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May 9, 2000

Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee  
CIO PERF  
1 120 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Suite 930  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee,

It is a pleasure to be recommending the "Mobile ATM Robberies" Project to the committee. I believe this success story is worthy of recognition.

The "Mobile ATM Robberies" Project is a wonderful story of identifying a problem and developing a collaborative response that made a difference. The young Latino men who had been living on the margins of our community, often invisible and forgotten, were not only protected by this Department but also brought more closely into our community. These young men went from being regular victims in their community to becoming stakeholders in the society. It is a story of planning, purpose, partnership and compassion. It is a success story.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Dean M. Esserman  
Chief of Police

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## PANEL SUBMISSION FORM

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### *SUMMARY*

The City of Stamford is a thriving corporate community with approximately 108,000 residents. There are still a few areas of the City, which have not benefited from the economic boom. The target area for the study is one of those areas and is described as follows:

- Referred to as beat 2A--more commonly known as the `south end'
- The area is a peninsula geographically defined as being south of Interstate 95, with the railroad track to the north and water on three sides
- The area has approximately 2,600 residents, which is approximately 2.4% of the total population of Stamford
- 19% of the City's reported robberies occur within the area
- Includes the City's largest homeless shelter
- Home to the Stamford Transportation Center

The victims, upon closer review, were often day laborers who were of a Latino heritage and more specifically Guatemalan males. Many of the victims were living here illegally and worked off the books for cash. They lived in substandard housing and carried all of their money on their persons. They would walk around with all of their money in their pockets and shared apartments where they slept in shifts. They were reluctant to use banks. These men often became robbery victims. Thus the reference of "walking cash machines" or "mobile ATM's".

This area also contained a lot of bars, which only exacerbated the problem, as the victims were often intoxicated.

*SUMMARY,* A large part of the problem that was identified by detectives and  
*continued* community police officers was that a lot of the robberies were not being reported. As bad as the numbers were for robberies the actual numbers were much worse. There were also several 'home invasion' type robberies with Guatemalans as the targets.

The City of Stamford took the following actions to address this high-crime area:

1. The Police Department embraced the "community policing" philosophy by breaking into districts, with District Commanders having direct responsibility.
2. A partnership between the Fire, Health, Building, Social Services, and the Police Departments was formed to create Operation Safe Houses. Operation Safe Houses improved the living conditions of the residence by ordering repairs to properties and, in some cases, relocating residents.
3. The community police officers started to host bank nights where three large financial institutions agreed to send representatives to the south end and assist people with opening of bank accounts. The thought being if people did not have cash on their person, they would be a less attractive target. The response was good from the residents. Most had no idea what a checking account even was.
4. The Police Department is working to close down the illegal bottle clubs and have the legal establishments stop serving intoxicated patrons.
5. The Police Department strengthened its relationship with Probation, Parole and Corrections with its Meet & Greet program.

The robberies in Stamford dropped as crime did in the rest of the country in the past several years. However, the drop in robberies in the south end of Stamford was even more dramatic.

## **SCANNING**

### **What problem did you address in your POP project?**

Street robberies of our Latino population, which consisted of predominately day laborers who worked hard all day and were frequently, intoxicated at night. Being day laborers who worked 'off the books' they had cash in their pockets and were good targets.

The Detective Bureau recognized the unusual number of Guatemalan victims back as far as 1994. Attempts were made through churches to inform residents of the problem and how to better protect their money.

As the department went to crime mapping, the problem became apparent to everyone in the Police Department. The offender groups were similar and the Department made numerous arrests. The robberies were occurring less frequently but had not stopped. The mobile ATM robbery was still the most frequent type of street robbery in the area. During the first nine months of 1998 almost one in four of the City's robberies occurred in the target area.

### **Why did you select this problem over others?**

The physical violence was probably the largest driving factor to address the problem. The ingredients for elevated violence were all coming together as Latinos were starting to walk in groups to stay safe and in several instances fight back.

Frequently the crimes were not reported, as a lot of the victims, due to cultural differences, were afraid to contact the police. Also, some of the victims were here illegally. Unreported robberies were uncovered during investigations of the reported robberies. The victims were frequently intoxicated so they could rarely identify their attackers making traditional police investigations difficult.

Going back to 1994 there were numerous successful investigations which were closed with arrests and successful prosecutions but the robberies were not eliminated.

**ANALYSIS**

**What analysis was done concerning this problem?**

It quickly became apparent that the victims were from the same group and occurred in the same area on 'pin maps'. Arrests and convictions were not significantly reducing the incidents.

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Robberies</i> |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1990        | 50               |
| 1991        | 57               |
| 1992        | 53               |
| 1993        | 43               |
| 1994        | 71               |
| 1995        | 48               |
| 1996        | 40               |
| 1997        | 34               |
| 1998        | 33               |

The area has a 'legal' population of only 2,600 and is geographically easy to define as it has water on three sides and Interstate 95 and the railroad tracks on the fourth side to the north.

Traditional police response was not enough. It was decided that the department needed to try a different approach by working with victims by 'target hardening' them, making them less attractive victims. The victims had a lack of trust with the police and as a result they were not involved in the analysis. Detectives had spoken at a few churches back in 1994, which probably resulted in the sharp rise of the reported occurrences that year. Once Officers came up with the target hardening approach with bank nights the community became more involved.

**What harms have resulted from the problem?**

The level of violence was rising as the immigrant population started to walk in-groups to fight back. The specific area that these incidents were occurring was also a *Weed & Seed site* and the publicity was getting that group very upset as they viewed the problem as an isolated problem but detrimental to the attempt to redevelop the area. Race relations between the predominately Latino victims and predominately African American suspects were deteriorating making community projects difficult to put together.

**RESPONSE**

**What were the goals of your response?**

To stop the robberies by more than just arresting the violators whom could be replaced. A lot of the times it was small groups who attacked the victims so there were numerous violators and not all were apprehended or even identified. We were also looking for a creative response that was financially less expensive than uniform saturation of the area.

A secondary goal was better relations with the Hispanic community and the Police as well as other members of the community. A lot of the response was from our partners in Operation Safe Houses.. There was a cost to the city but actually was less expensive than saturating the area with uniform police officers. Prosecutions proved ineffective in and of themselves.

The banks were more than happy to assist. This was a no cost item to the Police Department and the banks in the area are often criticized for not making enough of an effort to serve the minority community and jumped at the opportunity. The Adult Learning Center where English is taught as a second language ended up hosting the third bank event. They also jumped at the opportunity to help their clients.

**Describe the response and any difficulties you encountered.**

*Operation Safe Houses* which is a partnership between the City Fire Department, Health Department, Building Department, Social Services and the Police looked at the living conditions of the victims. Pressure was put on landlords to bring properties up to code. Landlords are billed for the City's cost of the action and properties are leaned if the fines are not paid. Residents that needed to be relocated were assisted by Social Services. There was resistance at first to this project but once the residents saw that we were there to help relationships improved. The fear of displacement or deportation never took place. The Police also saturated the area with uniform officers during the initial sweeps at a great expense.

Detectives in the Crimes Against Property Division worked with Probation, Parole and Corrections who were part of the Department's *Meet and Greet Program*. This program helped put pressure on witnesses to the robberies in an effort to get them to cooperate and placed restrictions on suspects.

*RESPONSE,  
continued*

The *Meet & Greet Program* starts with a meeting at Police Headquarters. As people come out of prison with time left on their sentences or if they were placed on 'intensive' probation or labeled as high risk they would become part of the program. The first stop of a recently released inmate or new probationer is the Police Department. There a meeting between their community supervisor and police takes place. The Police are allowed to add to the conditions of parole that the parole officer already had in mind for the client. A photo of the client is taken and an information sheet with conditions of their release is made available to all police officers. Some of the clients were not allowed in the target area as a condition.

Community Resource Officers made a collaborative effort with Churches in the area to bring in banks to help residents set up bank accounts so they would not be walking around with so much cash, therefore eliminating the 'mobile ATM'. The lack of knowledge and lack of trust of the U.S. banking system attributed to the residents failing to open bank accounts. The CROs sponsored bank nights where Spanish speaking representatives of different banks would come into the south end 'safe haven' and assist people in opening bank accounts. The improvement in relationships with the community on this endeavor was tremendous.

The English as a Second Language class at the Adult Learning Center was approached by the CROs. They hosted the third bank night. The amount of questions asked was tremendous. Although no accounts were actually opened on this night numerous residents contacted representatives at their branches. It is believed that some of the residents gained information from people who attended the presentations. The community members were talking amongst themselves.

The main problem that was overcome during the bank nights was the fact that bank accounts require a social security number. A common theme that was found among the victims was that they did not have social security numbers. One of the lending institutions would allow residents to open up checking accounts with two of the following types of identification:

1. Foreign Passport
2. Alien Resident Card
3. U.S. Drivers License
4. State issued I.D. Card

At least the residents had a place to put their money everyday or week until they had to pay large bills such as the rent or utilities.

*ASSESSMENT*

**What were the results of your response?**

Robberies dropped dramatically towards the end of the project. The systems put in place helped in the short term and if continued, would assist in keeping the problem from reoccurring at a high frequency. The community police officers continue with the bank project to this day. The officers are also looking for a location for a real ATM for residents to use. Possibly installed in a police substation or firehouse.

The Department is also attacking the illegal bottle clubs and working with the legal ones to get them to stop serving intoxicated persons. The assessment is ongoing.

**How did you measure your results?**

City wide crime dropped as it did in most of the nation. However, the south end had an even larger drop in robberies. The few robberies that are still occurring do not have Guatemalan victims. The first four months of 2000 show the area to have 5 robberies but no Hispanic victims. Two of the five were juvenile robberies and one was domestic related.

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1990 to 1998 | 19% of robberies occur in target area.              |
| 1999         | 12% of robberies occur in target area.              |
| 2000         | 14% of robberies occur in target area in 1 quarter. |

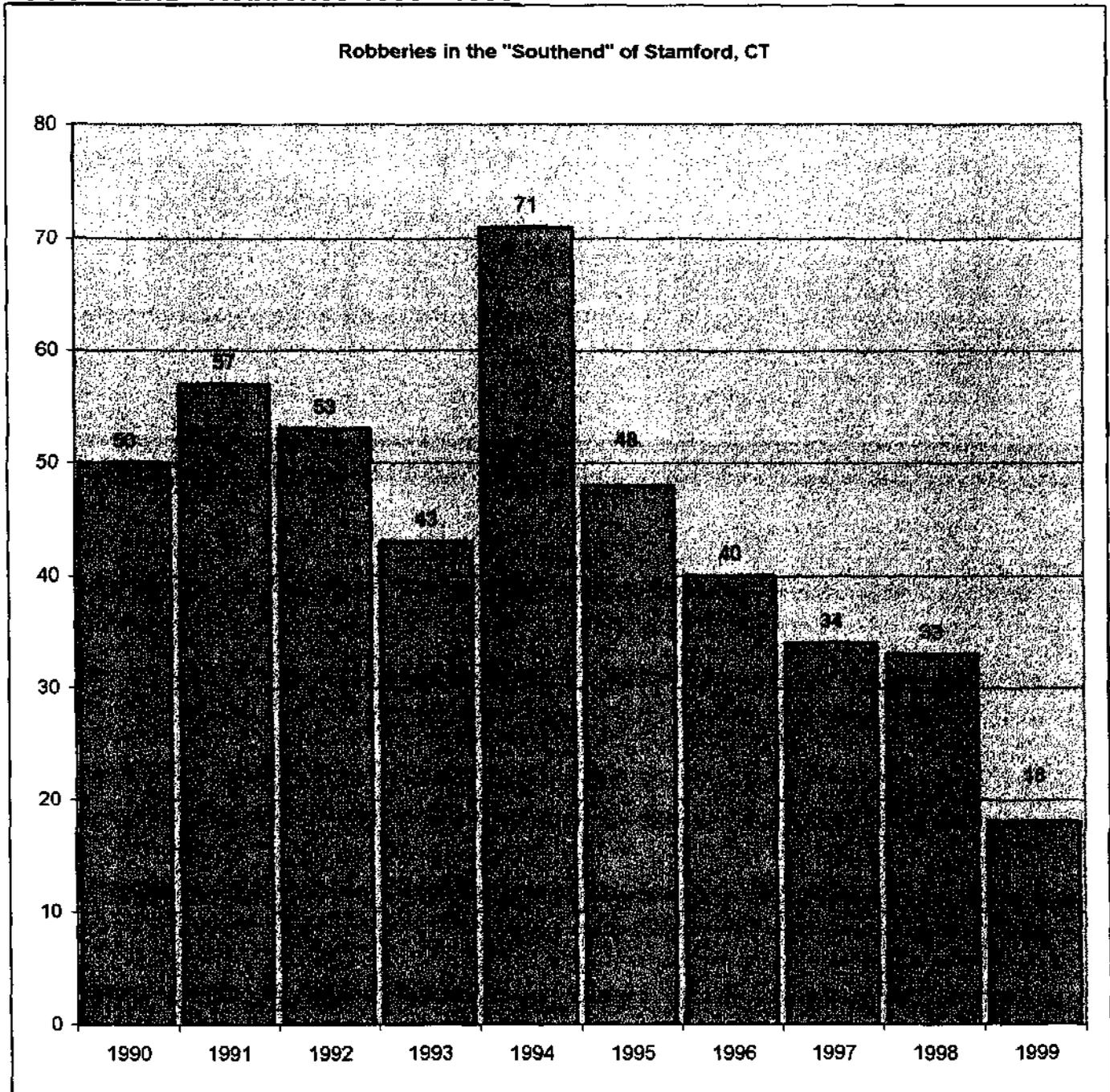
The editor of our largest Spanish language newspaper, El Sol, was a robbery victim. He was so impressed with the Detectives that the newspaper printed a positive article on the police. He also went on several ride alongs in marked cars.

During the recent clean up days in the target area Latinos and African American residents were observed working side by side cleaning up the area.

**Bank Accounts**

- Fleet opened 10 new accounts as of 02109100.
- People's Bank opened 6 new accounts as of 02/09/00.
- + Numerous other residents did inquire but have not opened accounts as of yet. The third 'bank night' will be held in conjunction with Adult Education.

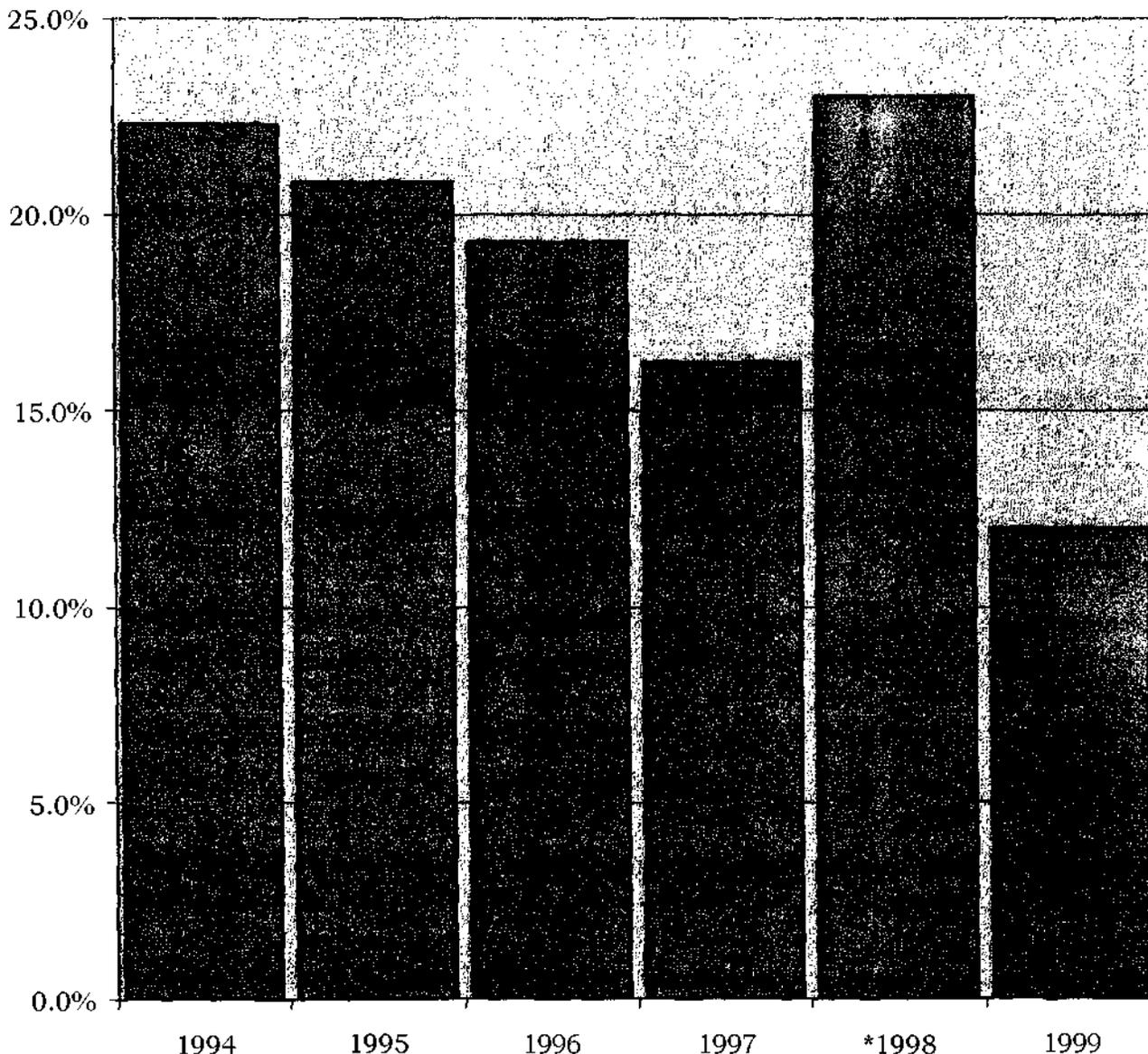
**Stamford Police Department**  
**"SOUTHEND" Robberies 1990 - 1999**



| Year | <u># of robberies</u><br><u>in Southend</u> |
|------|---|
| 1990 | 50  |
| 1991 | 57  |
| 1992 | 53  |
| 1993 | 43  |
| 1994 | 71  |
| 1995 | 48  |
| 1996 | 40  |
| 1997 | 34  |
| 1998 | 33  |
| 1999 | 18  |

**Stamford Police Department**  
**"SOUTHEND" Robberies 1994 - 1999**

**Percentage of City Robberies occurring in "Southend"**



®% of total robberies in City

| <u>Year</u> | <u>% of total robberies in City</u> |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1994        | 22.3%                               |
| 1995        | 20.8%                               |
| 1996        | 19.3%                               |
| 1997        | 16.2%                               |
| *1998       | 23.0%                               |
| 1999        | 12.0%                               |

\*1998-first 9 months of 1998