
CIVIL REMEDIES FOR CONTROLLING CRIME: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

by

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***Abstract:** Over the past decade, community organizations and citizens have increasingly used civil remedies to compel non-offending third parties to take action to prevent or mitigate crime, drug and disorder problems in their neighborhoods. Nuisance and drug abatement ordinances and municipal codes are the most common civil laws employed by community organizations, which may or may not work in concert with law enforcement, prosecutors and other government agencies. While civil remedy strategies are not without problems, community organizations report general success in their use. In this chapter, the history of civil remedies used by community organizations is reviewed and the results of a national survey of community organizations are presented. The results include the characteristics of the respondent organizations, the types and prevalence of civil remedy strategies used, problems encountered and outcomes of the application of strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

Today, preventing and resolving neighborhood crime and disorder problems are the responsibilities of law enforcement professionals and other government authorities — and citizens, acting individually and collectively. These citizens are not experts in crime prevention, drug interventions or neighborhood revitalization. They are everyday people — residents, workers and business owners — working to improve the public safety and quality of life of the neighborhoods in which they work and live. To prevent and resolve neighborhood crime and disorder

problems, these everyday people receive training, support, assistance and protection from community organizations and their paid staff. Over time, a number of these people become experts themselves — community activists with the expertise and tenacity to play a central role in turning neighborhoods around. In this heyday of community policing, community organizations and citizens play a crucial role in maintaining order, public safety and the quality of life in our nation's neighborhoods.

In recent years, community organizations and citizens have learned to apply civil remedies, to use civil laws and mechanisms to compel non-offending third parties to take action to prevent or mitigate criminal and other problems. This chapter presents the results of a national survey of community organizations focused on their civil remedy activities. These organizations engage in a variety of civil remedies, alone and in concert with law enforcement and other agencies. As described below, they also fill a unique role that these other agencies cannot.

ROOTS OF CIVIL REMEDIES BY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Three decades of rising concern with neighborhood crime, topped by radical changes in the nature of such crime due to drug dealing and the violence that has accompanied it, have been paralleled by increases and changes in collective citizen action. Community crime prevention flourished in the late 1970s and early 1980s, then slowly gave way to community-based anti-drug efforts in the late 1980s and 1990s. Community involvement in civil remedies aimed at crime and drug control emerged with the anti-drug activities of recent years.

The importance of community organizations and citizens in community crime prevention and order maintenance efforts became apparent in the mid-1970s, as concerns about street crime and residential burglaries began to rise and it became obvious that the police alone could not control crime. With the formation and early success of neighborhood and block watch efforts, citizens themselves realized they could do something about the local crime problems that concerned them most. DuBow and Emmons (1981) labeled this the "community hypothesis," stating that neighborhood residents could be mobilized to participate in collective crime prevention, which would get residents to take greater responsibility for local problems, increase social interaction, rebuild informal social control, and reduce crime and fear of crime.

Central community crime prevention strategies of the 1980s included neighborhood and block watches (Cirel et al., 1977), citizen patrols (Yin et al., 1977), surveillance and reporting of suspicious behavior to police

(Bickman et al., 1977), and environmental design changes, commonly referred to as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) (Gardiner, 1978; Fowler et al., 1979; Fowler and Mangione, 1982; Crowe, 1991). Several theoretical models underpin community crime prevention approaches. One school of thought concludes that high crime is found in neighborhoods with substantial social disorganization and a weakened capacity for local institutions and organizations to control the behavior of local residents (Greenberg et al., 1982, 1985). According to this theory of informal social control, community crime prevention involves strengthening or resurrecting traditional agents of social control — families, churches, schools, ethnic solidarity, traditional values — and improving community cohesion. A second theory, opportunity reduction, covers the mainstream community crime prevention approaches such as neighborhood watch and a sizable variety of CPTED principles. Here, crime prevention involves removing or reducing opportunities for crime (Rosenbaum, 1988). A third theoretical model is the "broken windows," or "incivilities," thesis (Greene and Taylor, 1988), most cogently raised by Wilson and Kelling (1982), which posits that physical (graffiti, broken windows, trash, etc.) and social (public drug use, loitering, etc.) incivilities indicate that neither area residents nor municipal authorities care about the neighborhood or can enforce social control. As incivilities become more widespread, neighborhood deterioration and alienation, fear of crime, and victimization increase. In this model, citizen action takes a variety of directions, including neighborhood clean-ups, problem solving and application of civil remedies.

Community organizations ranging from small, barely organized grassroots groups to umbrella organizations serving other community groups and coalitions of block watches have been instrumental in organizing and training citizens in community crime prevention efforts (Roehl and Cook, 1984). Two core elements are common to most community crime prevention efforts. Community organizing, typically leading to the formation of watch programs characterized by looking out for neighbors, reporting suspicious activity, household target hardening and marking valuables (i.e., Operation ID), is the basic building block of community crime prevention. Forming and sustaining collaborative working relationships with local police is also a key component of most community crime prevention efforts, recognized as necessary and valuable by both police and community (Feins, 1983). Citizens have become "the eyes and ears" of police, using the well-accepted tactic of documenting and reporting suspicious behavior to police and looking out for one another's homes. Police officers, for their part, provide community crime prevention groups with information on crime problems in their

areas, and on training and education in target hardening and personal safety.

A decade of research on community crime prevention programs has suggested that poor, high-crime, disordered neighborhoods — where the need is greatest — would be the least likely to launch and sustain community-based anti-drug efforts (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Lavrakas et al., 1981; Skogan, 1988). Further, successful community crime prevention are rarely located in neighborhoods with the worst crime (Yin, 1986). While there were signs of success in early community crime prevention programs (Cirel et al., 1977; Fowler and Mangione, 1982), other studies found little evidence of their effectiveness in reducing crime (Rosenbaum et al., 1986; Lavrakas et al., 1989).

As the scourge of drug use and dealing came to dominate pockets of neighborhood life, community crime prevention efforts of the 1980s evolved into the community-based anti-drug efforts of the 1990s (Roehl et al., 1995). The anti-drug methods are similar to those of community crime prevention, yet more intense and focused on specific dealers and residential, commercial, and open-air drug markets. Community-based anti-drug efforts also concentrate heavily on prevention strategies (Roehl et al., 1995), grounded in social development and influence models (Hawkins et al., 1992; Pentz et al., 1989; Ellickson and Bell, 1990).

These community anti-drug efforts, while having much in common with community crime prevention efforts, also differ in important ways. New evidence challenges some of the conventional wisdom about community crime prevention (Davis et al., 1993). For example, community anti-drug programs have been successfully launched in poor neighborhoods, especially when given substantial technical assistance and police involvement (Lurigio and Davis, 1992; Skogan and Lurigio, 1992), and these programs have been shown to succeed with the involvement of only small numbers of citizens (Smith and Davis, 1993; Weingart, 1993; Weingart et al., 1993). A national assessment of community-based anti-drug efforts, coupled with the research cited above, found that determined, organized citizens play roles that other institutions cannot, and are effective, valuable partners in anti-drug efforts (Roehl et al., 1995).

The targets of anti-drug efforts, clearly, are different from those of community crime prevention. Rather than protecting neighborhoods against unknown and largely unseen perpetrators, these efforts target drug dealers who are visible and sometimes known by the residents. Partnerships with law enforcement are also integral to community anti-drug efforts, yet the scope of anti-drug partnerships has been expanded by community groups to include schools, businesses, health and social service agencies, and housing and code enforcement agencies. Block

watch participants still serve as the eyes and ears of the police, but they are also trained to be intense surveyors and reporters, recording specific information about dealers and buyers (race, physical characteristics, clothing, etc.), their cars (make, color, license numbers, etc.), and dealing activities (what drugs are being sold? where are they hidden?). Focusing specifically on drugs has led community organizations and citizens to revise and adapt community crime prevention tactics such as community organizing, environmental design changes, citizen patrols, vigils and marches (Rosenbaum et al., 1994).

During the past three decades, policing has also changed substantially in both method and philosophy. In the 1970s, law enforcement agencies were proud of their "professional policing," which focused on crime control and response time and gave little emphasis to community concerns or roles. As crime rates and community crime prevention efforts grew, *partnerships* between the police and community became the new buzzword — certainly in the rhetoric of policing and crime prevention, and evident in varying degrees in U.S. cities. The drug problems of the mid-1980s, however, were met with a "war" waged by federal, state and local law enforcement officials, with little room for citizen participation. At the local level, these drug enforcement tactics were found to have limited success, effective primarily in the short term and immediate area (Sherman, 1990; Moore and Kleiman, 1989). Slowly over the past decade, community policing, with its emphasis on problem solving — of drug problems in particular as well as those of concern to neighborhood residents — has become the dominant policing model (Skolnick and Bayley, 1986; Pate et al., 1986; Eck and Spelman, 1987; Greene and Mastrofski, 1988; Goldstein, 1990; Rosenbaum, 1994; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997).

The use of civil remedies for controlling neighborhood crime, drug problems and disorder is the newest tool in the community-based anti-drug workshop. The majority of civil remedies are directed toward targets who are neither known dealers nor unknown criminals — usually building owners, landlords and managers who are responsible for a place where crime, drugs and/or disorder are harming the quality of life of a neighborhood. As shown here and elsewhere in this volume, civil remedies are also directed at perpetrators themselves, such as loiterers, panhandlers, and disruptive youths. The remedies are based on civil rather than criminal laws, requiring less of a burden of evidence and capable of being applied by non-criminal justice groups — such as citizens and community organizations. While environmental changes, multi-agency partnerships and community organizing continue to be

part of community crime control efforts using civil remedies, civil litigation, code enforcement and eviction are also critical tools.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN CIVIL REMEDIES

Descriptions of uses of civil remedies by community organizations began to appear around 1990 through the work of the National Training and Information Center and the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) (Feldman and Trapp, 1990; NCPC, 1992; Rosenbaum et al., 1994). Although Davis and Lurigio (1996) cite Portland, OR's Office of Neighborhood Associations as the leader in community-based civil remedies in the mid-1980s, the landmark case that set the stage for future work was *Kellner v. Coppellini*. In 1986, private attorney Douglas Kellner, acting on behalf of 26 petitioners from the grassroots organization the Westside Crime Prevention Program in Manhattan, used a 125-year-old New York State statute known as "the bawdy house law" (Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law 715) to file suit against a "crack den" (a residence-based drug dealing operation). The court ordered the residents evicted, the crack house sold and the legal costs of the petitioners paid from the sale of the house. The civil statute invoked in this first case of the use of civil remedies by a community group to close a drug house is presently used by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in its own Narcotics Eviction Program.

Civil remedies have assumed many forms in the past decade. In 1993, Roehl et al. (1997) launched a national study of the extent, nature and effectiveness of the use of civil remedies by community members and groups to reduce neighborhood crime, disorder, drug use and drug trafficking. The results of the national study are reported below.

Characteristics of Community Organizations Using Civil Remedies and the Neighborhoods Served

A national search for community organizations actively involved in applying civil remedies to neighborhood crime, drug and disorder problems resulted in detailed surveys completed by 73 organizations located from coast to coast, with no regional patterns apparent. The organizations range from very large to very small in terms of staffing, funding and overall activities, but many of them are well-established groups (see Table 1). Most organizations reported they had legal assistance readily available to them.

Table 1: Characteristics of Organizations Using Civil Remedies and the Communities They Serve (N=73)

Organizations	
No. with operating funds	57 (79%)
Average annual budget (top 5% removed): Range:	\$238,762 \$50-4,000,000
Average no. of paid staff: Range:	8 1-60
Target Communities	
Population (average): Range:	154,492 500-2,000,000
Income level:	
Middle to upper income	3 (3%)
Middle income	9 (12%)
Lower income, working class	28 (38%)
Lower income, public assistance	13 (18%)
Areas include all SES groups	20 (27%)
Ethnicity:	
White	34%
African-American	43%
Hispanic	14%
Asian	6%
Other	3%

The large majority of the organizations serve urban areas, with half targeting inner city areas. Sixty percent concentrated their civil remedy strategies in specific neighborhoods; these neighborhoods contain sizable proportions of lower income and minority populations. Drug dealing (typically crack or heroin), property crime, violent crime and blight — in that order — were cited as significant problems. Crack and alcohol were reported to be the most serious substance problems in the target communities.

Types and Prevalence of Civil Remedy Strategies

Broadly stated, two strategies were found to be the most common forms of civil remedies used by community organizations: environmental changes and enforcement strategies. Within these strategies, civil remedy tactics take many forms, as listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage of Surveyed Organizations Reporting Various Civil Remedy Tactics (N=73)

Area clean-up, improvements, demolition, board-ups, etc.	93%
Report information to authorities (e.g., license numbers, logs of illegal activity)	86%
Pressure government agencies to enforce building and health codes	85%
Pressure landlords and property owners to deal with a problem	78%
Urge government or appropriate agencies to establish (pass) new or revised ordinances, laws, etc.	74%
Specific environmental changes (e.g., removing pay phones, altering traffic patterns, etc.)	74%
Ask authorities to enforce alcohol and beverage laws and regulations	63%
File formal complaints with prosecution or law enforcement to enforce ordinances, laws, etc.	60%
Appear at hearings regarding the issuance or renewal licenses and permits	52%
Ask authorities to initiate seizure and forfeiture actions	51%
Fix a problem directly (e.g., board a building)	38%
Initial legal action (e.g., small claims court filing, testifying in civil suit, etc.)	36%
Banning of drug-related items (e.g., beepers, paraphernalia, etc.)	29%
Training for landlords and property owners (e.g., writing drug-free leases, tenant screening, etc.)	27%
Other civil remedy strategies not listed above	19%

Environmental Strategies

Neighborhood-based environmental changes are extensions of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) approaches and are designed to secure properties, enhance the physical appearance of a neighborhood and indicate the presence of caring, vigilant residents. Traditional forms of environmental changes reported by the surveyed organizations include neighborhood clean-ups, board-ups and demolitions of abandoned property, and beautification efforts, including graffiti eradication. These changes are made by property owners or local agen-

cies, after requests and pressure from community groups and/or organized community members.

The most common environmental change directed specifically against drug dealing, and one that falls more squarely under the civil remedies heading, is the removal of pay phones used by dealers for drug transactions or their alteration, to allow outgoing calls only. Other specific changes include improving street lighting, removing billboards (especially those advertising liquor), installing speed bumps and the like.

Enforcement Strategies

Civil enforcement strategies rely on the use of state statutes, local ordinances, and building and health codes to abate crime, drug, and disorder problems. The laws most frequently used in civil remedies are municipal drug or nuisance abatement ordinances (a few organizations rely on similar county ordinances or state statutes). While all nuisance abatement ordinances do not specifically identify drug activity as a nuisance, their use against such activity has generally been successful. In a 50-state statutory analysis, Smith et al. (1992) found that most abatement ordinances designate public prosecutors as the individuals who may initiate an abatement action, although citizens may do so in at least 16 states. The ordinances typically enable a plaintiff (private citizens, community organizations, city attorneys, etc.) to take legal action against an owner who knowingly allows a crime or nuisance problems to exist at his or her property (Cadwalader et al., 1993). Court-ordered sanctions include imposing fines and penalties, ordering the property closed, allowing the city to take action at the owner's expense, seizing the property and other remedies. Ordinances are also used to abate specific problems such as cigarette machines in areas frequented by youths, motels with hourly rates, graffiti, abandoned vehicles and property maintenance.

Municipal codes specifying safety and health standards for private residential and commercial properties are also used by community groups to force an owner to remedy problems. Owners who ignore violations issued by municipal agencies are subject to the same sanctions listed above. Other laws used in civil remedy strategies include loitering, trespassing and curfew ordinances, which are usually directed at reducing problems with youths and gangs. Zoning changes to establish drug-free zones around schools and neighborhoods are also used, as are state laws and local regulations and ordinances concerning the sale of liquor.

Bars, liquor stores and houses harboring drug dealers are the typical targets of enforcement efforts instigated by community organizations.

Community groups and citizens often approach enforcement in a step-wise fashion. The first step is to document the problem thoroughly, as though evidence is being prepared for legal action (as it may well be). Some organizations then directly approach the offenders (usually tenants in residential or commercial properties); however, most choose to work instead with the landlords and owners responsible for the property. Using threats to enforce ordinances that provide particular remedies, the community organizations and citizen activists pressure tenants, landlords and owners to resolve the problem.

In the face of intransigent owners and in situations where the community organization feels that approaching the owners is unwise, community groups approach public agencies to pressure them to enforce existing ordinances. The public officials worked with most often are, in order, the police, elected officials, building inspectors and prosecutors. Citizens and community groups provide these officials with the information gathered as evidence of the problem(s) and urge them to enforce existing laws by notifying landlords and owners, inspecting and citing for code violations, calling for solutions for unlawful nuisances and criminal behavior, and threatening and taking legal action. Private-sector companies such as mortgage and advertising firms may be approached by community groups as well. A fairly new tactic aims to not only get rid of the problem but to obtain resources for neighborhood improvement at the same time. For example, several community organizations have pushed to have seized and forfeited property and proceeds returned to the community for its own use.

When enforcement tactics short of adjudication fail to result in positive changes in individual properties, community organizations may file lawsuits against property owners or pressure city prosecutors to do so. Another growing form of direct enforcement strategy, which does not require the involvement of police or prosecutors, is the use of small-claims court actions against owners who knowingly allow a nuisance to remain. The tactic of small-claims courts for drug and disorder abatement was pioneered by the Oakland-based Safe Streets Now! community organization, which combines traditional organizing and empowerment strategies with the civil remedy. Safe Streets Now! organizers provide expertise, training and protection to residents in filing small claims actions — one for every man, woman, and child — up to the maximum. In most cases, community pressure and threats to sue — along with media reports of the success of this civil remedy approach — are enough to make landlords resolve the problem. With one exception in which no award was given to the neighborhood, small-claims courts have ruled in favor of community residents (Roehl et al., 1997).

Community organization staff organize the activities of residents and participate in them. They provide needed assistance and support in research, technical areas, and legal proceedings; obtain materials and publicity; and perform specific tasks such as writing letters to property owners and coordinating with city agencies and other community groups. Community organizations also serve an important protection function — they shield the identity of citizens from the targets (drug dealers, angry landlords, etc.) of their efforts. Letters to owners come from the organization, rather than individual residents, and court filings are made by the organization or an attorney operating on their behalf.

Half of the organizations involved in enforcement activities obtained legal advice or assistance in the process, while the other half said no special legal assistance was required. The majority of those receiving assistance obtained it from public attorneys (city, district or state attorneys); others used board members and/or community volunteers. While 12% of the organizations expressed a desire for technical assistance in legal procedures and use of ordinances, often for the residents who work with them, most of the organizations reported no problems with obtaining legal assistance, usually *pro bono*.

Lobbying for Civil Remedies

In some situations, local and state civil laws are not available or adequate for combating drug and other problems. The majority of the surveyed organizations have lobbied for the passage of new ordinances or other regulations useful for enforcement. A small number have taken the lead and written the proposed ordinances themselves, then pushed for passage. Community organization staff and citizens often attend hearings of alcohol beverage control regulators and permit-granting bodies to influence the issuance or renewal of permits and liquor licenses. A third of the organizations have worked to ban drug-related items such as beepers, cigarette machines and drug paraphernalia.

Civil Remedies for Prevention and Neighborhood Improvement

A final category of civil remedies used by community groups are those that are preventive and proactive, aiming, respectively, to reduce opportunities for problems to arise, and to improve and protect the quality of neighborhood life. The most common prevention strategy is to provide training and assistance to landlords and owners in tenant screening and relations, management techniques, and security and

crime prevention, similar to the program offered by the Oakland (CA) Police Department's Beat Health Unit (see Mazerolle et al, this volume).

The proactive use of civil remedies by community organizations is in an embryonic form. Examples include working to increase alcohol tax revenues and have a larger proportion returned to the community, and turning abandoned property into needed housing for low-income families or other special groups.

Obstacles and Outcomes

The large majority of the community organizations surveyed reported success in their civil remedy strategies. Environmental changes were relatively easy to implement and usually successful in cleaning up the neighborhood and promoting community awareness, pride and commitment. On the down side, several organizations reported the nagging recurrence of trash and graffiti.

Subjective reports of the outcomes of enforcement strategies are similarly positive. The organizations report that in 80 to 90% of the cases, owners take steps to resolve the problems before legal actions are needed. While rare, lawsuits are also generally effective. All but one of eight lawsuits initiated by surveyed organizations were decided in favor of the plaintiffs. Organizations also reported details of success with specific problems, such as evicting a drug dealer and closing a problem bar, and many have an impressive track record of ongoing successes (e.g., closing down 50 crack houses in the past several years). Beyond these resolutions of specific problems, a number of organizations report reductions in crime, loitering and other problems, and increases in community awareness and commitment. Most of the organizations were generally satisfied with the responses of police, prosecutors and housing officials.

In spite of generally positive results, the civil remedy strategies used by community organizations are seldom quick, easy or trouble-free. Agency "red tape" and resistance, legal roadblocks, unyielding landlords and owners, slothful tenants, and the lengthy, often frustrating time required by civil solutions were among the obstacles reported by community organizations. They also reported problems common to community crime prevention efforts, such as difficulty in getting residents involved and keeping them involved, fear of retaliation, and lack of funds and resources. Concerns about retaliation, unfortunately, are well-founded. Nearly a third of the organizations surveyed reported attacks, mostly verbal threats and some vandalism against citizens, believed to be in retaliation for their involvement in anti-drug activities.

The directors of the organizations surveyed expressed concern about the potential of civil remedies to cause harm, such as making false accusations against innocent people or, more typically, instigating the eviction of the mother or child of a drug dealer. Twenty percent of the directors reported receiving complaints about violations of civil rights, mostly from targets of tactics. Constitutional challenges to specific ordinances are discussed in Cadwalader et al., (1993), Smith et al., (1992) and Finn and Hylton (1994).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the national survey, civil remedies were found to be most common in urban areas, and particularly in inner-city neighborhoods where drug problems and their devastating effects are greatest. The main roles of neighborhood residents in the enforcement of civil remedy strategies are (1) to identify and document the problem, (2) to keep pressure on appropriate authorities to resolve the problem, and (3) to monitor the situation over time. In these roles residents gather information, provide information to authorities, write letters, and appear and present at hearings. Within environmental change strategies, citizens provide the manual labor needed — they paint out the graffiti, haul trash, plant shrubs, etc.

Community organizations active in civil remedies tend to be well-established groups with solid funding and staff support, although fledgling groups of residents have mounted numerous successful efforts. Although money and staff are not *required* for civil remedies, they do require specific expertise, knowledge and tenacity to succeed. Additional funding and technical assistance support would likely increase the intensity and duration of civil intervention efforts.

There may also be a natural maturation process underway in many community organizations. A number of participants in the national survey began with the basic building blocks of community organizing years ago, moved into neighborhood watch and community crime prevention, and then on to anti-drug efforts and civil remedies applied to specific "hot spots." The organizations surveyed reported general success with their civil remedy tactics. In fact, there is emerging evidence in this volume and elsewhere (Finn and Hylton, 1994; Davis and Lurigio, 1996) that civil remedies may be more effective than criminal prosecution in alleviating neighborhood drug problems. This evidence, however, is largely anecdotal, self-reported and focused on the short-term. There has been very limited support for impact evaluations di-

rected toward the work of community organizations to determine what works and what does not.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to community-based civil remedies is the charge that they displace, rather than eliminate, crime and drug problems. Community organizations are concerned about displacement (and particularly the possible harm done to innocent residents); nonetheless, they consider the eviction of a drug dealer a small victory to be combined with others to achieve long-term success. Lurigio et al. (1993), in a limited follow-up study of displaced dealers, also provide tentative hope for positive impacts on displacement as well. Yet the long-term effects of civil remedy outcomes such as evictions need further study, including assessments of their effectiveness in reducing neighborhood problems (Smith et al., 1992), their potential for harming innocent parties (Davis and Lurigio, 1996), and the high level of retaliation against those involved in civil remedies (Roehl et al., 1997). The most tenacious problems faced by community organizations involve properties that are owner-occupied, owned by absentee owners, or no longer financially viable; the slowness of bureaucratic procedures; and the stubborn ability of drug problems to return. This may be due, in part, to the continued failure to address the underlying conditions that contribute to drugs and crime.

Although citizens and community organizations can and do apply civil remedies on their own, they benefit greatly from the clout and support of city agencies, particularly the police, housing officials and public prosecutors. Multi-group partnerships are often necessary to apply effective civil remedies, in the same vein that such cooperation underlies the most effective crime prevention and community policing strategies (Friedman, 1994). Future advancements and acceptance of civil remedies may depend on enhancing mutual problem-solving and information-sharing between citizens and government officials with enforcement responsibilities.

Finally, community organizations have a special and unique role in community-based crime control and neighborhood revitalization. Community organizations cannot always apply civil remedy strategies alone, but they *can* do things for their communities that government agencies cannot or do not. Many of the community groups use civil remedies to mitigate crime, drug and disorder problems, yet aim for a more permanent solution by leaving behind an empowered citizenry that can work toward and then protect a higher quality of life in the neighborhood. If and when crime or disorder reappear, residents are ready and able to tackle them quickly. The preventive and proactive applications of civil remedies by community organizations, such as training landlords and

turning seized drug houses and abandoned properties into low-income housing and community centers, also hold much promise for neighborhood improvement and empowerment. Increasing community empowerment is inherent in the majority of civil remedy actions guided by community groups — these actions are accompanied by training and support designed to increase citizens' knowledge, expertise and power.



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