

**JOLIET POLICE DEPARTMENT  
DAVID L. GERDES  
CHIEF  
815/724-3201  
FAX 815/724-3290**

**CITY**

**OF**

**JOLIET**

**150 WEST JEFFERSON STREET  
JOLIET, ILLINOIS 60432-4156**

12 May 2000

Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee  
Police Executive Research Forum, (PERF)  
1120 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 930  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Committee Members:

It is with great pleasure and pride that I nominate this project for the 2000 Herman Goldstein Award. Officers Esqueda and Hir have worked diligently in their assigned area to address the multitude of problems that plague the residents there. Their ability to integrate various activities into one workable solution help make our department's overall efforts in community policing a reality. I feel that this problem-oriented project is one of their best efforts, and am confident that you will feel the same.

Sincerely,

  
David L. Gerdes,  
Chief of Police

# Problem-Oriented Policing Project #99-600

Submitted by

Officers Javier Esqueda and Dave Hir

**Joliet Police Department**

2000 Herman Goldstein Award Submission

## **PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING PROJECT #99-600**

### **Scanning**

While working in their assigned area for several months in 1998, officers noticed an increase for calls for service at a local tavern as well as a residence located a half block east. Further checking notified officers that the activities revolved around prostitution and drug activity.

### **Analysis**

Officers first confirmed their suspicions by checking the number of calls for service generated within this two-block area. In 1998, over two hundred calls for service were made in this small area, mainly centered upon the two above-mentioned locations. Officers then used the crime triangle to identify specific suspects, victims and locations. They determined that the suspects were prostitutes, drug dealers and their potential customers. Victims were identified as the residents of the two-block area, as well as the owner of the tavern and the City of Joliet. The location was pinpointed as the 900 block of Collins Street, the 400 block of Francis Street, as well as the tavern and the residence.

Officers obtained data by watching the area and activities of the suspects involved, speaking with the tavern owner, local residents and the area Councilman. The analysis revealed that the problem evolved around prostitutes soliciting customers immediately in front of the tavern, and using the pay phone to make contacts for drugs at the nearby residence.

### **Response**

Officers met with various City Officials and City Departments and with their help were able to close down the residence and declare a public nuisance. The pay phone was removed and "No Parking" signs were strategically placed along Francis Street. Numerous arrests were made of the prostitutes, drug dealers and johns in the area as well

as numerous parking citations and state traffic citations.

Assessment

The former prostitute and drug haven on Francis Street was effectively closed down, and no further complaints were made. The removal of the pay phone has decreased calls by at least 20 percent (20%). Officers have cleared the area of the criminal element that was once present and continue to make numerous arrests.

## SCANNING

Officers Esqueda and Hir were assigned to work in Joliet's Sector Twelve in 1998. Located on the City of Joliet's East side, this area of approximately 1.8 square miles is largely populated by working-class Hispanic residents. In addition, there is a vast contingent of opposing street gangs, prostitutes and drug dealers that frequently disturb the community.

During their regularly scheduled midnight shift, officers' attention was attracted to an inordinate amount of apparent prostitution and drug activity in the area of Francis and Collins Streets. This primarily residential area exhibited a high amount of vehicle traffic where individuals would frequently stop and park near one specific residence for short periods of time. A family reputed to be crack cocaine and cannabis users owned this residence.

Although the property had long been a problem in the community, the disruption appeared to be increasing, as prostitutes began aggressively flagging vehicles down, and people entered and exited the residence at all hours. After spending several days observing the activities, officers surmised that prostitutes were using the house as their base of activities for drug dealing and prostitution. In addition, officers observed frequent use of a pay phone a half block down the street where the prostitutes appeared to be making contact with drug dealers.

Officers then made attempts to interview patrons of the tavern as well as subjects that they had arrested in the area for possession of controlled substances. They described incidents of prostitutes entering the bar and soliciting them, offering sex as well as drugs. In addition, the owner of the tavern confirmed the use of the pay phone outside the tavern as a drug hotline.

Community concern for the ongoing problems was high. Officers were notified by the Shift Lieutenant that the area's Councilman had called with numerous resident complaints about the excessive traffic and noise in the area. Pressure to reduce the problem was strong, and it seemed to be worsening as word spread of the availability of drugs and prostitution in the area.

Seeing an opportunity to put their problem oriented policing training to work, the officers

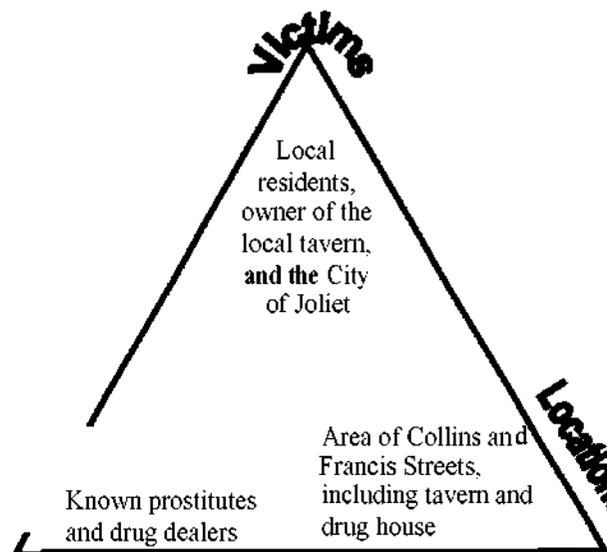
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*Problem Oriented Policing Project #99-600  
Officer J. Esqueda and Officer D. Hir  
2000 Herman Goldstein Award*

decided use the SARA model to develop a plan of action. Given the long-standing nature of the problem, it was apparent that traditional policing was not effective, and a new approach had to be found. Officers selected this problem from others because it was suspected to be the biggest challenge, and community members were demanding a resolution.

ANALYSIS

The first step the officers took was to use the crime triangle to identify the suspects, victims and locations. The chart below illustrates the three parties that officers identified.



Officers then obtained area data on the quantity and quality for service for the past year. In this two-block area, over two hundred calls for service were made over twelve months, mainly public complaints. The drug house accounted for twenty-five percent of all calls made on that block of Francis Street, while the tavern accounted for over seventy-five percent of all calls made on that block of Collins Street. The larger percentage of calls (62%) was made between the hours of six in the evening and six in the morning.

Officers then continued making close observations of the activities at the two locations.

They frequently observed vehicles stopping in the middle of the street at the intersection of Collins and Francis Street, near the local tavern, to talk to the prostitutes that were waving at passing vehicles. When a vehicle would stop, an exchange of words would usually take place, and the two parties would often drive away together. Other times, the prostitute was observed using the pay phone at the local tavern soon after speaking with someone in a passing car. Officers suspected that they were calling for drugs to be dropped off at an arranged location! Most of the time the vehicle would only drive half a block away and stop in front of the reputed drug house.

Exchanges of money and drugs were observed on numerous occasions by the officers, and were later confirmed by drug arrestees. The arrested subjects completed the officers' mental picture by describing what was taking place. They were told that passing cars would initially pick up the prostitutes on the pretense of giving them a ride. Upon driving away with her in the vehicle, the driver would be offered oral sex, sexual intercourse or drugs for money. The residence on Francis Street was being used as a place of prostitution as well as a drug supply house. If the driver only wanted drugs, the prostitute would flag down a contact at the house and then the contact would go to the pay phone that was located down the street outside the tavern and call the drug dealer to deliver the drugs.

Officers then spoke with the bar owner, who expressed exasperation at the prostitutes, who would often go into the tavern and solicit the patrons. He also confirmed that the pay phone was frequently used for drug activity.

Officers also surveyed local residents who also voiced their concerns about the noise and constant activity. They described an environment in which they were afraid to venture due to the prostitutes and drug dealers. Many stated that they were tired of being harassed for money, or offered sex and drugs. In addition, many residents complained of being robbed and burglarized often by not only prostitutes but also by the drug users. Residents stated that they wanted to be

able to go out at night and not have to worry about these problems.

The last party to be contacted was the Councilman in the area who shared the same concerns as the citizens. He expressed concerned that the problem would only get worse and spread to other areas, and promised his support in whatever needed to be done to solve this problem.

### RESPONSE

The analysis revealed that the problem revolved around the drug house and extended to the intersection of Collins and Francis, where both the tavern and the pay phone were located. The prostitutes and drug dealers had a residence to use for their activities and had an unlimited resource of customers from the tavern down the street. Officers surmised that eliminating the drug house as well as the pay phone location from the triangle would accomplish two things: significantly reduce the traffic in the area as well as eliminate the attraction for prostitutes and drug dealers.

Officers determined that in order to solve the problems it was necessary to first meet with the Deputy City Manager and gauge the variety of resources available from other city departments. He advised officers that they would have the cooperation of any city departments necessary to improve the area, and directed them to Neighborhood Services.

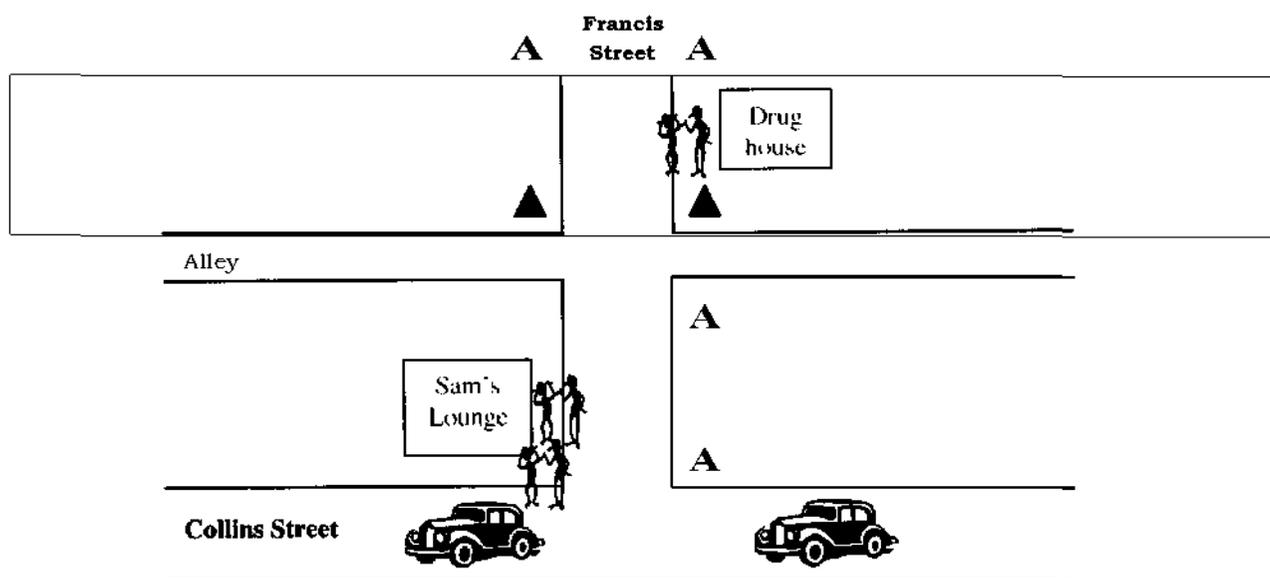
Rather than determining whether a property is structurally fit, or has adequate electrical wiring, this department is charged with inspecting the physical maintenance and upkeep of properties. They do have the power to close down properties that do not meet city ordinance standards. Before setting up a meeting with Neighborhood Services representatives, the officers began by developing a plan of action, separated by areas of concentration. This plan is illustrated below.

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Slow down the traffic by placni ' No Parking Signs' on Francis Street:
3. Remove the <sup>pav</sup> phone from outside the tavern
  4. Arrest the prostitutes. drug dealers and johns for City and State charges and increase police presence.

Officers first worked to determine what could be done to close down the drug house. Since it had always been a frequent visiting place for officers in response to drug activity, domestics, loud noise and unwanted subjects, officers knew that it was heavily infested with roaches and was poorly maintained. In addition, the occupants would often forego the faulty plumbing, and leave their feces in the yard. They hoped that with the cooperation of Neighborhood Services Inspectors, the home could be vacated, at least temporarily.

At the meeting with Neighborhood Services representatives, the officers were advised that the residence had recently gone up for sale. In addition, they stated that the City of Joliet was interested in buying the home, rehabilitating it and reselling it under a homestead program. When inspectors made a walk through of the home, they found numerous violations, and immediately red-tagged the property as condemned. With this information, officers had the ability to arrest anyone found in or around the property.

The next meeting was with the Public Works Department in reference to the traffic problem on Francis Street. On meeting with a representative, both parties agreed that the best way to eliminate the traffic problem would be to place scattered "No Parking, No Stopping and No Standing" signs throughout the street. The signs would be strategically placed on both sides of the street, directly across from the drug house, as well as other places. With the signs in place, officers would be able to write tickets for the parking violations and curb the heavy flow of traffic. The illustration below depicts the plan for sign placement on Francis Street, as agreed upon between the Public Works and Police Departments. It includes the locations of the drug house and the local tavern in relation to Francis and Collins Streets.



The red triangles represent planned placement of "No Parking, No Stopping and No Standing" signs.

The next step was to meet with the owner of the local tavern to see what could be done about the pay phone outside his establishment. The owner reiterated earlier statements about the pay phone causing problems in the front of the bar as well as on the Francis Street side of the establishment. He explained that he attempted on several occasions to have the phone removed, but the telephone company refused. Officers gave the number of the phone company to him, and stated that if the company continued to refuse to remove the phone, officers would call personally.

Once all key pieces were in place, the next job for the officers was to ensure that it was implemented. With this response plan officers hoped to eliminate the problem permanently, close down the drug house without displacing the problem. The use of traditional policing under similar circumstances in other areas had displaced the problem and created the same problems elsewhere, usually not very far from the original location. By closing the house, the location part

of the crime triangle would be removed, but officers had no guarantees that this would stop the problem.

A Neighborhood Services Inspector met with officers and red tagged the drug house the following day. This immediately halted all activity on and around the property, as the picture indicates. The Public Works Department was also very cooperative, and quickly placed all the "No Parking" signs in the previously agreed upon areas, and the pay phone was removed the following week. Within a month of completing these projects, the hot spots of activities in the area were virtual ghost towns.



With all of the groundwork completed, officers had to now respond with traditional law enforcement. They immediately began to arrest subjects that were found inside and on the property of drug house for both trespassing and drug possession.

Prostitutes that were found hanging around the bar outside flagging cars down were arrested for loitering within two hundred feet of a liquor establishment, open alcohol on a public way under city ordinance as well as state drug possession and prostitution charges. When johns attempted to park and solicit the prostitutes, officers wrote parking citations, citations for

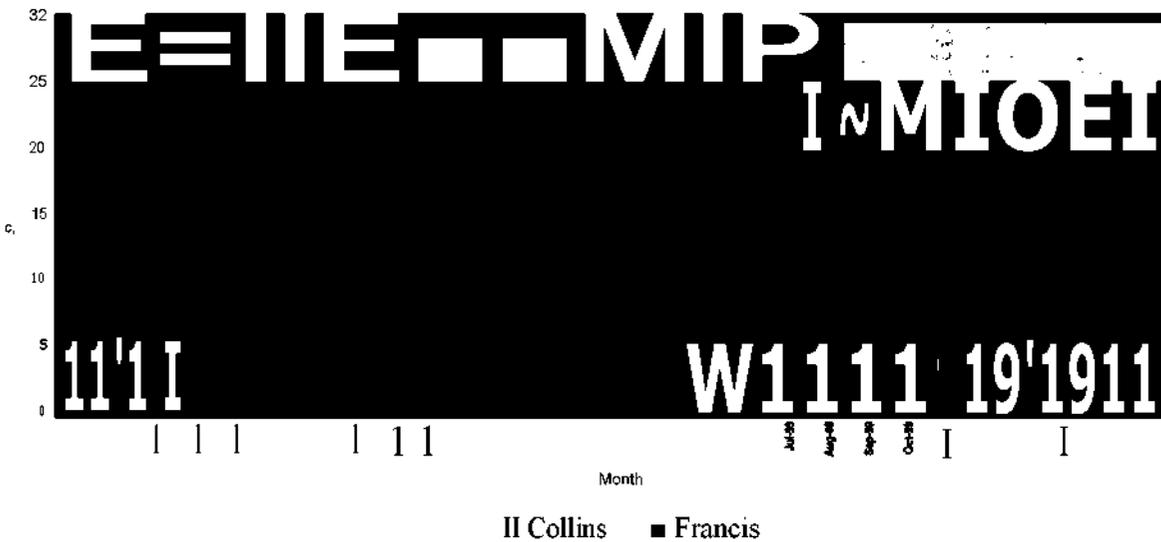
suspended driver's licenses and state arrests for soliciting prostitutes and drugs.

ASSESSMENT

The most immediate results were a complete drop in activity at the drug house once it was closed down. As of October sixth of 1999, it was declared a public nuisance due to illegal activity and failure to bring the residence up to code, and the City planned to demolish the property within the next year. The prostitutes and drug dealers were no longer found in the area and the amount of traffic was drastically reduced. The pay phone was eliminated as well from the tavern.

The impact that the officers' activities had on the area is evidenced in a significant drop in calls for service for the two streets, as well as at the drug house. The following chart illustrates the change in the number of calls for service for both Francis and Collins Streets combined.

**Joliet Police Department  
Calls for Service by Street and Month  
January 1998 through April 2000**



Overall, calls for service experienced a significant increase in 1999, and then a subsequent decrease during the end of the year, continuing into 2000. This same pattern is demonstrated at the two specific locations: the local tavern and the drug house. Based on estimates, calls for service in 2000 are down sixty-three percent (63%) from 1999, and approximately twelve percent from 1998 at the local tavern. Calls for service at the drug house went from an average three calls each month to none since November of 1999. The types of calls that represented the most significant decreases were battery (tavern only), disturbance, and suspicious incidents. ) 2

Local residents contacted the area Councilman about the work that officers had done, and expressed satisfaction with the closing down of the drug house was closed down. In addition, they stated that the prostitutes no longer frequented the area, and the increased presence of the officers made them feel safer.

Officers did have a concern for displacement but were able to curb that as well due to officers opening another problem oriented policing project at another nearby tavern experiencing similar problems. Aggressive patrol in both these areas appears to have made the locations less inviting for the suspects. Since other drug houses still remain in the area, the officers were able to follow where the prostitutes were going and by arresting them or making our presence known to deter them from remaining in the area.

Officers still continue to monitor the area and make arrests, since the number of calls for service is still high for the local tavern. To date, the officers have made over two hundred and fifty arrests in the ar      continue      to work with the community for a safe city.

## AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

Joliet Police Department Officers Javier Esqueda and Officer Dave Hir initiated this problem-oriented policing project. It was accomplished with the guidance of Lieutenant Robert Pedersen and Sergeant Edward Rachel, who helped in implementing the neighborhood-oriented policing philosophy that Deputy Chief Fitzgerald has both espoused and shared with all members of the department. Officers were allowed to change their hours of work in order to accomplish their goals.

*Project Contact People:*

Officer J. Esqueda and Officer D. Hir  
150 W Washington Street  
Joliet, IL 60432  
Telephone: 815-724-3100  
Fax: 815-724-3260