

Problem-Oriented Approach to Drug Enforcement

Case Studies



Police Commissioner

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Queen village: Project D.o.E.

In December of 1987, Inspector Edward McLaughlin, Commanding Officer of South Police Division, announced a plan to form an active partnership with Queen Village neighborhood. The purpose of the partnership is to bring police officers closer together with the community to identify and solve drug and crime related problems in the neighborhood. The Department dubbed the plan "Project D.O.E." because Queen Village neighborhood encompasses patrol-sectors D, O, and E in the 3rd Police District (See Appendix B).

Five uniformed patrol officers from the 3rd Police District are assigned to patrol sectors D, O, and E, (Queen Village). These patrol officers are responsible for using their training in problem-solving techniques to go beyond responding or reacting to calls for service and incidents and address the underlying problem(s) that prompted the calls for service or incidents to arise. In October of 1988, the five patrol officers moved into a police mini-station located in Southwark Housing Plaza which is located in Queen Village. Mini-station facilities were provided by the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

Also assisting the five patrol officers are five narcotic officers, two detectives, and a crime analysis officer. The narcotic officers assist the patrol officers in making drug buys and serving warrants. The detectives conduct follow-up investigations on all robberies, burglaries and thefts committed in the neighborhood. The crime analysis officer plots crime and criminal activity patterns, and distributes the information to the officers and community in the form of crime bulletins.

Queen Village is a six-square block area in South Philadelphia. Queen Village is a neighborhood with many diverse communities that include: a thriving business community, an artesian community, a residential community, and a public housing community.

Queen Village is home to approximately 7,200 residents which comprise 21 percent (21%) of the 3rd Police District's resident population or about 0.4 percent (0.4%) of the city's 1.6 million population. In 1980, there were 3,381 households in Queen Village. The resident population is approximately 52 percent (52%) white, 46 percent (46%) black, and 8 percent (8%) are either of Asian or Spanish speaking origin.

South Street, which borders Queen Village on the north, is a bustling business district which draws daily crowds larger than 20,000. South Street is often compared to Greenwich Village in New York City or Bourbon Street in New Orleans because of its colorful street atmosphere and attraction for artists, musicians, and tourists. South Street offers an endless array of galleries, restaurants, shops, live theaters, and night clubs. There are 413 commercial establishments currently operating along South Street and its immediate vicinity. At night, South Street comes alive with music and a steady stream of locals and tourists who come to stroll, browse, dine, party, cruise, and just "hang out."

Southwark Plaza, which borders Queen Village on the south, is one of Philadelphia's largest public housing developments. Southwark Plaza is operated by the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA). Southwark is an 886 unit development that consists of three (3) 25 story and twenty-six (26) two (2) and three (3) story buildings spread over 14.28 acres. With only 476 of the 886 units or 53 percent (53%) presently occupied due to reconstruction, Southwark Plaza has 1,445 residents, of whom 99 percent (99%) are black. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the households in Southwark are headed by a female, of whom 58 percent (58%) have dependent children living at home. Children under 18 years of age make up 46 percent (46%) of all residents living in Southwark. The average age for a head of household in Southwark is 46 years. Elderly persons represent 9 percent (9%) of the resident population in Southwark. The average annual income for Southwark residents is \$6,400, of which residents spend on average \$1,669 a year for rent.

Although the diversity of communities has caused some relations problems in the past, there is a growing sense of community in Queen Village. There are, for example, several business and civic groups active in the neighborhood such as: the Queen Village Neighbors Association, the South Street Neighbors Association, the South Street Business Association, the Fourth Street Business Association, the Queen Village Town Watch, and the Southwark Tenant Council. In addition to the Queen Village Management Team, a South Street Task Force has been established to specifically address problems confined to South Street. Clearly, Queen Village is rich with capable and willing community organizations prepared to tackle the drug, crime, and disorder problems in the neighborhood.

The "Pipe House" at 1040 Randolph Street

Located within Queen Village, the 1000 Block of Randolph Street is a residential area comprised of twenty-two (22) homes. Randolph Street is the latest block in the neighborhood to experience revitalization or gentrification. Architecturally, Queen Village has a wide variety of 18th century style homes and buildings. Many of the older homes are being purchased and renovated either by developers or young married professionals. The 18th century style home sell for upwards of \$150,000 to \$400,000.

All of the homes on Randolph Street are either occupied or undergoing renovation, with the exception of one vacant house located at 1040 Randolph. Unsecured and easily accessible for entry, drug dealers operating nearby began directing their customers to the vacant house. The buyers were using the vacant house as a place to smoke their crack. Word soon spread in the area about the "pipe house." As a result, the police department received 37 complaints (via 911) from residents in the area between January and March 1989. The complaints included such things as sanitation problems, litter, trash, abandoned vehicle, disturbances, and loud noise during the night, in short, the conditions of the block had deteriorated. In addition, there was increased concern for the potential of fire on the block due to smoking the crack in pipes. Residents had become concerned for their personal safety. The restaurant at the end of the block sustained a sharp decline in business due to fear among area residents. Many residents reported to the police that they were afraid to come outside their homes because of the drug users at 1040 Randolph.

Sergeant Fred Carbonara of the 3rd Police District began to look into the problem in February 1989. He immediately arrested two (2) drug dealers operating nearby, but this had little impact on the problem. Sgt. Carbonara then turned his attention to the vacant house itself. He soon discovered that the owner of the house had recently died, and the house had been left to family members. Further inquiries revealed that the decedent's daughter was most anxious to cooperate with the police to solve the problem. The daughter had been trying to sell the house, but two local real estate firms had dropped their listing of the house because real estate agents were afraid to show the house to prospective buyers.

The new owner (daughter) agreed to have the property resecured. She had done this twice before. With Sgt. Carbonara present for protection, a construction crew properly secured the vacant house. Sgt. Carbonara and other block residents contacted the realtor to pledge their support

in keeping the house secured until it could be sold. Sgt. Carbonara has provided increased patrol to the area, and area residents have become an ever present "watching eye" in the community.

The house is now listed for sale by a realtor, and has vast customer potential because of the area. The residents and restaurant owner have felt an immediate relief and the overall quality of life on this block has dramatically improved.

Cleaning Up Queen Village

Although crime and drug trafficking are primary concerns, Philadelphia Police Officers and concerned residents of Queen Village recognize that the physical condition and appearance of the neighborhood are equally important. That is, the physical environment or condition of the neighborhood is linked, albeit either directly or indirectly, to such problems as crime, drug trafficking, and fear in the community. Thus, improving the environment may lead to a reduction of such problems in the neighborhood.

Using an environmental problem identification survey instrument, patrol officers assigned to the 3rd Police District Mini-Station in Queen Village conducted an environmental survey or physical assessment of the neighborhood. The survey instrument assisted officers in identifying and collecting descriptive information on the physical environment. For example, it helped officers identify environmental problems or so-called incivilities such as litter, graffiti, unkept lots, abandoned or dilapidated buildings, and abandoned vehicles. Through the environmental surveys, officers identified 20 abandoned vehicles, fifty abandoned or dilapidated buildings, seven blocks with serious litter problems, eleven blocks with serious graffiti problems, and five littered and junked vacant lots. Officers also noted that six blocks had poor overhead street lighting either because the lights were broken or covered by overgrown trees.

Although patrol officers in Philadelphia routinely conduct similar environmental surveys (known within the department as "Sunday Surveys" because officers conduct them on Sundays when calls for service are lower), patrol officers rarely address the problems themselves. Rather, the traditional practice is for patrol officers to simply document the problem and forward the information through the chain of command to the individual or outside agency responsible for resolving the problem. However, this practice has proven to be neither very efficient nor effective at resolving many of the neighborhood problems. In addition, patrol officers rarely use the environmental surveys as a data source or tool for identifying, analyzing, or explaining other neighborhood problems such as drug hotspots, crime prone areas, disturbance locations, or fear among neighborhood residents.

Patrol Officer George Blewitt, an eight year veteran of the department who is assigned to the 3rd Police District Mini-Station in Queen Village, has undertaken the responsibility of responding to many of the problems identified in the environmental surveys. Officer Blewitt

has begun working on removing abandoned vehicles, securing or demolishing abandoned or dilapidated buildings, and cleaning vacant lots.

Officer Blewitt's first task was removing abandoned vehicles from the neighborhood. Blewitt believes the abandoned vehicles are problematic for several reasons: they detract from the overall appearance of the neighborhood, they tend to collect litter, trash and other junk, they attract rodents and other animals, they take up valuable parking spaces, they provide drug dealers with a place to hide their drugs, they are a safety hazard for playing children, they are considered a nuisance by residents, and they convey a lack of community concern, pride, and control over the neighborhood.

To remove an abandoned vehicle from the neighborhood, Officer Blewitt records the vehicle's identification number and location, and reports it to Abandoned Auto Officer Dominic Candito of the 3rd Police District. Officer Candito examines the vehicle and identifies the owner of the vehicle through the state's Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV). Candito notifies the vehicle owner by certified mail that he or she has 30 days to remove or repair the vehicle. If the vehicle is considered a safety hazard, it may be removed before 30 days. If the owner fails to resolve the problem, Officer Candito places a work order requesting that the vehicle be removed by one of several private salvage companies hired by the city to remove abandoned vehicles. Officer Candito then sends the owner a summary ticket (via certified mail) for abandoning the vehicle. The cost of the ticket covers expenses incurred by the city for removing the abandoned vehicle.

Between December 1988 and April 1989, Officer Blewitt had identified 32 abandoned vehicles for removal from Queen Village. Together, Officers Blewitt and Candito have been successful in removing all 32 abandoned vehicles from the neighborhood. Although it generally takes 30 to 60 days to resolve an abandoned vehicle problem, Officers Blewitt and Candito have been successful in having many of the abandoned vehicles removed within 30 days or in about half the time by doing follow-ups with the vehicle owners and salvage companies.

In addition to identifying and removing abandoned vehicles from the neighborhood, Officer Blewitt had identified through personal observation and complaints from other officers an abandoned and dilapidated house in serious need of a response. The house was located in the middle of a drug infested and crime prone block strewn with litter and trash. Large crowds gather almost daily on the block to "hang out," drink, and buy drugs.

The abandoned house had become so dilapidated that it had become a safety hazard to passersby and playing children. The front door had fallen from its hinges, bricks were falling down on the sidewalk, floors and walls inside had collapsed. Officer Blewitt had on several occasions observed children running from the house as he passed by in his patrol car. He also noticed evidence of drug use inside the abandoned house such as burnt bottle caps, broken glass vials, and marijuana cigarette butts.

On January 13, 1989, Officer Blewitt contacted the city's Licenses and Inspection Department (L & I) about the abandoned house. L & I inspects buildings and enforces building code violations. L & I looked into the problem, and concluded that the building was too dilapidated and unsafe to secure through ordinary measures such as boarding it up with tin or bricks. Rather, the building would have to be demolished. L & I attempted to notify the owner of the building about the problem. The owner generally has 30 days to respond before action is taken against the property. The owner however could not be located. A record check by L & I showed that the owner of the building owed almost \$3,000 in real estate taxes dating back to 1981.

Since the house had to be demolished, L & I turned the problem over to the city's Contractual Services Department who hires wrecking companies. To follow up on the problem, Blewitt contacted Bob Soblive, Director of Contractual Services. Soblive informed Blewitt that his office would have to seek bids from several wrecking companies before the building could be demolished. On March 15, 1989, Contractual Services accepted a bid from a wrecking company. By March 20, the wrecking company had begun demolishing the building. Within the week the building had been demolished and the lot had been cleaned of most of the debris.

In addition to the abandoned house, Officer Blewitt had L & I look into the problem of a litter strewn lot which is located on the same block as the abandoned building. The lot was an eyesore and nuisance to the community. L & I examined the vacant lot along with the abandoned building in January, 1989. L & I agreed with Blewitt that the lot was in serious need of cleaning. A record check by L & I showed that the city owned the vacant lot. Because the lot needed cleaning, L & I referred the problem to the city's Clean and Seal Department. Officer Blewitt followed-up the problem in March by contacting Mr. Jim Grundy, who oversees the Clean and Seal Department. Blewitt learned from Grundy that because the lot posed no immediate danger to the community it would be put on a list where it could take eight to nine months before the lot can be cleaned. In the meantime, Officer Blewitt continues to pursue other means for cleaning the lot such as having area residents conduct a neighborhood clean-up.

Although no formal survey or evaluation has been conducted, Officer Blewitt reports that residents are pleased with the much needed physical improvements in the neighborhood. Recognizing the importance of improving the physical environment and condition of the neighborhood, Blewitt continues to monitor old environmental problems or incivilities as well as respond to others.

Thefts from vehicles in Queen village

Thefts from vehicles present a serious crime in Queen Village. In 1988 for example, thefts from vehicles comprised 35 percent (35%) of all serious (Part I) crimes in the neighborhood. In 1988, there were 142 reported thefts from vehicles. So far this year (January through May), 116 thefts from vehicles have been reported to the police. Thefts from vehicles are up 87 percent (87%) over this time last year. The average loss of property from each theft is \$613. The loss of property this year may exceed \$240,000, not counting unreported thefts and damage done to the vehicles.

Officer Karen Alba has been assigned the responsibility to analyze and respond to the problem of thefts from vehicles in Queen Village. As part of her analysis, Officer Alba has plotted crime patterns by time of day, day of week, week of month, and location. She has also interviewed victims in an effort to gather additional information about the method of entry, the type of property stolen, security measures taken, and reasons for parking in the location. She has also gathered information on likely offenders, and she has interviewed a local repeat offender.

From her analysis, Officer Alba has learned for example that most of the thefts from vehicles have been committed on Monday nights. However, a sizable number have been committed on different days and at different times. In addition, Alba has noticed that many of the thefts were committed during the third week of each month (January through May). She believes this could be either a coincidence or perhaps it has something to do with available money running low by the middle of the month. She has also found that the location of thefts vary from day to day, week to week, and month to month. Given that the neighborhood is relatively small (6 square blocks), all areas of the neighborhood have experienced thefts from vehicles.

Thinking that offenders may be selecting certain types of vehicles or targets, Alba has looked into other potentially contributing factors such as characteristics of the vehicle, the method of entry, and the type of stolen property. She has found for example that the type of vehicles vary widely. Likewise for victims, there does not appear to be any connection with the age, race or sex of the victim (driver of the vehicle). Most of the victims or vehicle owners were neighborhood residents. Of the 116 thefts from vehicles, all but 40 involved local neighborhood residents. The 40 outsiders were either visiting family or friends, or shopping in one of the many stores in the neighborhood. None of the victims worked in the area.

The most common method of entry involved breaking the window, generally on the sidewalk side of the car. Almost all of the vehicles in Queen Village are parked on the street as opposed to private drives or garages. With approximately, 7,200 residents and several thousands of visitors in the neighborhood each day, the number of vehicles on the streets is exceptionally high. In addition, no tools or instruments used to break the windows were ever found at the scene.

Many of the victims interviewed by Alba have reported leaving the property in "plain view." Although many victims readily admitted that it was their own fault for being victimized, most wanted more or better police protection. However, very few of the vehicles had security alarms. The type of stolen property varied. During the winter, most of the stolen property included clothing. Now that the weather is warm and construction is underway in the neighborhood, much of the stolen property includes tools. Other types of stolen property include radios, stereos, auto parts, cameras, briefcases, and small change.

Having analyzed the problem, it appeared that most of the thefts from vehicles were merely crimes of opportunists. There were few patterns or clues to suggest a likely time, area, or target where officers could direct their attention. Recognizing that she needed to learn more about the offenders in the area, Alba compiled a list of likely suspects. But again, this information has been of limited use.

Having discussed the problem with her supervisor, Sergeant Frank McFillin, he suggested that she go right to the source of the information - an offender. With the support of her supervisor and approval of her captain and other detectives, she interviewed a long time neighborhood offender who had been arrested three times in April for thefts from vehicles. The offender is a 37 year-old male resident of Southwark Plaza where he lives with his mother and other siblings.

With the promise of immunity, the offender agreed to discuss his methods and reasons for committing thefts from vehicles. His reason was an addiction to crack cocaine. For him, committing thefts from vehicles was the only way of supporting a \$1,500 a week crack habit. Prior to his crack addiction four years ago, he held a steady good paying job with the city's Sanitation Department. After working with them for over 10 years, he was fired in 1987 because his crack addiction had caused him to miss too much work. A criminal record check shows that he has been arrested 13 separate times since 1970 for various types of property offenses and drug charges.

Problem-Solving Project Review Form

DRUGS

Chapter : Yes ___ Possibly X No ___

Worth a Mention: Yes I No ___

Follow Up Recommended: Yes I No ___

Location: URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

Program not P-S: ___

Contact: TRV JERRY PHILLIP

Location of Effort:

Y-O HOUSTON LOCAL NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS GROUP IN UNDERSERVED NEIGHBORHOOD TO REDUCE CRIME

Agency PHILADELPHIA PD

State PA

Urban/Suburban Problem I Rural Problem ___

Analysis: No Data ___ Some Data v Good Data ___

Additional Data Needed:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Strategies: Exclusively Enforcement ___ Mostly Enforcement and not interesting ___
 Some Enforcement but some other interesting strategies tried ___
 Creative y Good Collaborations V

Assessment: None done ✓ Data only qualitative nothing quantitative ___
 More data needed ___ Good data ___

Suggested Data: (video, charts, photos, #'s, surveys, economic measures, etc.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Summary: Circle

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Not Interesting | <u>Somewhat</u> Interesting | Interesting |
| 2. | <u>A lot of Gaps</u> | Nicely Done But Some Gaps | Well Done |
| 3. | Not Creative | Somewhat Creative | <u>Creative</u> |
| 4. | Not Transferable | <u>Somewhat Transferrable</u> | Transferrable |
| 5. | No Community Involvement | Some Community Involvement | <u>Community Involved</u> |
| 6. | Not worth exploring further | <u>Sufficiently</u> exploring further | High Potential (worth exploring further) |

GOOD OR INTERESTING THINGS ABOUT EFFORT

OFFICER PERSISTENCE TO ADDRESS UNDERLYING CONDITIONS

As for his methods, Alba learned that he walked around the neighborhood almost daily looking for likely targets. One of the reasons he preferred committing thefts from vehicles over other types of crimes, such as burglary or robbery, was that he could see what he was getting for his efforts. She also learned that the time of day, day of week, week of the month, location, type of car, and type of property did not matter to him. When questioned about potential deterrents, he confessed that nothing really mattered with exception of witnesses. That is, he would not commit a theft if someone was outside. Alba also learned that he used a screwdriver as a lever to break the window which created very little sound. Within seconds, he could complete a theft and be on his way. She also learned that he would not commit more than one theft at time. Rather, his strategy was to make only one "hit" and then run. Alba also learned that he would he commit between 15 and 20 thefts from vehicles a week.

As for the stolen property, he would sell it to anybody looking for a good buy. He would find most of his buyers on the street. They were generally neighborhood residents. Some buyers were regular customers. As for the resale value of the stolen property, he would ask for 50 percent (50%) of the value. If he was unable to sell the stolen property, he would go to the drug dealers. He considered the drug dealers a last resort because they would only give him 10 percent (10%) of the value of the property. The dealers in turn will either keep the stolen property for themselves or they will resell it.

Most importantly, Officer Alba learned what it would take for him to stop committing the thefts. He believed being drug free (off the pipe) is the answer to his successful rehabilitation.

Officer Alba is presently developing responses to the theft from vehicle problem in Queen Village. Some possible responses include: targeting repeat offenders for probation and parole violations, entry into a drug treatment program, community crime prevention workshops, media campaign, coordinated patrol between the police and neighborhood townwatch.

Narcotic Anonymous in Queen Village

In recent years, Queen Village has experienced serious crime problems as drugs have infested the neighborhood. In 1988, 407 serious (Part I) crimes were committed in Queen Village, amounting to a crime rate of 56 serious crimes per 1,000 residents, or 12 out of every 100 households were victimized by at least one serious crime. Although it is impossible to determine how many of these crimes were drug related, a recent study conducted by the Philadelphia Police Department showed that 70 percent (70%) of the offenders arrested for a serious crime tested positive for cocaine use.

As part of the department's problem-oriented policing project in Queen Village, Officer Jerry Philipp saw an opportunity to address the crime and drug abuse problems in the neighborhood with a rather untraditional police response. Philipp believed that drug treatment programs could be used as an additional means for reducing crime and other drug related problems in the neighborhood. Based on his knowledge of the community, Philipp knew that very few drug treatment programs were available to residents in the community. For example, one nearby treatment center is a private sixty-six (66) bed facility that offers treatment for mental health, drug and alcohol abuse problems. The other drug treatment facility is a 20 bed unit in a nearby hospital. However like many treatment programs, they are expensive and have long waiting lists. Thus, these drug treatment programs were not always accessible to many area residents.

Having broadly defined the problem as drug abuse and a lack of drug treatment programs, Philipp's strategy was to develop and implement some type of drug treatment program or programs in the community. With support and encouragement from his supervisor Sergeant Frank McFillin, Officer Philipp started outlining a strategy in November 1988. To get a better understanding of community-based drug treatment programs, he first talked to an Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) counselor. The AA counselor supplied him with books and other literature on AA and various other types of community-based treatment programs.

Officer Philipp also looked within the department to see what drug treatment programs were available. Although the department did not have any community-based drug treatment programs, he received some assistance from two members of the Philadelphia Police Department's Employee Assistance Program (E.A.P.). Officers Dennis Mongello and Bill Brennan of E.A.P. helped Philipp fine tune his ideas on selecting and implementing a community-based drug

treatment program. Together, they listed criteria that they thought were important for a successful treatment program. For example, the treatment program would have to be based on another proven program. It would have to be easily accessible and open to all neighborhood residents. The program would have to require little start-up costs and be self-supporting. To survive, the drug treatment program would have to provide a positive and lasting effect on the community. Narcotic Anonymous (NA) seemed to fit these criteria.

Philipp's next task was to learn more about Narcotic Anonymous. He tried calling a number listed in a local service directory. The number turned out to be a hotline, and the person operating the hotline was unable to direct him to a local NA representative. He also tried to find an address for a local NA office, but again he had no luck.

Feeling frustrated, he contacted E.A.P. for additional assistance. After networking through several people, Philipp finally contacted an NA counselor. After learning of Philipp's intentions, the NA counselor agreed to starting up an NA program on the condition that Philipp provide a meeting place.

In December 1988, Officer Philipp turned to the housing authority manager of Southwark Plaza for a meeting place. Aware of the growing drug abuse problem in Southwark and the lack of treatment programs, the manager agreed to provide a room adjacent to the 3rd Police District Mini-Station which is located in Southwark Plaza.

The first NA meeting was held on January 7, 1989. Fifteen (15) people were in attendance at the meeting which was considered very good since the meeting was advertised by word of mouth only. Of the fifteen people in attendance, twelve (12) were neighborhood residents, and three (3) were residents of Southwark Plaza. Meetings are held every Saturday night. By the end of the first month, attendance had grown to 25. After five months, attendance has grown to 53 regular members.

Although Officer Philipp is not responsible for overseeing the NA program, he continues to monitor its progress every week. An NA meeting has been held every Saturday night between January 7, and May 27. There has not been a single complaint against the group. In gratitude, members of the NA program have offered to pay the Philadelphia Housing Authority for their use of the meeting room.

Although it is hard to say whether the NA program has reduced crime or other drug related problem in the community, it can be said that the NA program has had a

positive impact on the lives of 53 neighborhood residents. That is, 53 area residents are on the road to being drug free because of the NA program. Given the success of the NA program. Officer Philipp plans to start up an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program in the neighborhood as soon as he can locate a willing counselor and meeting room.

Although personal satisfaction was enough reward for Officer Philipp, his captain and the community felt otherwise. On May 25, 1989 Officer Jerry Philipp received an award from the Philadelphia Optimist Club for Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.