

TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT
Case Study 2

College Hill Street Lights

As the police officers who are assigned to the College Hill Homes Community patrol the area, it becomes readily apparent that many areas within the community are in total darkness. Officers have complained about the need for better street lighting in the area for a long time. The areas hidden in total darkness serve as havens for criminal activity; the most noticeable being the illicit narcotic activity that occurs in these dark holes on a daily basis. Many of the residents of College Hill are fearful of these areas and as a result do not venture out of their homes after dark.

Police officers in the past have documented the existence of street lights that were not working. They have documented whether the street lights appeared to have burnt out by themselves or whether they were shot out by drug dealers. The reports generated by the street officers eventually made it to the Tampa Electric Company who repaired or replaced the street lights. However, in many instances the officers noted that many of the street lights that had been recently replaced were once again inoperative, many of which appeared to have been shot out by the drug dealers. The repair and replacement of broken street lights in the College Hill Homes community in the past has not been consistent and as a result is a continuous problem.

The problems associated with the street lights in the College Hill community were brought to the attention of the Problem Oriented Policing Management Team. During a meeting which was held in January 1989, the Management Team agreed that the problems with the lighting conditions in College Hill needed to be addressed. Officer John Quicci with assistance from officers, Fred Gennille, Bill Davidson, and Mike Niemi began looking into the problems associated with the street lights in College Hill.

Initially, the Problem Oriented Policing Unit conducted a survey of the current lighting conditions within and surrounding the College Hill Homes community. A representative from the Tampa Electric Company assisted in the survey. The Tampa Electric Company provided technical information and assistance that would be required for future change. Maps designed as part of Tampa's Problem Oriented Policing project data base (The Drug Problem Inventory) were used to plot the locations of every street light and pole in the area. Each light pole and street light were recorded by their specific pole number as well as street location. The maps also indicated the current wattage of all existing lights and those that were inoperative.

Once the survey was completed. Officer John Quicci contacted the Tampa Electric Company and the Tampa Housing Authority to begin the process of addressing the lighting problems. During discussions with the Tampa Electric Company and the Tampa Housing Authority, Officer Quicci quickly learned that the Tampa Electric Company owns and operates all street lights within the City of Tampa. The Tampa Housing Authority however, pays for the use of the street lights within each of their low-income housing projects. At this point a distinction needed to be made as to which lights were paid for by the City of Tampa and which were paid for by the Tampa Housing Authority.

Once proper ownership and responsibility of the street lights was determined. Officer Quicci found both agencies to be very cooperative. Officer Quicci kept well informed of the issues involving the street lights and as a result negotiations between the Tampa Electric Company and the Tampa Housing Authority went smoothly.

Initially, the Tampa Housing Authority wasn't going to commit to having the street lights within College Hill upgraded, replaced or additional lighting installed until the City of Tampa did their part. Fortunately, the City of Tampa began the initial action. From the information learned in conducting the survey of current lighting conditions in the College Hill Homes area a proposal was drawn up. Officer Quicci assisted the Tampa Electric Company in drawing up the proposal.

The proposal called for the replacement and upgrading of all existing street lights in the College Hill Homes area. The upgrading would consist of replacing all existing 100 watt street lights with 400 watt street lights. The proposal also called for the installation of an additional fifty light poles and lights of the same wattage after the initial upgrading. Locations of the additional light poles and lights would be determined by conducting another survey after the upgrading.

For purposes of presenting the proposal to the Tampa City Council, a figure of fifty additional poles and lights were arrived at during the initial survey. This figure is being utilized as a maximum requirement. The final survey may not indicate a need for all fifty additional poles and lights. Only those areas that show a need for additional lighting will receive it.

The proposal was completed and submitted to the Tampa City Council for the first of two readings. The proposal was read on two different occasions and on March 15, 1989 it was approved by the City Council. As a result, the Tampa Housing Authority immediately approved their portion of the agreement.

The Problem Oriented Policing Unit continued negotiations with the Tampa Electric Company. A work order for the replacement and upgrading of all street lights in the College Hill Homes area were drawn up and a two week period was set aside for the upgrading and replacement of the street lights. An existing policy was reaffirmed between the Tampa Police Department and the Tampa Electric Company that would provide for replacement of any street light that became inoperative within a 48 hour period after they were notified of the problem.

The upgrading and replacement of all existing street lights in the College Hill Homes area was completed in a timely and efficient manner. During the upgrading and replacement of the street lights Officers from the Problem Oriented Policing Unit were in the College Hill Homes area assuring the safety of the Tampa Electric workers. As a result, the upgrading and replacement of all street lights in the area went smoothly.

To date, only a few street lights have become inoperable and in each case was the direct result of a drug dealer shooting the light out. The lights that became inoperative were replaced immediately and are still working.

A final survey to determine the need for additional street lights has not yet been conducted. However, a College Hill Resident Satisfaction survey is currently being conducted to determine the residents perceptions and feelings about the improvements being made in their community.

Of the 161 College Hill residents who have been surveyed, 94% are either satisfied or very satisfied with the improved lighting conditions in their community. The residents who felt dissatisfied with the improved lighting conditions in their community (6%) indicated they had difficulty sleeping because the street lights were too bright.