

NOMINATION FOR 1997 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD**ABSTRACT****Scanning**

During the past 10 years, the St. Louis Park Police Department has become increasingly aware of changes in the quality of life being experienced by the Meadowbrook neighborhood. This perception has been supported by calls for service data as well as the observations of patrol officers and area residents.

Analysis

The St. Louis Park Police Department has been conducting some analysis of the Meadowbrook neighborhood for several years. We began with some haphazard trial and error methods of analysis during our infancy as a community policing environment. During the past few years, we have become much more effective in our analysis techniques.

Response

The response strategy being utilized by the St. Louis Park Police Department is one that integrates police resources into a multi-faceted partnership called the Meadowbrook Collaborative. This partnership has assisted us in focusing on root causes and underlying issues and made our use of analysis more problem-oriented and less symptom-oriented.

Assessment

Our assessment has been based upon calls for service, both in terms of volume and category. Additionally, the views of the residents of Meadowbrook, the management and ownership of Meadowbrook, members of the police department and city government representatives, have been considered. We have also sought input from our collaborative partners regarding the progress being made.

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DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Scanning

1. The nature of the problem in the Meadowbrook neighborhood was the general increase in crime and disorder occurring throughout the neighborhood. Everything from nuisance complaints to crimes of violence were increasing at alarming rates. The police officers working in the Meadowbrook neighborhood observed significant deterioration occurring on many fronts and discussions with residents made it increasingly obvious that the residents did not "feel safe."
2. The problem was identified by examining calls for service data on the Meadowbrook neighborhood, coupled with input from complex residents and management and the observations of the police officers working in the Meadowbrook neighborhood. Increases in crime and disorder data on the Meadowbrook neighborhood were disproportionate by comparison to other neighborhoods in St. Louis Park and to the metropolitan area in general.
3. The problem was identified by neighborhood residents as well as the complex management and ownership. The problem was also identified by area police officers and members of other city departments. Additionally, representatives of city government, including elected officials, began to express concerns about deterioration of the Meadowbrook complex.

4. This problem was selected because it was clearly becoming an issue of significant proportions within the city and because of shared experiences of other communities regarding similar trends of deterioration in rental property complexes. Additionally, this problem was drawing significant attention from city representatives and elected officials.

5. The initial level of diagnosis for this problem was the neighborhood level. As part of the strategic planning process for community policing in St. Louis Park, we have returned to a neighborhood based system for gathering information and evaluating police service. The Meadowbrook Manor complex is also the Meadowbrook neighborhood, one of the 35 distinct neighborhoods served by the St. Louis Park Police Department. Problem identification and problem solving is most often conducted on the basis of geographic neighborhoods.

Analysis

1. The analysis was done primarily by using calls for service data on the Meadowbrook neighborhood from monthly and annual reports. Analysis also involved reviewing the observations of patrol officers whose geographic assignment included the Meadowbrook neighborhood. We also interviewed the management and ownership of the complex and conducted several resident surveys. The resident surveys generated very limited input.

2. The history of the problem dates back to the mid to late 1980's. Officers assigned to the Meadowbrook neighborhood began to notice physical deterioration and quality of life deterioration. Families with small children, many of them single parent families, began to move away citing personal

safety concerns. The quantity and nature of our calls for service data also began to change during this time period.

3. The problem involved an ongoing influx of tenants who participated in lifestyles associated with frequent crime and disorder. The victims were the other residents of the complex who were forced to accept increasing chaos and disorder or move from the neighborhood. Many of the victims were long-term, loyal residents of the complex.
4. The greatest harm resulting from this problem was the deterioration of quality of life in the Meadowbrook neighborhood and the particularly negative impact on families with small children. The increasing frequency of violent crimes, drug activity, property crime and disturbances as a natural extension of the differing lifestyle which characterized many of the new residents.
5. Prior to the problem-solving project, the problem was being addressed only by random efforts generated by frustrated patrol officers. The management and ownership of the complex were primarily in a state of denial and the residents who were being victimized were afraid to work in partnership with the police.
6. The analysis revealed that many residents had abandoned their "ownership" attitude regarding the Meadowbrook neighborhood. The sense of community had disappeared from the neighborhood. Additionally, many new residents coming into the neighborhood brought lifestyle and behavior histories which made increased crime and disorder predictable. The management and ownership of the complex had become frustrated and somewhat apathetic regarding the problem, and they had come to view the police as more of an adversary than a partner.

7. The analysis revealed that the problem was affecting the general quality of life and specific ability to feel safe for virtually all the residents who were not participants in the creation of crime and disorder in the complex. It became clear during analysis that the moral fiber of this community was disintegrating because of the problem.
8. The situational information we collected was used primarily for reactive methods. Once new residents were admitted into the complex and displayed the belief that an atmosphere full of crime and disorder was acceptable, we were forced to depend upon the criminal justice system and eviction proceedings far too often. However, some situational information dealing with tenant behavior patterns and issues motivating the residents to take back their neighborhood was useful for prevention purposes.
9. Residents of the Meadowbrook neighborhood were reluctant to discuss their fears and concerns in an open meeting, despite numerous attempts using a variety of formats. Written surveys also resulted in very little neighborhood response. However, on some occasions, private discussions between police officers and residents gave insight into the genuine level of fear which existed in the neighborhood.

Response

1. The response alternatives included building relationships between police and neighborhood residents, targeting problem suspects and addresses using aggressive enforcement and implementing the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program. We also felt that building a better relationship with the management/ownership was an important alternative and believed the

Crime Free Multi-Housing Program would assist us in addressing this alternative.

2. We decided to pursue a multi-faceted response strategy, using all of the alternatives described above. This strategy gave us maximum flexibility and prevented disappointing results in one alternative from having a fatal impact.
3. The analysis demonstrated and identified the common denominators which collectively defined "the problem." It became clear during analysis that there were several underlying or root causes which needed to be addressed. The response strategy we developed was designed to address the root causes in a meaningful and effective way. We discussed response alternatives with the residents, management/ownership, police department members and our potential partners. The response is intended to address the underlying causes using the input of the affected stakeholders.
4. The volume and nature of police calls for service is a primary evaluation criteria for the department. Changes in the culture of the neighborhood, particularly quality of life issues involving crime and disorder, were also important evaluation criteria.
5. Our response plan was intended to address the volume and nature of police calls for service in the Meadowbrook neighborhood. Our response plan was also intended to establish relationships and build partnerships with the residents, management/ownership and community partners. We also felt that the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program would assist us in addressing several underlying or root causes which were directly related to the management/ownership of Meadowbrook.

6. During the development of our response strategy, the COPS FAST grant funding became available, and our department began to pursue the concept of a full-time officer taking ownership for this neighborhood. Matching funds for this grant were obtained from The Foundation - Health System Minnesota, which was also funding a full-time outreach worker for the Meadowbrook neighborhood. Resources were also contributed by the owner of the complex who provided a townhouse to be used for office and activity space for the police officer and outreach worker.
7. Before implementing the response strategy, we spent some time in planning and interacting with the stakeholders involved. We knew there would be some trial and error involved, but our intention was that all stakeholders be fully informed, and that the implementation steps have broad-based support.
8. A number of significant difficulties were encountered during response implementation. Many of the residents of the Meadowbrook neighborhood lived in complete isolation out of their fear and frustration regarding the issues of crime and disorder. The management/ownership of the complex did not trust the police or view them as viable partners. The officers of the police department had essentially written off the Meadowbrook complex, and most officers went into the complex only when responding to calls. Essentially, the attitudes of all the stakeholders presented significant challenges.
9. The response strategy involved the St. Louis Park Police Department, the residents and management of the complex, the Foundation - Health System Minnesota, representatives from other city departments and a number of non-profit community-based volunteers including members of the St. Louis Park School District.

Assessment

1. The results were significant. There has been improvement in the volume of calls for service and the nature of calls being received by the police. Residents of the complex have begun to feel safe in the neighborhood again, and many residents have begun demonstrating a feeling of ownership toward the neighborhood, the response plan has created significant improvements in police statistics in the neighborhood and has brought many residents out of their state of isolation and fear.
2. The methods of evaluation involved statistical comparisons of police calls for service over 3 years, input from police officers on the changes in the neighborhood, views expressed by the management and ownership of the complex, views expressed by the other collaborative partners, and formal and informal surveys of neighborhood residents. Evaluations are based upon 3 years of involvement with the Meadowbrook neighborhood.
3. The assessment has involved all the stakeholders involved in this partnership. Some of the evaluation steps are statistically driven, and some are the result of collecting anecdotal information.
4. The problems involved in implementing the response plan were primarily based upon the need to motivate stakeholders to change their attitudes. Many of the stakeholders had difficulty embracing the belief that substantive change could happen at Meadowbrook. It was truly a case where "whether you think you can or you can't, you're right." As the stakeholders adopted the belief that change was possible, it became possible.
5. Not applicable.

6. Police calls for service to the Meadowbrook neighborhood have been improved significantly, both in terms of volume and nature. The developing partnerships have improved police relationships with the residents and the ownership/management. Another goal which has been accomplished is that residents have begun to "feel safe" again in the Meadowbrook neighborhood. Additionally, the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program has assisted the complex management in making significant operational improvements.
7. The methods of evaluation involved statistical comparisons of police calls for service over 3 years, input from police officers on the changes in the neighborhood, views expressed by the management and ownership of the complex, views expressed by the other collaborative partners, and formal and informal surveys of neighborhood residents. Evaluations are based upon 3 years of involvement with the Meadowbrook neighborhood.
8. The only change which might have made the response more effective would have been earlier recognition regarding management deficiencies. This response piece has been the slowest to materialize and stabilize.
9. Because the response strategy included the development and execution of a better tenant screening system, it was clearly our intent to prevent those prospective tenants with histories of crime and disorder from gaining rental approval. The strategy also involved enhancing management's ability to expedite evictions. These concepts would undoubtedly lend themselves to some degree of displacement. However, as it becomes more and more difficult to find a place to rent, these concepts might also force some people to change their behavior.
10. Yes. It will take at least several more years of monitoring and effort before the Meadowbrook neighborhood can assimilate the changes being

supported by the partners who have participated. Additionally, we will always need to maintain a proactive level of involvement exceeding the levels accepted in a conventional policing environment.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

1. This problem solving initiative was developed by one sergeant and a small group of officers with the support of the police chief and city manager.
2. The officers involved attempted several training sessions and made several site visits before and during this project.
3. The only incentives given were the opportunity to work in a non-traditional environment with greater opportunities for flexibility and creativity.
4. The only resources and guidelines used were those developed through our training and site visits. Books and articles on community policing, along with the shared experiences of a few other agencies, gave us a general idea about how to manage the project. Our expectation from the beginning was that trial and error would be part of this project.
5. The nature of the problem in the Meadowbrook neighborhood was the general increase in crime and disorder occurring throughout the neighborhood. Everything from nuisance complaints to crimes of violence were increasing at alarming rates. The police officers working in the Meadowbrook neighborhood observed significant deterioration occurring on many fronts and discussions with residents made it increasingly obvious that the residents did not "feel safe."

6. Funding for the officer came from the COPS FAST grant, and matching funds have been contributed by The Foundation - Health System Minnesota. Office space and utilities were subsidized by the complex owner. Playground equipment, activities and children's services, and numerous other resource donations came from the local school district and numerous volunteer partners. Additional resources, including the full-time, on-site outreach worker, were also provided by The Foundation - Health System Minnesota.

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MEADOWBROOK POLICE CALLS FOR SERVICE

| Type of Call | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1/2 Yr. 1997 |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Burglary | 22 | 18 | 15 | 5 |
| Fire | 16 | 18 | 14 | 5 |
| Gun Calls | 14 | 9 | 2 | 0 |
| Auto Theft/Recovered Stolen | 3 | 9 | 14 | 3 |
| Citizen Assist/Welfare Check | 53 | 52 | 84 | 27 |
| Theft | 36 | 32 | 21 | 10 |
| Animal Complaints | 15 | 18 | 3 | 2 |
| CSC | 4 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| Noise Complaints | 148 | 139 | 82 | 55 |
| Car Accidents | 17 | 24 | 13 | 6 |
| Fights/UW Guests/Disturb | 155 | 130 | 74 | 34 |
| Traffic Stop/Arrests | 10 | 26 | 31 | 10 |
| Domestics | 31 | 37 | 30 | 11 |
| Vandalism/Property Damage | 28 | 17 | 11 | 1 |
| Juvenile Calls | 39 | 11 | 25 | 19 |
| Child Abuse/Neglect | 7 | 6 | 7 | 2 |
| Parking/Tow | 30 | 31 | 31 | 12 |
| Medical | 32 | 39 | 24 | 16 |
| Assault | 13 | 10 | 11 | 9 |
| Subpoenas/Warrant | 19 | 25 | 27 | 14 |
| Harassing Communication | 15 | 11 | 5 | 1 |
| Terroristic Threats | 14 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Exposing | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| DOA/Suicides/Attempts | 7 | 4 | 12 | 0 |
| Robbery | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Miscellaneous | 102 | 238 | 145 | 21 |
| TOTAL CALLS | 836 | 916 | 688* | 264 |

*25% decrease in calls from 1995