

FORMING PARTNERSHIPS AGAINST CRIME

The Oak Park Community of Sacramento experiences one of the cities highest crime rates. Oak Park has a disproportionately higher rate of crimes for drug offenses, burglary, and violent crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assaults. Many of the crimes are directly linked to the drug and gang activity in the neighborhood. Arrests for possession and sales of rock cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and marijuana are higher in Oak Park than in most other neighborhoods in the City. Sacramento police officers made 506 arrests for drug offenses in 1992. The Sacramento Police Gang Unit has spent over 30% of its enforcement time in Oak Park. Many of the Sacramento Police Departments past efforts were enforcement oriented with short term and high visibility activities staffed with the limited police resources.

The Oak Park consists of approximately 18,000 people with an ethnic population of approximately 27% black, 19% Asian, 25% white, and 28% Hispanic. Only 40% of the residents own their own homes; 80% of the families in the community receive some kind of public assistance; and approximately 50% of the residents in Oak Park are unemployed.

In the battle to control crime, police departments have struggled with a variety of methods and applications designed to reduce the crime rate in communities. In July of 1993 the Sacramento Police Department joined forces with the University of California, Davis Police Department and began an effort to revitalize one neighborhood in Sacramento; the result was a community oriented policing program for the Oak Park neighborhood. Oak Park is an area of Sacramento experiencing high unemployment and a disproportional high crime rate.

The Sacramento Police Department was interested in creating partnerships with the agencies and organizations in Oak Park and one of the first contacts they made was at the University of California Davis, Medical Center (UCDMC). UCDMC surrounds the northeast boundary of Oak Park and is policed by the UC Davis Police Department. UCDMC is the largest employer in the neighborhood and the fifth largest employer in Sacramento with approximately 5,000 full-time employees. UCDMC has undergone substantial and aggressive growth and more than doubled its space in recent years.

UC Davis Police immediately embraced the community policing project for a variety of reasons. From a micro-perspective, UCDMC suffered with rising crime rates which mirrored the Oak Park neighborhood. The Medical Center stretched along the edge of the Oak Park neighborhood approximately 1 mile. Many of its buildings and clinics were located in the neighborhood and serviced the Oak Park neighborhood and UCDMC was the hospital of choice for the Oak Park neighborhood. There were no true boundaries between the Medical Center and the community. Crime at the Medical Center was a mere reflection of the surrounding Oak Park neighborhood and influenced by the criminal activity in the community. Crimes at UCDMC rose approx. 8% pr. year over the last five years. Purse snatches, assaults, auto theft and similar crimes were on the rise. UC Davis Police were looking for strategies to lower their crime rates.

From a macro-perspective, they looked at the surrounding neighborhood as a part of their larger sense of community and their commitment to the neighborhood where the hospital is located. The problems in Oak Park were seen as a community health problem. One requiring a commitment on the part of all affected parties, not just those immediately involved in the situation. The administration believed that healthy people must come from healthy communities and that violence was an epidemic which plagued the neighborhood. By combining the resources of UCDMC with the City of Sacramento the police department believed that they could help to revitalize the community and reverse the downward spiral of economic deterioration in the neighborhood.

Another important factor for UCDMC were the economics of this unique program. UCDMC was the closest hospital for the Oak Park neighborhood and was also the only hospital in northern California designated as a Trauma Center. Every major trauma including gunshot, stabbing, and assault victims are brought to UCDMC for treatment. Because UCDMC was the hospital of choice for the Oak Park residents, it received a significantly higher proportion of infants born addicted to rock cocaine (and other problems related to children born from mothers who suffered from poor health habits) as well as trauma victims from street gang and drug violence. A program which would reduce the number of rock cocaine babies born at UCDMC by indigent mothers or reduce the number of assault victims brought into the emergency room would amount to a significant savings for the Medical Center.

The UC Davis Police began their partnership with the Sacramento Police by committing UCD police officers Dave Robinson and Paul Freeman to the Oak Park Revitalization Program and assigning them to the Sacramento Police Department for a three year commitment. The two UC officers teamed with Sacramento police officers Milt Nenneman, Allan Geoffroy, Steve Quinn, James Lassen, Cevin Kolbe, and sergeant Ernie Daniels to comprise a team known as the *Oak Park Neighborhood Police Officers (NPO's)*. Sergeant Daniels was later promoted to Lieutenant and Ofc. Nenneman was promoted to the program Sergeant. Ofc. Bill Tanton was assigned to the team to replace Officer Nenneman. The new program began by strengthening the responsibilities and authority of the NPO's. They were given the responsibilities for solving neighborhood problems and also the authority to seek out the resources and work with them towards solving problems. This style of policing is distinctly different from a more traditional policing style which emphasis the paramilitary hierarchy of command. Police administrators knew that it was important for the officers to work with community members and solve community problems in a timely manner, thus necessitating a shift in the policing style.

The NPO's first efforts were aimed towards increasing enforcement. The Oak Park Neighborhood Police Officers (NPO's) rallied with other allied law enforcement agencies such as Probation, Parole, ATF, FBI, and Federal HUD enforcement officers. They identified high crime problem areas and high risk offenders. The team began quarterly sweeps for gang activity, drug activity, and targeted the high risk offenders. Within the first year the teams made approximately 500 arrests and confiscated numerous weapons (including automatic weapons, sawed off shotguns, rifles and one hand grenade).

The officers also focused their attention towards prevention programs and began working with community based organizations to develop long term solutions. They needed to bring back the cohesive nature of the community which had been disrupted by the gangs, drugs, and poor economics. They began to get neighbors working with neighbors to revitalize their community. The Officers initiated Drug Free Zones. NPO's identified clusters of neighborhoods around parks, schools, and anywhere where children would congregate to play. They mapped out an area 1,000 feet around these centers which they posted and labeled as "*Drug Free Zones*". They invited the neighbors within these *DFZ* zones to attend monthly meetings designed to identify and solve their community problems. The Drug Free Zones help the neighborhood to define their identity and work closely, on a smaller scale, with their community resources. The officers helped to form the Drug Free Zones and bring in other resources to train the community members in areas of public safety, neighborhood watch, identifying abandoned homes and contacting owners to board them up, and also how to identify residences used for drug sales. The *DFZ*'s organized Saturday street sweeps. Neighbors got together on Saturdays and cleaned up debris from the streets and abandoned homes. Sacramento City Solid Waste Dept. responded with a truck to assist the cleanup of the streets and alleys. The neighborhood declared their identity and made a statement that drugs and gangs would not be tolerated.

They immediately began working together to build partnerships with the other neighborhood organizations and also towards bringing the resources of UCDMC to the neighborhood. UCDMC realized that economic opportunity and education were the keys to building a healthier community. UCDMC worked with the NPO officers to developed a Jobs Program in partnership with the neighborhood high school. They organized the program through UCDMC and the surrounding neighborhood businesses to hire youth, ages 15 through 18, at the hospital. The kids who were known to the officers or who were referred by high school administrators, church leaders, or who had come into contact with other officers were selected by the NPO's. The officers looked for youth who might be in jeopardy of influence by the drugs or gangs in the neighborhood and kids in need of opportunities for them to excel. With the first few kids hired at UCDMC, the officers found that they lacked some fundamental skills and also lacked parental guidance necessary to maintain a job. In spite of the good intentions of the programs offered to the youth, the officers found the kids lacked the parental support to get the kids to work each day and the kids lacked the job skills necessary to get along with peers and supervisors. The officers found that their kids needed a more personal and intense guidance and supervision.

In conjunction with the jobs program the officers developed a mentoring program. The mentors came from various departments at UCDMC and also from the various existing neighborhood organizations (i.e.; My Brothers Keeper). The mentors were given instruction from trained professional in the Child Development department at UCDMC and also worked closely with the Juvenile Court and Judge Lytle's *Sacramentor Program*. They worked with the youth to develop the kids potential and to help them realize their goals. The role of the mentor is to identify the goals of the youth and to guide the kids both academically and vocationally or professionally towards reaching the child's goal. They also helped develop the youth's potential by bringing them into the academic environment at the University Medical Center's teaching facilities. The mentors also act

as career advocates for the youth and seek out employment opportunities within UCDMC and the neighborhood for their kids. The two programs work effectively with each other because the jobs program depends upon the kids ability to improve their grades, reduce truancies, and reduce the school drop out rate.

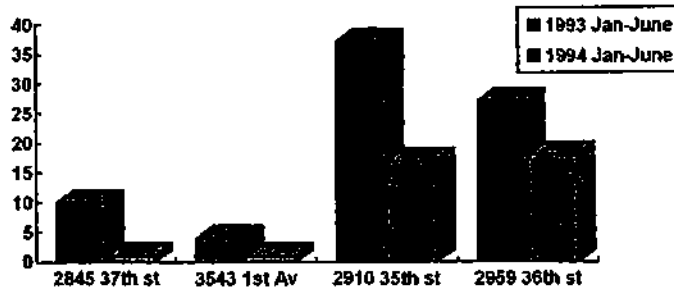
The NPO's met with the UCDMC Nursing Department. The Director of Nursing created a Nursing R. O. P. (Regional Occupational Program) in partnership with the Sacramento High School to target minority and disadvantaged students. UCDMC provided equipment and worked with the high school science teaching staff to develop a curriculum for a nursing program. A seventh period class was offered, students completing the program are prepared to go on to a college nursing program or a career in the health care professions. UCDMC also offers grants and scholarships to deserving students admitted to college. The elective classes filled immediately and a waiting list was established for future classes.

The NPO's realized another problem endemic to their neighborhood was related to the gangs and drug traffic. Gang members moved into apartments and began drug dealing and prostitution. The police were receiving excessive numbers of calls for service which strained their resources. The NPO's worked with the Sacramento Police Problem Oriented Police officers (POP). The NPO's developed POP projects on specific locations. They worked with the property owners, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, and the neighborhood to dramatically reduce the calls for service to these locations.

For example POP projects were located at four sites in Oak Park. Calls for service for two six month periods in 1993 and 1994 indicate that POP projects located at 2845 37th street were reduced 90%, 3543 1st avenue were reduced 75%, 2910 35th St. reduced 54%, and 2959 36th St. reduced 33% (see Table 1).

Table 1

Calls for Service in four selected POP projects in Oak Park, Sacramento



The data indicated to the NPO officers that many of the gangsters and drug dealers were moving a few blocks away from the designated POP project sites and continuing their illegal activities in other apartment complexes. The NPO's realized that many of the apartment owners and managers were doing very little, if anything, to screen tenants. Managers and owners were charging tenants a fee for financial screening which they never followed through with. In many instances, after less than 30 days the tenants would begin drug dealing and prostitution. The police responded with enforcement and arrests; and the managers/owners began the eviction process. The eviction process however, can take 60 to 90 days to complete and the drug dealing tenants would stay in the apartment rent free while the process moved its way through the courts. This cycle repeated itself throughout Oak Park and was a contributing factor in the narcotics and gang activity.

In response the MPO Officers began an Oak Park Apartment managers and owners association. They worked with City Councilwoman Deborah Ortiz and sent out mailers to multi-unit owners informing them of the association and the next time and meeting place. The first meeting was attended by approx. 60 owners and managers and subsequent meetings have been well represented. The association is comprising its own local tenant screening process. The association has also connected with the California

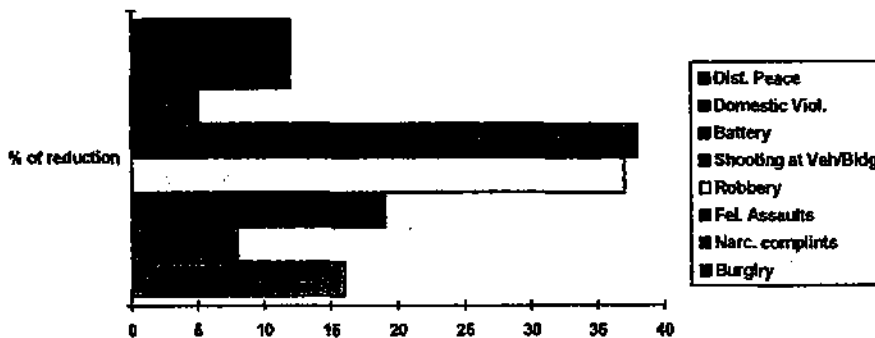
Apartment Association and is developing standards for their apartment buildings. Units which meet these standards will display a placard identifying their apartments as meeting the fair housing standards and tenants will know that their neighbors have been screened. These efforts will hopefully reduce the drug and gang problem and bring more acceptable tenants into Oak Park while refusing to rent to those individuals identified as previous problem tenants.

The officers have also begun to coordinate efforts with the other community based organizations in Oak Park. They have met with the neighborhood business association in an effort to provide jobs for the neighborhood youth. They are meeting with the church organizations to build community member groups which will attack the neighborhood problems of drugs, violence, unemployment, and affordable housing. They have also worked to organize the community into their own patrols. The NPO's organized a neighborhood watch which they entitled "C.O.P's." (Citizens on Patrol). Neighbors routinely patrol their areas in their own vehicles and called in suspicious activity to the police.

After the first year of operation the statistics show a dramatic reduction in crimes and calls for police service. Overall police department calls for service in Oak Park were reduced approx. 20% from the previous year. Police calls for service at the neighborhood high school were also lowered 20% from the previous year (see table 2).

Table 2

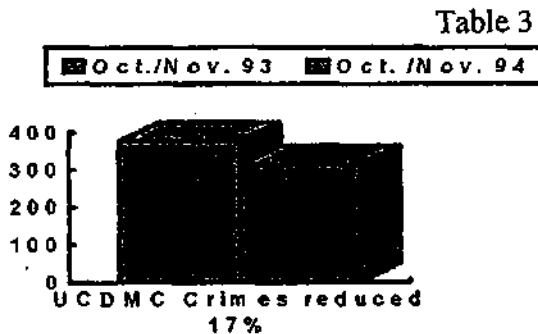
Crimes Reported by Category in Oak Park Oct-Sept. 1993/1994



As Table 2 indicates, crimes in almost every category were lowered after the first year of operation;

- Felony assaults were reduced 19%.
- Robberies were reduced 37%.
- Burglar was reduced 16%
- Narcotics complaints reduced 8%
- Shooting at vehicles/buildings reduced 38%
- Battery reduced 5%
- Domestic violence reduced 12%
- Disturbing the peace reduced 5%

At UCDMC the categories of violent crimes and property crimes were reduced 17% for the first year the program was in operation (see Table 3).



The problems in the Oak Park neighborhood were the results of 15 years of a continual downward economic spiral. Law enforcement and the community are well aware that the problems will not be solved in one, two, or even three years. But we have learned to shift our focus from quick-fix efforts towards looking for long-term solutions. The efforts of the neighborhood police officers community involvement, along with the resources of the University of California Medical Center and the community based organizations have had a significant impact on the community in the short time since the program was implemented. The outlook is hopeful for continued success as the

neighborhood police officers continue to bring in the other organizations to work with the neighborhood. We can no longer accept that neighborhoods which experience high levels of poverty, unemployment, and lack opportunities will also experience high crime and violence. People who live in lower economic neighborhoods should feel safe in their neighborhoods. Everyone, individuals and organizations, must be aware and committed to the neighborhood where they live and work if the neighborhood is to thrive and maintain its healthy environment.