

TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT
PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING
DRUGS IN LOW-INCOME HOUSING

The Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Police Executive Research Forum and the Tampa Police Department entered into an agreement to create a controlled substance abuse assessment mechanism that incorporates the views of Line Officers, Department Support Personnel, and Citizens in guiding policy and resource allocation to effect a coordinated response to the illicit drug problems in the City of Tampa.

The Tampa Police Department project, known as the Problem Oriented Approach to Drug Enforcement began in early 1988 and is targeting the College Hill Homes Community. This community, in the past, has been home to several disturbances and was saturated with illicit narcotics use and sales. The community was one of Tampa worst in terms of its illicit narcotics problems.

At the onset of the project; a Problem Oriented Policing Management Team was established. The Management Team was tasked with the responsibility of overseeing, guiding and assisting the Tampa Police Department in its efforts to address the problems in College Hill. The Team is comprised of representatives from the Mayor's Office, the Tampa Police Department, the Tampa Housing Authority, the Tampa Housing Authority Commission, the Judiciary, and the State Attorney's Office. All Team Members received training in the methodology and concept of Problem Oriented Policing shortly after being established. The Team was instrumental in assisting the Tampa Police Officers in their problem solving efforts.

Summary of Project Highlights:

A tremendous amount of data collection and analyses resulting in the creation of Tampa's Drug Problem Inventory report. This report, created by the police officers assigned to the POP project with the guidance and assistance from the POP Management team, is basically an anatomy of drug problems in the College Hill Homes community. The document contains information on City, County, and in some cases State-wide drug problems. The document formed the basis from which informed responses were made in addressing the illicit drug problems in the College Hill Homes community.

Responses to the Drug Problems Identified in the College Hill Homes Community through the use of Tampa's Drug Problem Inventory:

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1. Adoption of a Parking Program in the community. The program consists of the issuance of parking decals for legal residents only and visitor passes for family and friends of residents. This response has resulted in a reduction of non-resident vehicular traffic in the community and removal of all unauthorized, abandoned or disabled vehicles from the property. The Parking Program is making the community an undesirable place for the drug dealers to ply their trade.

2. Installation of Traffic Diverters or Speed Bumps. This response has resulted in a reduction of vehicular drive-by traffic for the purpose of purchasing illicit narcotics and has made the streets safer for the children of the community. This response was accomplished as a result of a joint effort by the City of Tampa Public Works Dept. and the Tampa Police Dept.

3. Upgrading of all existing street lights from 100 watts to 400 watts and an additional 50 street lights and poles. This response has eliminated all of the darkened areas where drug usage and sales were most prevalent. This response was accomplished as a result of a joint effort by the City of Tampa Commission, the Tampa Electric Company, Tampa's Public Safety Commissioner, and the Tampa Police Department.

4. Additionally, the Tampa Police Dept. hosted a College Hill neighborhood clean-up event that has resulted in a better police/community relationship.

Future Responses:

1. The Tampa Police Dept., G.T.E., and the Tampa Housing Authority are working together on a proposal to have general use telephone systems hardwired into every apartment unit in the College Hill Homes Community. The telephone system will be programmed for local calling only and will have a long distance lockout. The system will enable the residents to call family and friends locally and most importantly emergency services. The cost associated with the telephone system will be minimal and will be passed onto the resident. The residents will still be able to obtain private telephone service if they opt not to have the provided service or in addition to it. Details are being worked out at this time.

All the goals of the project have not been met, but great strides have been achieved. Officers describe their relationship with the residents as being much improved than in the past. Residents are working harder to stop the flow of drugs into their community and have showed an

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increased willingness to inform the police about illegal activities they witness. Violence, while still high to most parts of the city, has been greatly reduced. It will be some time before College Hill is free of drug dealers, but the journey toward that

goal has begun.