivalent to the previous budget.

#### V. Recommendation

CCCJ should fund community crime prevention projects in contrast to police public relations efforts. The latter is an internal process which is best carried out during the officer's normal course of duty and not as a separate police function. Community crime prevention projects, on the other hand, are specified in the 1978 Comprehensive Plan and compatible with the agency's future direction.

76-013

Neighborhood Security Project  
Wilmington Bureau of Police  
7/1/76 to 7/31/77  
February 1978

(\$17,000)

A. Purpose(s):

1. To prevent crime by educating the citizens of Wilmington in the latest crime prevention techniques.

B. Findings:

1. The program contained four distinct components:
  - a) Neighborhood Watch - designed to organize community groups to assume an active role in crime prevention,
  - b) Senior Citizens - aimed at making the elderly less likely to be victimized,
  - c) Youth Exchange Sessions - designed to open lines of communication with local youth groups, and
  - d) Auxiliary Police - formed to patrol neighborhoods and report crimes or suspicious activity.
2. The project was implemented by members of the crime prevention unit of the Wilmington Bureau of Police. The unit contained eight positions which were filled by 11 officers at various times during the year.
3. Overtime monies were used to support project personnel and compensation was based on time, grade and the number of hours worked.
4. Regarding the neighborhood watch component, two hundred and fifteen meetings were held with 16 neighborhood watch groups involving 3313 persons (duplicate count).
5. For the senior citizens component, 31 meetings were held involving 1114 persons (duplicate count).
6. A total of 222 youth exchange sessions were held involving 6080 persons (duplicate count).
7. A unit of 40 auxiliary officers was formed and 25 individuals received training from the bureau. However, the unit never became operational due to a controversy over the equipment to be carried (night stick/mace), the question of control over the auxiliary officers and the costs of liability insurance.
8. No effort was made by the police to determine if any of their suggestions were implemented or resulted in behavior changes by the project participants.

9. An examination of crime rates for the City of Wilmington revealed a 16 percent decrease over the previous year. The neighborhood security project may have been one factor in this decline, however, its contribution cannot be isolated from other programs operating within the city, such as the Split Force Patrol.

C. Recommendation:

GCCJ should fund community crime prevention projects in contrast to police public relations efforts. The latter is an internal process which is best carried out during the officer's normal course of duty and not as a separate police function. Community crime prevention projects, on the other hand, are specified in the 1978 Comprehensive Plan and compatible with GCCJ's future direction.



**END**