

HERMAN GOLDSTEIN EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM

TEAM AWARD PROJECT SUMMARY

"WESTWAY COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION TASK FORCE"

KING COUNTY (WA) DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

A. Scanning

1. What was the nature of the problems? Westway is a low-income residential area located within the City of Federal Way, WA. Once known derisively as "Wasteway," Westway has historically had a bad reputation, with alcohol, drug, and assault crimes necessitating police response far above that warranted by the size of the population. Many residences were not maintained, resulting in trash, rodents, and other symptoms of urban decay. For the residents of the community, this was an unwholesome situation, negatively affecting their quality of life. Directly, the high-crime rate and unmaintained properties affected those who lived in the community and who were subject to victimization or were forced to live in unhealthy surroundings and to experience reduction in property values. Indirectly, it affected the police, whose workload was increased by multiple responses to the same locations and individuals for crime incidents and neighbor disputes.

2. How was the problem identified? The officers on the street knew that they were responding to the same addresses in Westway over and over again. The Department's Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) system and the Precinct Crime Analysis Officer were also sources of information on what crimes were most common, which individuals were most involved, and to which locations the police were dispatched on a recurring basis. **Clearly, one of the major identification sources was the experience of the residents of Westway themselves; they stepped forward and demonstrated very accurate knowledge of who, what, where, and when crime and other problems were occurring within the community and, most importantly, their desire to make a change in the quality of life within their community.**

3. Who identified the problem? The residents of Westway, together with the Community Service Officers (CSO's) who dealt directly with the residents and responded to calls within the community and the social service agencies who provided services to the community.

4. How and why was this problem selected from among problems? Community-activists from the Residents' and Homeowners' Associations came to the

police to make sure we were aware of the complexity of the problems affecting Westway, their priorities as to crimes they most feared, and to demonstrate their knowledge of the individuals and locations most involved. The majority of the residents of Westway wanted an end to the unwholesome living conditions and the stigma of being residents of "Wasteway." Amid all of the negative physical and domestic conditions and crimes which negatively affected their quality of life and made them live with fear, isolation, and stigma, the residents prioritized several crime and sociological patterns that were the most common and had the most far-reaching influence on the entire community—assaults, drugs, alcohol, firearms, domestic violence, and child abuse. Since Westway is an identifiable community, with recognized boundaries, it was easy to correlate the experiences and observations of the residents with the data collection capabilities of the department, including the Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) system and our practice of using Final Clearance Reporting (FCR) Codes at the end of each police response to identify what the type of incident, the officers' actions, and the hazard to the officers. These capabilities made it easy to analyze data and identify or verify locations, suspects, and crime trends. They wanted special emphasis by the police within the community, giving it extra patrol presence, but it was soon obvious that mere police presence was not the long-term solution. **The community, as well as the police, needed to recognize the inherent limitations of mere police presence and enhanced patrols (even if there had been sufficient police resources to do so) to impacting not only the crime rate, but, more strategically, the long-standing root causes of community deterioration.**

5. What was the initial level of diagnosis/unit of analysis? The residents, Westway Police Substation Community Service Officers (CSOs), and the district patrol officers identified certain individuals and residences as causing a majority of the problems in Westway. High on their list of concerns were drug dealing, child abuse, and domestic violence, with alcohol, firearms, and assaults closely involved. Their observations were verified by a calls for service analysis from the CAD system, correlating the FCR Codes with incident numbers, locations, and suspect information.

B. Analysis

1. What methods, data, and information sources were used to analyze the problem? The CSOs and officers on the street knew they were responding to the same addresses within Westway over and over again. The residents knew which addresses and individuals were causing the crime and quality-of-life problems which the community had prioritized as needed to be addressed. The police department's Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) system and the Precinct Crime Analysis Officer were also sources of information on which crimes were most common, which individuals were most involved, and to which locations the police were being dispatched on a recurring basis. **But the collective experience and memory of the**

residents and landlords was every bit as accurate as the police computer system in identifying problem locations and individuals.

2. History: How often and for how long was it a problem? Westway, as a low-income, pocket area with a transient population, had this problem and image in the area since the mid-1980's, before Federal Way became a city. (In those days, there was no community-policing or problem-oriented policing approach to law enforcement services by King County Police, which were provided out of a police substation.) In 1992, active Homeowners' and Residents' Associations were formed; these were key events in identifying the problem. Before this, individual residents might complain about recurring problems or individual officers might vocalize their impatience with having to respond to the same locations over and over again. **Forming the associations brought a true community voice to the complaints and made it evident that a purely reactive approach would no longer work.**

3. Who was involved in the problem, and what were their respective motivations, gains, and losses? The Community Service Officers and police officers assigned to Westway had the motivation to cease having to respond to the same locations for the same crimes and to deal with the same individuals over and over again. The residents and landlords desired an improvement in the environment for their families and protection for their investments (eg, resale value of residences). A possible loss in rental income or assessed civil penalties faced landlords whose rental units were among the identified locations or whose tenants were the individuals most involved in criminal or other unacceptable behavior. For the violators, their desire was to live their lives as they wished and to be involved in socially-unacceptable and/or illegal activities without worrying about police action or community sanction. After the Task Force was formed, potential losses to violators included arrest, eviction, loss of Section 8 rental subsidies, and other civil action. **More than this, before the Task Force, the violators were actually in a position of power in the community and prevailed over law-abiding citizens; after the Task Force was begun, these violators became outcasts in the community and were forced to change their lifestyle or to relocated outside of Westway. For the Task Force as a whole, the motivation and mission was to reach long-term solutions to the causes of long-standing crime and quality of life issues.**

4. What harms resulted from the problem? Westway became known as "Wasteway." The community and its residents were held in low regard by the rest of the City. Fear, isolation, stigmatization, and low quality of life faced the residents daily. For the police, repetitive responses to incidents involving assaults, alcohol, firearms, juvenile delinquency, truancy, and drugs presented an officer safety concern. For juveniles, from elementary school up to high school, truancy and delinquency were

commonplace, the results from abuse, domestic violence, poor role models, isolation, and a lack of positive resources in the community.

5. How was the problem being addressed before the problem-solving project? What were the results of those responses? The police approach, prior to the formation of the Task Force, was a purely reactive one. Patrol officers handled each event as it was dispatched; detectives followed up when there were sufficient solvability factors. Only crimes were investigated by the police; quality of life issues were not viewed as being in the purview of the police. If there was any action by non-police agencies (eg, Code Enforcement, Health, Fire), it was sporadic and uncoordinated. The Westway Police Substation, staffed by Community Service Officers, was an attempt at trouble-shooting and resource-referral, but there were no protocols or coordinated effort between the police and other government and social service agencies. The result was that Westway continued to deteriorate, and the crime trends were not affected by police presence or action.

6. What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem? Resident observations and Crime Analysis arrived at the same conclusions--a small number of addresses and individuals were responsible for the majority of crime and quality of life concerns. Repeat call analysis clearly demonstrated that the residents had identified the problem locations correctly. Since most of Westway is rental or lease property rather than owner-occupied, the tenant situation was key. The negative image of Westway made it an unattractive location for families seeking quality rentals. The landlords, to keep their rentals occupied, were less than selective in screening their potential renters; background checks, credit screening, and reference checks were all but nonexistent. The result was that the area attracted renters with criminal records, financial problems, and socially-unacceptable lifestyles. Absentee landlords only served to exacerbate the problem, since they did not see what was becoming of their property, nor did they seem to care about tenant activities as long as the rent was paid on time.

7. What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem? The problems were address- or individual-specific. The negative image of Westway as a community actually came from the activities of a limited number of individuals living at or operating out of a limited number of addresses; there was nothing generic to Westway as a community that should have warranted its reputation and negative image. **While the effects of the problem were felt throughout the community, only a few addresses and individuals were the direct cause; these would be the focus of the efforts of the Task Force.**

8. What situational information was needed to better understand the problem? We needed hard evidence to back up the general feeling that residents and

officers had from personal experience. The Task Force identified several serious categories of police response (eg, assaults, alcohol, drugs, firearms) to determine true extent and location and individuals involved. In the case of the targeted locations, we needed to know who were the true owners/landlords; these were not always obvious because of absentee-landlord situations and sub-letting.

9. Was there an open discussion with the community about the problem?

Yes. Community Service Officer (CSO) Sonja Ericson, whose duties included working out of the small Westway Police Substation, located on land donated by the Westway community, first suggested that a collaborative approach be utilized instead of our traditional reactive law enforcement approach. Captain (then-Lieutenant) Dick Baranzini, a former Community Crime Prevention Officer, implemented this suggestion by convening what would become the Westway Community Crime Prevention Task Force. Further, **the police made a decision to involve many agencies and associations and to empower them with information-sharing and streamlined procedures to access the information.** Innovations in information-sharing included providing CAD printouts directly to the Task Force members, showing locations where the crimes and incidents selected by the community were occurring; streamlined procedures were even adopted to allow the Task Force to obtain from King County Police Records Unit sanitized copies of incident reports concerning locations, crimes, or individuals targeted by the Task Force (all abiding with the requirements of the Public Disclosure and Privacy Acts). With many agencies and associations brought on board (Westway Homeowners' and Residents' Associations, King County Housing Authority Section 8 Administrator, Federal Way City Code Enforcement, Federal Way School District, Seattle-King County Public Health Department, King County Fire District #39, King County Animal Control, Adult and Juvenile Probation and Parole, and, of course, the Police), **information could be collected and evaluated from a multi-disciplinary perspective, opening up avenues of approach that would not be readily apparent as long as the problem was looked at solely from a law enforcement perspective.**

C. Response

1, What range of possible alternatives were considered to deal with the problem? From a police perspective, continuing to respond in a reactive manner, but with a "no tolerance" philosophy of arrest or citation, was a possible approach, as was increasing the patrol time within the boundaries of Westway. "Knock-and-Talks" could be conducted by officers at problem locations, with the hope that on-view violations would result in arrests or that tenants would see the wisdom of moving out of the area. Involving more agencies, "burying" the violators in a variety of civil and criminal citations and processes, such as civil abatements, leash law violations, health code violations, and building code violations, was another possibility, in which each agency

stakeholder enforced its own laws/ordinances/codes. The landlords could strictly enforce rental/lease agreements and evict those who did not comply (this was limited by the unwillingness of some landlords to force out a tenant who was paying their rent each month). Education was also a big factor; residents were educated in crime-reporting/use of 9-1-1, crime prevention, and social service resources. Landlords were educated in methods to better screen rental applicants, to enforce compliance with rental/lease agreements and to expedite eviction procedures. The community, in partnership with an adjoining apartment complex, even considered hiring a private security company to provide patrol services during periods when the police were unable to devote time inside Westway. While each of these might force compliance to one or more rules and regulations or even force or convince the violator to move, there was no guarantee that there would be long-term improvements as long as the individuals remained living within Westway; many of these procedures were also very time- and manpower-intensive. The Task Force felt the long-term solution was to force the violators to move out of Westway in the shortest possible manner.

2. What responses did you use to address the problem? Analysis determined that all of the identified problem locations were leased or rented property; further, all were receiving Section 8 rent subsidies paying part of the rent each month. The Task Force determined that the landlords should use violations of rental/lease agreements to deny lease renewal or to evict the errant tenants. When the landlord would not or could not use the lease agreement, the Task Force turned to the rules governing the receipt of Section 8 subsidies as a most useful tool. Since the rules for receiving Section 8 subsidies were even stricter than most rental/lease agreements, the subsidies could be cut off when the Task Force presented proof of violations from police records, forcing even the most noncooperative landlord to evict the errant tenant. The problem individuals would then be forced to move out of Westway. This became the initial and most-successful approach to removing problem individuals from the community. Concurrently, Patrol conducted "Knock-and-Talks" at addresses identified by computer or informant as being involved in drug trafficking, resulting in on-view arrests and voluntary relocation. The Homeowners' Association also subsequently committed funding and teamed with an adjoining apartment complex to contract with a private security company to patrol both areas during high-activity time periods when the police were not able to devote discretionary time within the complex.

3. How did you develop a response as a result of your analysis? Using the streamlined information-sharing procedures set up by King County Police Records and the Precinct Crime Analysis Officer, **members of the Residents' and Homeowners' Associations (not the police) could identify problem locations and obtain incident numbers and case reports.** The documentation would then be shown to the landlords. If the landlord would not or could not cancel the lease or evict the tenants, the same information would be shown to the Section 8 Administrator within King County Housing Authority. Since the requirements for obtaining Section 8 assistance are more stringent

than most lease agreements, it was often easier to obtain an end to the rent subsidies than to use lease-violation eviction proceedings to force the removal of the tenant. The "knock and talks" also proved successful in convincing violators that the police were focusing on them and that changing residences or lifestyles were good options.

4. What evaluation criteria were most important to the department before implementation of the response alternatives? The traditional, reactive response criteria of Dispatched Calls for Service, Total Calls for Service, Arrests, and Citations/Notices of Infraction issued.

5. What did you intend to accomplish with your response plan? A reduction in the crime rate, ending multiple, recurring responses to the same locations; improvement of the quality of life within the community by replacing errant residents with more law-abiding residents.

6. What resources were available to help solve the problem? The participation and expertise of representatives of the community and several state, county, and city agencies~and the legal codes they operated under and enforced, which were largely unknown to the police.

7. What was done before you implemented your response plan? The police utilized a purely reactive response, handling each call for service individually.

8. What difficulties were encountered during response implementation? For the police it was a paradigm shift, since offering up information to and empowering citizens was something new. There were also information-sharing problems between units within the police department, requiring protocols to be written to insure a free flow of information in a timely manner. For the community, it was not a quick-fix and the solution was not handed to them on a platter; they had definite roles and responsibilities for the response to be successful, including paying for copies of case reports to document residents' violation histories. **For several of the governmental and social service agencies, this was the first time they had been involved in a multidisciplinary approach to a problem;** some came with nothing more than stacks of brochures, thinking that would solve the problem! Several landlords, notably the absentee variety, either expressed little interest or were hesitant to do anything to endanger rental income; at least one tried to rationalize that if he evicted a tenant, the tenant would just move to another location within Westway. We also experienced an attempt by a targeted individual to file harassment charges against the President of the Residents' Association; the charges were dismissed when CSO Ericson testified in the President's behalf at trial.

9. Who was involved in the response to your problem? The Westway Homeowners' and Residents' Associations, King County Police, King County Housing

Authority Section 8 Administrator, Federal Way Fire Department (King County Fire Protection District #39), King County Animal Control, Federal Way City Code Enforcement, Juvenile Court Probation, Washington State Adult Probation/Parole, Seattle-King County Health Department, Federal Way School District.

D. Evaluation:

1. What were the results? What degree of impact did the response plan have on this problem? Several problem tenants were evicted from their residences. Some had their Section 8 rental subsidies canceled, allowing eviction for failure to pay rent. Others had their lease/rental agreements terminated as landlords became more willing to take a strong stand and take action against rental/lease agreement violations. Other tenants moved after patrol "knock and talks". The Task Force continues to identify problem locations and to force evictions and/or voluntary moving. The prime activity of the response plan-Section 8 rental subsidy cancellation-turned out to be the single most effective tool for the Task Force because most of the problem locations were subsidized rental property.

2. What were your methods of evaluation and for how long was the effectiveness of the problem-solving effort evaluated? There is on-going evaluation. Even as assignments have changed at the police department, the procedures are still working smoothly and repeat calls for service are down because of the movement of the problem residents. Most importantly, the community now knows how to take care of its own problems and that it will be supported and empowered by the police in obtaining the documentation necessary to accomplish what needs to be done. This has resulted in an increase in the community's sense of ownership and responsibility for their quality of life. They have even spent their own money and entered into partnership with an adjacent apartment complex to contact with private security for extra patrol coverage.

3. Who was involved in this evaluation? The Task Force members from the Homeowners' and Residents' Associations and the police.

4. Were there problems in implementing the response plan? As noted in #8 of Response, above, the initial problems were in devising streamlined information-sharing procedures between the community and the police. As it turned out, there was much we could do without violating the guidelines of the State Public Disclosure and Privacy Acts. In fact, the Revised Code of Washington specifically addresses the subject of sharing drug and assault incident information with landlords. The unwillingness or inability of some of the landlords to cooperate was a more difficult problem; this was the reason the Section 8 approach was adopted and proved so helpful.

5. If there was no improvement in the problem, were other symptomatic efforts considered to handle the problem? N/A

6. What response goals were accomplished? Better communication within the police department and between the police and the community; reduction in number of repeat responses to problem addresses in Westway or attributable to problem individuals living within Westway; quality of life has improved in Westway because of physical improvements, reduction of the feeling of fear by the residents, and less feeling of isolation from the rest of the city and the public service agencies. **And the police, by testifying for the Residents' Association President in a harassment trial, proved that we would support the community members when they were taking responsibility for their community.**

7. How did you measure your results? Crime Analysis could demonstrate reduced calls for service, of the types of incidents targeted, with the CAD computer. The residents verbally expressed their more positive feelings about life in Westway and their improved relationship to the agencies that served them; they were actually willing to spend their own money to contract with private security for additional protection.

8. How could you have made the response more effective? If there had been more periodic meetings with the core group (Proactive Unit, Patrol, ESO's, Crime Analysis, and Homeowners' and Residents' Associations), we could have had a more timely response to the symptoms of the problem and a more continuous evaluation of our successes or the obstacles to success we were facing. From the police side, reassignment of key players negatively impacted the continuity of the police input to the Task Force.

9. Was there a concern about displacement? With the exception of a partnership with an adjacent apartment complex, with information exchanged so that targeted individuals did not just move "across the fence" (and, later, to co-funding a contract for private security services), displacement was not a concern; the concern was solely to remove the problem element from Westway and to improve the quality of life for the Westway community. In an idea! world, we would have liked to change the lifestyle of the violators right there, but the focus of this Task Force was the greater good of this community, not necessarily the rehabilitation of the offenders.

10. Will your response require continued monitoring or a continuing effort to maintain your results? Yes. The Task Force continues to meet and should continue to be a major player for the future. The County's police service contract with the City of Federal Way comes to an end in Fall 1996, so we are encouraging the new City of Federal Way Police Department to participate on the Task Force and to adopt protocols that support the efforts of the Task Force.

E. Philosophy and Organization

1. At what level of the police organization was this problem-solving initiative initiated? At the precinct-level.

2. Did officers or management receive any special training in problem-oriented policing and/or problem-solving before this project began? Community Policing and Problem-Oriented Policing were relatively new to the department; Capt Baranzini and CSO Ericson have read on the concept and have received some training in other venues, such as from the military or from site-visits to communities practicing POP.

3. Were additional incentives given to police officers who engaged in problem solving? No. However, because of the recognized successes of this approach, the Westway Community Crime Prevention Task Force was recognized by the Washington State Crime Prevention Association as the "**Non-Law Enforcement Crime Prevention Program of the Year,**" and each participant received a certificate from the City of Federal Way.

4. What resources and guidelines were used, if any, by police officers to help them manage this problem-solving initiative? None

5. What issues/problems were identified with the problem-oriented policing mode! or the problem-solving model? None. Because of the variety of individuals involved-private as well as agency representatives-there was no uniformity in amount of problem-solving training or understanding of the concept before the Task Force commenced operations. Therefore, the procedure was quite informal and did not reflect any one of the most commonly-used formal approaches.

6. What general resource commitments were made to this project, and, of those resources, what went beyond the existing department budget? Nothing was required beyond the normal capabilities of the precinct and its Crime Analysis Unit. The streamlined procedures for Task Force representatives to obtain CAD printouts and for requesting copies of incident reports did not involve additional work for the police records unit or other units of the department.

Supporting Documents:

1. WSCPA Award Certificate
2. Westway Newspaper Article
3. Westway Newspaper Article