

Community Problem Oriented Policing: The Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Experience

Darrel W. Stephens
December, 2003

Community Problem Oriented Policing: The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Experience

Introduction and Background

Problem Oriented Policing was first introduced by Herman Goldstein in 1979 in a Crime and Delinquency article in which he argued that police could improve their effectiveness if they focused more on problems.¹ The first actual experience with Goldstein's model was in the Madison Police Department in 1981 where they focused on the problems of drug drivers and repeat sex offenders.² That initial research was followed by projects in Baltimore County, Newport News and the United Kingdom. Although Herman Goldstein played an important role in the Baltimore County and Newport News experiments, their approaches to problem solving were different than Madison. Their primary difference was that patrol officers in both of these departments played a stronger role in the problem analysis and responses. All of these efforts reinforced the idea of the police concentrating on problems rather than incidents and problem-oriented policing became an alternative to "community policing" as a way police could improve their effectiveness in dealing with crime.

Although the Charlotte Police Department started a pilot community policing initiative in 1989, it wasn't until 1994 when the consolidated city county Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department adopted Community-Problem Oriented Policing (CPOP) as its operating philosophy under Chief Dennis Nowicki.

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg CPOP is a problem solving partnership with the community. It engages the police and stakeholders (neighborhoods, businesses, and governmental agencies) in a collaborative effort to understand the conditions that contribute to problems. With this improved understanding of the problem the partners develop tailored solutions to address them. The basic idea is one of building relationships and partnerships with a view toward addressing some issue or problem that is of concern to the community and appropriate for the police to address.

The CMPD has continued its work on community problem oriented policing since the department wide introduction in 1994. There have been changes in the process along the way but the fundamental direction has remained the same. This chapter will describe the CMPD experiences over the past ten years with a consistent policing philosophy under two chiefs. The CMPD experience is helpful in looking at the overall concept of police resource deployment as there have been organizational changes, resource allocation, training enhancements, community education and outreach to partners and stakeholders over that ten year period with a consistent policing philosophy. This chapter will describe that policing philosophy in greater detail. It will address the important issues of creating the environment, resource allocation for problem-solving, organizational structure, support systems and the measurement of impacts.

Policing Philosophy

Through the 1980s and into the mid 1990s there were continuous debates and discussions on community policing, problem-oriented policing and in the latter part of this time frame COMPSTAT. The debates centered on the merits and limitations of each of these concepts. By and large these conversations were on the margins of actual police practice in most communities. The debates on community and problem-oriented policing initially focused on a two key areas.³ First, was trying to define what these concepts were. While problem-oriented policing was clear, community policing was a much greater struggle because of the great differences from one department to another on the activities that were considered community policing. The second area of debate was on whether it was a philosophy or a program. Many argued that the implementation of both of these ideas were largely carried out by a relatively small number of officers dedicated full time in special units to these tasks. In most police departments the patrol and investigative functions continued their work pretty much in the ways they have for years. As COMPSTAT entered the scene in 1994 the NYPD focus was on information support and accountability. What was actually done on the street by officers and detectives beyond visibility and criminal justice sanctions has never been entirely clear.⁴

The philosophy of the CMPD has been to engage the entire police department, other government agencies, business, non-profit organizations and the community in a problem-solving partnership to prevent crime and improve the quality of life. The basic expectation of the police department is that all officers will use problem-solving as a tool to deal with crime, disorder, traffic and other situations where the public looks to the police for assistance. The challenge has been how to engage the entire department when the demands of traditional policing - visibility, call response, follow up investigations - continue to be strong community expectations. To be sure, this is a challenge faced by all police agencies as officers can understandably feel they are hearing two different messages - do all the traditional activities but our philosophy is community problem-oriented policing.

To an extent the officers are hearing two different messages. There is an expectation that police will respond to calls for service, conduct criminal investigations and make every effort to identify and contribute to the prosecution of the offender. The key difference in a community problem-oriented policing environment is that while those traditional activities take place there is also the expectation that officers are looking more deeply into the call or crime and asking if this is a single incident or part of a larger issue. They are expected to determine if it is a repeat call location or if the crime they are investigating could have been prevented in some way. Fundamentally, there is a different overall expectation that frames the role of the police in a much broader way than one of law enforcers whose primary responsibility is to feed the court and corrections

system. The police become leaders, followers, and partners in the crime prevention effort in collaboration with stakeholders in the community whose actions - or inaction - can contribute to the creation of safer communities.

Creating the Environment

Structuring an organization for community problem-oriented policing requires that considerable attention is given to creating the environment that will be conducive for employees and the community move toward the change in philosophy. Obviously there are a number of ways that can be accomplished and there are a wide range of issues that need to be considered. Some of the more important steps that were taken in the CMPD are discussed below. One aspect that is very important however is consistency in organizational direction.

It has been reported on a number of occasions that the average tenure of a large city police chief is about 3 years. In Charlotte the police chiefs tenure since 1980 has been about 5 years. Although there has been change - the CMPD's philosophy has remained the same through two police chiefs over a ten year period of time. It is not unusual for a new chief to make organizational changes and adjustments when coming into the position. Changes have been made in the CMPD but the community problem-oriented focus has remained the same and has been reinforced throughout that time. The department has a significant number of people - some in supervisory and command positions - that have never known any other philosophy. Traditional policing for them is problem-solving. That has been a critical aspect of creating and maintaining the right environment for this philosophy.

Mission and Values. The mission and values of the CMPD have remained the same over the past ten years as well. They clearly communicate the department's philosophy of policing and are reinforced in all aspects of the department's day to day activities. They are a part of training programs for new employees and are revisited in training programs for newly promoted employees.

The CMPD will build **problem-solving partnerships** with our citizens to **prevent the next crime** and enhance the **quality of life** throughout our community, always treating people with **fairness and respect**.

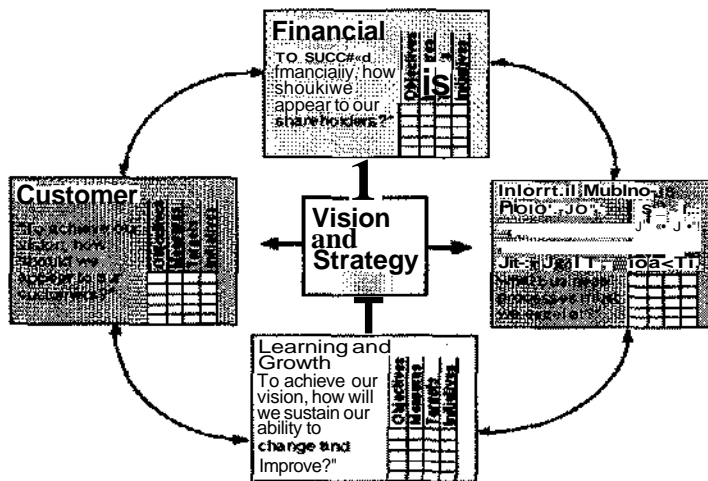
Core Values:

Our Employees	Integrity
Partnerships	Courtesy
Open Communication	The Constitution of North Carolina
Problem Solving	The Constitution of the United States
People	

Strategic Plan - Balanced Scorecard. The City of Charlotte has engaged in strategic planning for over 10 years and was the first large city to incorporate the "balanced scorecard" concept into its planning process. The process begins with the City Council establishing focus areas that reflect their highest priorities or strategic emphasis areas. All "key business units" (the phrase used to identify city departments) are expected to develop strategic focus area plans that reflect the Council priorities. This process has proven to be an important aspect of creating a supportive environment for the police department's community problem-oriented policing philosophy.

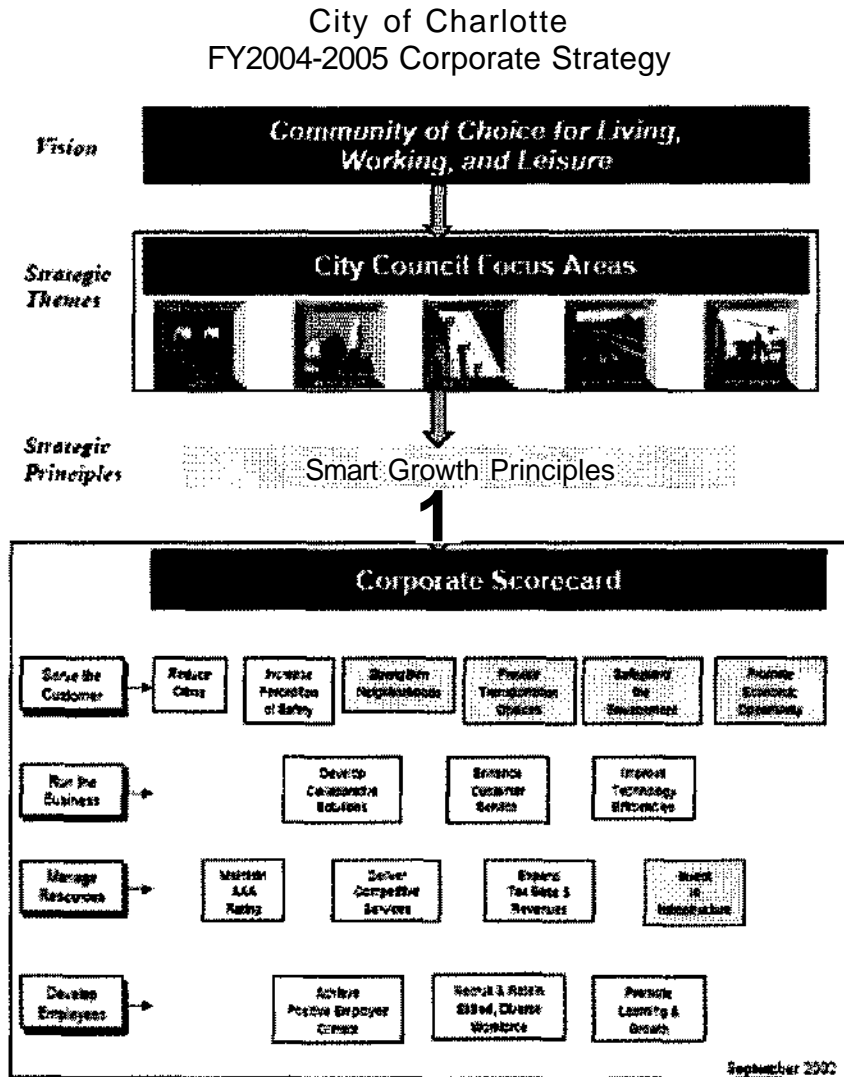
The balanced scorecard was designed by Drs. Robert Kaplan and David Norton in the early 1990s. The idea was to provide greater clarity on what a company should measure to balance the emphasis on the financial perspective. It is an overall management system that helps organizations develop a clear vision and strategy that can be translated into action? Figure 1 was developed by the Balanced Scorecard Institute and shows how financial measures are balanced by internal business processes, customer and learning and growth measures.

Figure 1 Balanced Scorecard



The "balanced scorecard" has been modified slightly by the City of Charlotte by using terms that more are a better fit for a local government environment as shown in Figure 2. One of the Council five strategic themes is "Community Safety". Within the scorecard there are objectives addressing crime reduction, perception of safety and strengthening neighborhoods. These are directly related to the police departments strategic business plan and the community policing philosophy. Inasmuch as these areas clearly identified as Council priorities, the police department is in a position to make business decisions that reinforce them.

Figure 2 Charlotte Corporate Score card



The police department builds its strategic business plan within the framework of the city corporate strategy. Several of the department's crime reduction objectives are shown in Figure 3. Each of the CMPD patrol districts and functional areas of the department will develop specific objectives for the council focus area priorities and in all four areas of the scorecard. They develop objectives on other areas as well that area important to overall service delivery that is included in the strategic business plan. Through the strategic planning process and the use of the scorecard the department is able to communicate priorities and measure progress. The community problem-oriented policing philosophy is reinforced at every step of the process which helps maintain consistent long term support at every level the department and local government.

Figure 3 CMPD Corporate Scorecard Example

Corporate Objective	KBU Initiative	Measure	Target
C1. Reduce Crime	Decrease crime in areas identified as chronic hot spots	Achieve crime reduction targets in chronic "hot spot" areas	Reduce crime in 8 or 12 hot spots
C2.	Reduce repeat calls for service in high repeat call locations	Reduction in repeat calls for service in high repeat call locations	Reduce calls at target locations in 8 of 12 patrol districts
C3.	Reduce the incidence of domestic violence in neighborhoods with high incidence of DV calls	Development of a neighborhood-based collaborative plan to target domestic violence	Formalized plan in place by end of FY04

The most important aspect of the strategic planning and balanced score card is that it communicates on-going expectations and provides yard sticks to measure progress. It is often said that organizations and people do the things that are measured. While most people are likely to agree with that statement, it is surprising the number of organizations that fail to clearly communicate objectives and measure progress toward achieving them.

Training. Training is critical to the effort of creating the environment and structure for community problem-oriented policing. The CMPD has a well developed program that touches every employee of the department from entry level police academy training to in-service programs. The department uses the SARA model to promote problem solving. It is incorporated into the entry level training throughout the curriculum. Each recruit also must complete a problem solving project and present the results of that project to academy instructors as a graduation requirement.

After academy graduation new officers are required to go through an extensive field training program. The department has adopted the "Reno model" of field training for police officers.⁶ It is a problem based learning method that uses problem solving as the basis for learning. Officers are taught to think about problems from a broad community context and are encouraged to analyze situations and to think systematically. The recruit officer must also complete a problem-solving project using the SARA model as a requirement to complete the field training phase. Over 100 officers have been trained under the new model and both trainees and trainers have come to believe it is a superior way of learning and that it clearly reinforces the department's policing philosophy.

In-service training, non-sworn employee training and supervisory and management classes incorporate the department's community problem-oriented policing philosophy into the curriculum.

Problem-Solving Briefings. Every month the police chief meets with each patrol district, the traffic division, major investigative units and support units to participate in discussions and presentations of problem solving projects that officers and non-sworn employees are underway or recently completed. These briefings serve several important purposes. First, it reinforces the importance of problem solving and the department's commitment to this approach to policing. The briefings are attended by the officer's chain of command, sometimes community members participate or other partners and they normally take about 30 to 45 minutes. Most of the briefings are structured around the SARA model and the actual presentations are made by street officers. The presentations are made by either the response team community coordinator or a response team officer. Officers have an opportunity to receive direct feedback on their work and suggestions on how some aspect of the project might be improved. Second, it provides an opportunity for the Chief to have direct contact with officers to talk about their work. Unless specific time is set aside and made a top priority on the Chief's calendar there will be little opportunity to focus in a positive way on an officer's work. Finally, these meetings are another opportunity to open the department up to other stakeholders to engage in a dialogue about problems in the neighborhood or with their business. It reinforces the department's policing philosophy with the community and provides a direct opportunity for seeing how their actions might substantially contribute to improving the situation.

On occasion particularly good presentations or those that have department implications are presented to the department's entire command staff or the Patrol Services Group command. This helps promote examples of good problem solving and in many cases has helped other areas of the department deal with a similar problem.

Rewards. Rewards and recognition are an important aspect of encouraging officers to engage in problem solving. The CMPD uses several methods. Problem solving is built into the performance appraisal system for officers and an overall satisfactory rating is required for merit increases. On an annual basis the department presents the Chiefs Problem solving award. Award winners are selected by a committee and they are recognized at an annual ceremony that takes place during police week. The department also submits problem solving projects for consideration in national award competitions such as the Goldstein Problem Solving Award. Officers are sent to the annual Problem-Oriented Policing conference when they are a finalist for the award or are invited to make a presentation on one of their projects.

Resource Allocation

Resource allocation decisions have an important impact on any approach a department takes to policing. It is particularly important in a community problem-oriented policing environment because you're not only working to create

discretionary time but trying to direct the use of that time toward problem solving activities. Every police executive has heard patrol officers say they agree with the idea - they just do not have the time to _____ (fill in the blank) whatever it is you want them to do. Officers will say I am running from call-to-call and hardly have the opportunity for a meal break - there just isn't time to do problem solving. In some cases they are right. In others it is the perception of constant business and in still others it is just a way to avoid change. Officers will also assign themselves to interesting calls which contributes to the running from call to call belief. The resource allocation process is a crucial step in structuring a department to implement a community problem-oriented philosophy of policing.⁷

In the latter part of 1999 the CMPD conducted a detailed review of the department's workload and resource allocation approach. As a part of this examination the department established several patrol allocation objectives. It also began using the Managing Patrol Performance (MPP) software to assist in patrol allocation decision making and monitoring.⁸ The department's Patrol Allocation Objectives include:

Establish Appropriate Staffing Levels. For a police department to be able to deliver service it has to have an appropriate number of police officers and other employees to do the work. In many police departments this has been a haphazard process that has been influenced by both political and financial considerations completely apart from considerations of how many people it takes to do the work the police are expected to do in the way they are expected to do it. The CMPD set out to determine the number of officers required to handle the workload and provide opportunities for officers to engage in problem solving.

Match Staffing to Workload. Although most any police officer knows that workload varies by time of day, day of week and season of the year many police departments do not reflect this common sense knowledge in their staffing decisions. It is not unusual to find that fewer officers are working on the busiest days and there is abundance of officers on duty during the hours where the least number of citizen calls are receive. The CMPD wanted to ensure that staffing levels were appropriate for the workload on any given day or hour of the day.

Equalize Officer Workload. The department wanted to balance workload among officers and districts as much as possible. The CMPD approach to community problem-oriented policing is one in which every officer is expected to engage in problem-solving. The department's resource allocation approach is structured to provide unstructured time in each work day to be devoted to problem-solving.

Call Response Time. The allocation model takes response time (and travel time) into account in determining staffing levels. The CMPD uses

three response priorities emergency, immediate and delayed. Each priority has time frames established for the dispatcher sending a patrol unit. The emergency response priority requires a unit to be sent as soon as the call is received. The other two priorities provide the dispatcher with longer time frames before a unit must be sent to the call. This procedure provides the basis on which patrol resources can be more effectively managed to ensure officers are available for emergencies and to engage in problem solving activities.

Problem Solving Opportunities. To ensure that officers have time for problem-solving it has to be included in the allocation model and considered workload as important as a call for service. The CMPD uses 15 minutes of every hour (25% of the work day) as the base for problem-solving time. Obviously there will be days that amount of time is not available just as there are days when there is more time available for officers to work on problems they have identified.

There are a number of factors that influence the allocation of patrol resources that must be taken into account when determining the number of officers required.

Policing Model. The approach a department takes to policing has a significant impact on the staffing levels required. If a department chooses not to engage in community or problem-oriented policing then time does not have to be set aside for these activities. If a department uses a split force concept in which one group of officers respond to calls for service and another has the community policing responsibilities it affects the number of officers required for each function. The CMPD model includes time for each officer to engage in problem solving and also includes officers who are dedicated full time to problem solving.

Workload. Obviously the workload is a key factor in determining the number of officers required. The choices police make on how to handle their workload has an important impact on the number of police officers required to serve the community. There are those who argue the police do not have much of a choice - but they do with the consent of the community and political leadership. They have to convince the political leadership and community that one approach is a more effective use of resources but it can be done. Many police departments for example have stopped investigating vehicle crashes on private parking lots while others continue to engage in this practice. Some departments use non-sworn officers or volunteers to handle certain types of calls. In Charlotte, the department uses volunteers for enforcing handicap parking regulations in shopping centers and apartment complexes.

Activity Service Times. An important feature of the MPP software is that it provides the capability for supervisors to monitor activity service times

which can have a great affect on police staffing. CMPD supervisors can look at how long it takes their response team or district to handle a certain type of call or activity. One area where the department has been able to improve is the amount of time it takes officers at shift change to go from their briefing to being logged on the computer aided dispatch system and ready to handle calls. The data showed significant variances from one shift to another and from one district to another. Another problem for most police agencies is officers responding to calls they were not assigned and then spending time at the call well beyond what was needed to assist. MPP helped the department identify the time used in this way and recapture it for other uses. There are many opportunities for departments to capture time that can be devoted to problem-solving if the activity service times are monitored.

Response Time. One of the CMPD resource allocation objectives is to ensure that staffing is adequate to meet the department's response time goals. Response time is central component in police resource allocation. If the department establishes an inappropriate response time goal it will have an enormous affect on the number of police officers required to meet the goal. In the 1972 **Police Report** of the National Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals the response time standard was set a three to five minutes for all part one crime calls. It was an impossible standard to meet and one that made little sense when it was understood that most of these calls were not emergencies and 67% of these crimes were discovered sometime after they had occurred.⁹ As noted above the CMPD has established response time goals that distinguish between emergency and non-emergency calls for service.

Relief Factor. Another important factor in patrol resource allocation is the "relief factor". Patrol officers must be on the street around the clock 365 days a year. Most police officers have 40 hour work weeks or 2080 hours a year. The "relief factor" is used to determine how many officers are required to fill one position around the clock 365 days a year. Although 2080 work hours (260 work days) is the base, vacation time, sick/injury leave, military leave, training time, holidays, etc must be subtracted from the base. Police executives must understand this concept, manage time off and calculate its impact on resources needed on the street. For a five day eight hour a day work week with the normal benefits it requires almost six police officers to staff one patrol position around the clock 365 days a year.

The ability of a police department to engage in problem-solving or any type of police service for that matter is heavily influenced by call management practices and policies. The police have an enormous number of choices on how to respond to the various expectations of the community. Should police officers respond to

all calls for service? Can non-sworn personnel handle some of the calls? Can some reports or calls be handled over the telephone? Should police investigate traffic collisions on private property? What opportunities does technology and the Internet present for managing police calls? The CMPD has placed a lot of emphasis on managing calls for service and seeking alternative methods in order to maximize the time officers have on the street for problem-solving. Two of the more significant alternatives are described below.

Non-Emergency Police Services (NEPS). The CMPD first began taking some police reports and calls over the telephone over twenty years ago. That initiative involved call takers in the 911 center transferring calls that met the criteria to a small unit to be handled rather than dispatching a police officer. In the mid-1990s the department expanded the function with a dedicated telephone number and created a call center that could accept calls directly or receive those transferred from the 911 center. The NEPS centered has evolved into a unit that handles a significant proportion of the police department's workload. The unit handles about 20,000 calls a month and completes 35,000 reports annually. The cost for patrol officers to handle this workload on the street is several times the annual NEPS budget.

The department is also experimenting with outsourcing some police reports that come into the NEPS unit. The unit's workload has overwhelmed the ability of the current staff to handle it within a reasonable time frame. Budget constraints made it impossible for the department to add sufficient staff at an estimated cost of \$900,000 to meet the demands. The department was able to outsource three types of police reports (larceny, larceny from vehicle, and damage to property) which accounted for almost half of the reports the unit takes for a cost of around \$250,000.

Alarm Calls. Handling alarm calls has increasingly become a major workload challenge for the police as the number of alarm systems have multiplied. Nationally about 98% of the alarm calls the police respond to are false and they have a significant effect on police workload and staffing levels. There are a number of cities that have adopted a "verified" response policy which essentially is a policy that says the police will not respond to an alarm call unless it has been verified that a crime has actually occurred.¹⁰ In 1995 the CMPD responded to 106,000 alarm calls of which 98.6% were false. This represented 20% of the calls the department received. The projections made at the time using the growth in the number of alarm systems were even more frightening - using a straight line trend the department would be handling almost 200,000 alarm calls a year unless something was done. The department enacted an ordinance similar to many at the time - 2 free alarms and then a graduated fee for response and required a permit. Since implementation the number of alarm users has increased each year but false alarms have

dropped from 106,000 in 1995 to 69,650 in 2001. In addition the department outsourced the management of the program to a private contractor. This ordinance has had an enormous impact on patrol staffing and contributed significantly to the creating of time for problem-solving.

Structuring Patrol for Problem-Solving

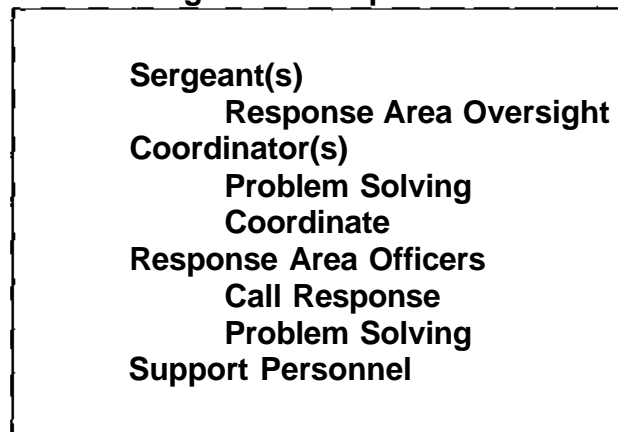
Police departments have been searching for a way to structure the patrol force that best meets the multiple service objectives of the largest segment of the department that has the most day to day interaction with the community. There are a number of different examples that departments have used to organize the patrol force. One common approach that departments have used is the split-force. That essentially involves giving part of the patrol force the responsibility for responding to all calls for service while the rest engage in specialized assignments. In some departments those assignments will be community policing or problem solving units. In others they will create street crime units that work on crime patterns or in high crime areas. Other departments use more of a generalist approach where officers are responsible for calls for service as well as any special problems or issues that might take place on their watch or area of responsibility.

A key struggle for departments in dealing with the patrol structure is the tension that always exists between accountability for time and geography. Although there is an element of accountability for both in every system departments will place greater emphasis on one over the other. For example, in a system that emphasizes time officer's focus on the calls and problems that come to their attention on the shift in which they work. In this approach responsibility for an area on a 24 four hour basis rests with a district commander or the patrol commander depending on the size of the community. Depending on the rank structure a sergeant or lieutenant (in some cases a captain) will be responsible for officers during a specific watch. In structures that emphasize geography a group of officers will be assigned to a specific area of the community and have responsibility for the area 24 hours a day. They continue to have shifts but they work together as a team to address the problems and issues within that specific geographic area.

The CMPD uses a hybrid between time and geographic accountability with the edge given to a geographic emphasis. The department's emphasis on problem-solving was an important factor in trying to develop a system that enabled patrol to maintain call response accountability while making room for all officers to engage in problem-solving. The connection to neighborhoods was also a central factor. Neighborhoods are obviously geographic based but they need services 24 hours a day so it was important to have a system that helped officers understand the neighborhood problems and provided a basis for effective communication.

The CMPD created Response Area Teams as the basic patrol service delivery organizational unit. Each team has 20 to 25 officers assigned that are responsible for a specific response area 24 hours a day. See Figure 4 for the response team composition. Each response team has a sergeant that has responsibility for providing oversight to the response team from a geographic perspective. These sergeants work with the officers on the team on their problem solving initiatives. The sergeants actually have a dual responsibility because they also work a particular watch in the district. Depending on the

Figure 4 - Response Area Team



nature of the area each team has from one to three community coordinators assigned. These officers work flexible schedules and are responsible for assisting the team maintain a close link with neighborhoods and other members of the community in the area. They are the primary contact point for the community and they also take the lead in coordinating the analysis and team response to some problems. The call response officers have the primary responsibility for handling calls on the shift they are assigned and secondary responsibility for working on problems. In some cases call response officers are engaged in the problem response strategy. In other cases they will be responsible for taking the lead on a complete problem depending on the type of problem and of the nature of the response. The response area teams also have district level, service area level and department resources that they may call on to aide in a response to a problem.

The level of responsibility above the response area teams is the patrol District. The CMPD has 12 patrol districts that are staffed by an average of about 100 personnel. Each of these districts is commanded by a captain that has 24 hour responsibility for the district. Each district has from three to five response area teams assigned. The district and response team boundaries were determined on the basis of workload with the idea of equalizing workload among the districts. Response team boundaries were designed with a view toward ensuring neighborhood boundaries were respected and fully contained within a specific

response area. Districts vary significantly by population and geographic size but the activity levels are similar to the extent possible.

The next level in the patrol structure is the Service Area that is commanded by a Major. There are six Service Areas in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg policing jurisdiction which includes the city and unincorporated area of the county. Each Service Area Major is responsible for two patrol districts. They report to the Deputy Chief of the Patrol Services Group. The patrol structure has served the department very well in the effort to fulfill the community problem-oriented policing philosophy.

Problem Solving Support Systems

The CMPD has developed a number of systems that have been designed to help support problem solving initiatives. There are a number of technology systems that have been developed to help officers become more productive and to serve as a basis for identifying, analyzing and responding to problems. The department has also developed approaches that link support units to response areas so they may share in the responsibility for addressing problems.

Technology. The department has focused its technology development on systems and processes to support its policing philosophy. Like many departments around the county the COPS office provided significant financial assistance in the development of these systems through the COPS MORE program. The CMPD KBCOPS (Knowledge Based Community Oriented Policing System) is in its sixth year of development and continues to be refined. Some of the key components of the technological support provided to officers include:

Wireless Network. The CMPD created a wireless network over which patrol officers which serves as the backbone of their connection to information sources while they are in the field. They are connected to the CAD system so they can be dispatched to calls for service and monitor other activities within their districts. The CAD system has a feature that allows officers to check specific addresses for a history of calls to that location and is an important tool for identifying repeat call locations. In addition the network provides an email account for every officer through the outlook system. That capability has proven to be a very important communication tool for officers working different shifts in the response team. The system also contains folders where information can be found on the response team area and on problems on which the team may be working. The network has been limited by band width but as broadband becomes available and affordable officers will be able to significantly enhance their information access from the field.

Records Management System (RMS). The department has developed a records management system that allows officers to file their reports on line from the field. They can also search the RMS data base from the field as well. This has proven very beneficial in investigations of specific crimes and in the problem solving work officers are doing.

Geographic Information System (GIS). The department makes extensive use of its GIS system to support problem solving efforts. A centralized crime analysis capability has been developed to serve officers needs. The analysts are assigned to specific districts and they also have a secondary responsibility for certain types of crime. These analysts make extensive use of mapping and access to a variety of data bases to assist officers in problem analysis and in assessing the impact of the problem responses.

Problem-solving data base. The most recent addition to KBCOPS to come on line is the problem-solving data base. This was designed to assist officers with their problem solving projects. Officers are expected to enter their problem solving initiatives into the data base, report progress as they work on the problem and the outcome. The template helps guide the officer's analysis efforts as they enter the information. The data base can be searched in a number of ways by officers they can be aware of other similar projects that are currently underway or that have completed. The data base has been on-line just a few months and there are over 200 problem solving project that have been entered.

Training Tool. The department also uses the network as a training tool for officers. Each officer has a development plan in the system that tracks the training they have received and the mandatory training they are required to complete. Officers are able to register for classes on-line and take some mandatory courses on a remote basis. The system has served a number of useful administrative purposes but has also been very beneficial to officers as a time saver.

Support and Investigative Units. The CMPD has organized its investigative and other specialized units in a way that provides direct links and support to the patrol function on a geographic basis. With the exception of homicide and sexual assault functions most of the investigative units assign detectives to be responsible for cases within the patrol district geographic boundaries. Vice and Narcotics Detectives work with the districts to identify drug hot spots in which they include as a key aspect of their work plan. Robbery detectives are assigned to

investigate cases in a specific district and are responsible for working with district officers on problem solving projects directed toward robbery problems. Burglary detectives and domestic violence detectives are assigned the same way. The department's centralized traffic unit works with the city department of transportation to identify high crash locations and they work directly with response team officers on problem solving projects designed to address those locations.

Communications. A continuing challenge for the CMPD has been to integrate the communications function in a meaningful way with the department's problem solving philosophy on a day to day basis. Although dispatchers have responsibility for serving patrol districts the department has not been successful at integrating their work or the work of the call-takers into an effective problem solving team.

Measuring Impact

It has become increasingly more important for police departments to determine the outcome of their work. The community almost always turns to the police when seeking an explanation for increasing crime or fear of crime. As the cost of government and policing continues to rise it is reasonable for politicians and taxpayers to ask if they are getting the best return they can on their investment in policing. Although it is not unusual for the police to take credit for crime reductions, establishing clear relationships between a police action or activity and an outcome is fraught with difficulty and sometimes not possible. Nevertheless, the effort to take reasonable steps to measure outcomes must be made. Though cautious about claiming a cause-effect relationship, an effort is made to report the outcome and determine if the problem response contributed in any meaningful way. The CMPD looks at outcomes from several perspectives:

Problem Solving Initiatives. One of the ways the CMPD attempts to measure outcomes is through the assessment phase of each of the problem solving projects. The final step of the SARA process is the assessment. The focus of this phase is to determine if the response implemented had the desired affect on the problem. In most cases the department is able to measure the outcome but it continues to be very difficult to say with certainty the response was the actual cause of the outcome. There are a large number of problem solving initiatives in the department that have achieved a positive outcome. In some of the problems the outcome has had a measurable effect on overall crime statistics. Some examples of problems follow:

Theft from Auto. The department has seen a number of problem-solving projects aimed at theft from auto. One in particular though was focused on this problem in the center city area and the work of the patrol officers was supported with the assistance of Herman

Goldstein and Ronald Clarke in the analysis of the problem, framing responses and looking at outcomes.¹¹ Because of the extensive experience that Clarke and Goldstein brought to the enterprise, the analysis of the problem was one of the most detailed ever conducted by the department. A range of solutions were proposed based on the analysis that were directed toward improving security measures at surface level parking lots to a system of grading parking lot security. Based on the analysis officers working the center city had a much better understanding of the circumstances under which these crimes were occurring. Although some of the proposed responses were never implemented the center city area experienced a significant decline in theft from autos during the life of the project.

Appliance Thefts. The department also received the assistance of Ronald Clarke and Herman Goldstein in the analysis and search for solutions to a significant problem of burglaries of homes under construction.¹² While the analysis of the problem was underway officers were using traditional investigative methods to work on the problem and they achieved a certain level of success through making more arrests and clearing more cases than ever before. The problem did not go away however so it was suggested that if the home builders would wait until the day of closing to install the appliances that thefts would go down because the house would not be unattended. Although officers were only able to convince a small number of builders to participate in a six-month trial of the policy, those that participated experienced a much lower number of burglaries than the non-participating builders.

Hispanic Robbery Initiative. The enormous growth of the Latino/Hispanic population in Charlotte spawned a significant increase in street robbery victims. This initiative targeted five apartment complex locations where there were high concentrations of Latino residents and robberies. A series of responses were implemented. One involved working with local banks to overcome problems with opening accounts to reduce the amount of cash the victims carried. Another was aimed at moving residents out of the parking lot where they gathered to drink (and to be robbed) inside into apartments and recreation centers. Still another was aimed at improving lighting in the complexes. The result was a significant decline in robberies at five of the six complexes.

The problems noted above were larger scale than many of the initiatives but an attempt is made on every project to conduct an assessment. Officers will often focus on repeat call locations and work to resolve the reason the calls are initiated.

Achieving Objectives. The department also tracks progress on the objectives that are set forth in the annual strategic business plan. Each area of the department establishes objectives for the fiscal year and progress on the objectives are tracked on a monthly basis. The department participates in a city-wide incentive plan that identifies several objectives that can result in monetary payments to all employees at the end of the year. These objectives are both crime related and administrative targets such as reducing the preventable crash rate for employees.

Crime/Traffic. The department tracks reported crime, traffic crashes and enforcement efforts and routinely reports this information to the community. Like many communities, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has seen an overall decline in the Uniform Crime Report rate over the past decade. Crime rate trends are reported in Figure 5.

Figure 5 - Uniform Crime Report Rates

	1991-2001	1999-2000	2000 - 2001	2001 - 2002
Total Index	- 37%	- 9.5%	- 2.9%	- 5.4%
Violent	-46%	- 9.9%	-0.1%	- 5.8%
Property	- 35%	- 9.4%	- 3.4%	- 5.4%

Traffic has emerged as a problem of great interest and concern to members of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. As a result vehicle crashes and department enforcement efforts are a part of what the department tracks on a monthly and annual basis. From 1999 through 2002 there has been a 16% decline in injury crashes while the miles traveled has increased about 4% each of those years. During the same time frame CMPD officers increased speeding enforcement by 74.1% and overall citations by 76.5%. These enforcement efforts have been targeted at high crash locations throughout the city and county.

As discussed above these outcomes are very difficult to connect to activities of the police department. It is important nevertheless to track these statistics and be prepared to use them in communicating with the public whose perceptions of problems may not always reflect what the data suggests.

Citizen Perceptions. The department also conducts surveys of citizens and businesses every 18 months to two years. These surveys are used to gain a sense of citizens perceptions about the service the police department is providing and problems of concern to them in both their neighborhoods and the community at large. These surveys ask citizens to

rate police service on a number of variables on a scale of one to ten with one indicating the lowest impression and ten the highest. The most recent citizen survey was conducted in 2002 - results on several variables are contained in Figure 6.

Figure 6 - Citizen Survey Results

Overall Impression	7.6
Courtesy	7.6
Professionalism	7.6
Integrity	7.4
Overall Safety	7.3
Neighborhood Safety	7.8
Safer than 2 years ago	5.7

It is interesting to note that citizens felt pretty safe in their own neighborhoods and despite a continuing decline in reported crime they felt less safe in 2002 than they did two years before.

Quality of Life Index. The City of Charlotte has developed what is called a quality of life index in conjunction with the University of North Carolina Charlotte that is an additional measure the police department uses in looking at its work. The quality of life index is developed from data collected about neighborhoods in four indicator areas. These areas are crime, educational achievement, property values and demographic variables such as poverty and unemployment. All neighborhoods in the city are analyzed and placed in one of three categories - stable, threatened and fragile. The police department in conjunction with city and county departments and the school system participate in a Neighborhood Cabinet that works to improve the ratings of neighborhoods in the threatened and fragile categories while keeping those with a stable rating from declining.

Conclusion

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department has been structured to reinforce its community problem-oriented policing philosophy. That structure has been supported and reinforced by city government processes that make problem solving partnerships an important aspect of their work. Moreover the strategic planning initiative and balanced scorecard provides political authority for the police department to take the steps necessary to achieve the objectives set forth in the City Council focus areas. To the extent the department has been successful in the implementation of its policing philosophy the environment in city government, the department itself and the community have made that possible.

The CMPD believes it has achieved a certain amount of success though it is being severely tested in the current economic environment that has resulted in two years of budget reductions and the prospect of several more. In addition the department functions in a state that has severe financial problems as well and those problems are reflected in declining resources devoted to the court and social service systems. The global struggle with terrorism has had its influences as well. The department has taken on additional responsibilities in dealing with terrorism at the same time that the armed forces have taken 38 police officers for periods up to two years.

There are those who have abandoned community policing and problem-solving because they say they do not have the resources. Problem-oriented policing had its roots in times when the economic conditions were worse than today and police departments had less human resources, less technology and much higher crime rates. Now is not the time to abandon community problem-oriented policing - it is the time to re-double the effort to fully engage police employees as well as the community.

1 John E. Eck and William Spelman, Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 1987).

2 Michael S. Scott, Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections of the First Twenty Years, (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2000)

3 As both concepts spread throughout policing there were many more areas of debate. They involved areas such as whether it required specialists or generalists, officer evaluation methods, if it required an entirely different type of police officer, how to measure outcomes. The outcome debates were particularly interesting in the sense some were applying measurement standards to community policing and problem oriented policing that they did not apply to traditional approaches.

4 See Phyllis Parshall McDonald, Managing Police Operations: Implementing the New York Crime Control Model-Compstat. New York: Wadsworth, 2002. for an overview of the NYPD Compstat model.

5 The Balanced Scorecard Institute, Rockville, MD, <http://www.balancedscorecard.org>

6 Police Executive Research Forum, PTO: An Overview and Introduction. (Washington DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing, 2003).

7 Detailed discussions of patrol resource allocation are contained in other chapters of this volume. It is important though to address resource allocation in the context of the CMPD and how it is used to structure the department for problem solving.

8 MPP was originally developed in the 1970s before many police departments had computer aided dispatch systems. It has been updated over the years and currently can run on windows through a network. The CMPD has this capacity available to patrol supervisors. The department also has an analyst that produces a set of monthly workload reports that supervisors can use to monitor patrol activity from the district level to an individual officer.

9 See Response Time Analysis, Kansas City Police Department, 1977. and Spelman, William and Dale K. Brown. 1982. Calling the Police. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, for a full discussion of the research associated with response time.

10 The verified response policy has been adopted by two large cities - Las Vegas and Salt Lake City. Others have attempted to adopt it but were thwarted when city councils refused after pressure from the industry and community.

11 Ronald V. Clarke and Herman Goldstein, Thefts From Cars in Center-City Parking Facilities: A Case Study in Implementing Problem-Oriented Policing, (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2003).

12 Ronald V. Clarke and Herman Goldstein, Reducing Theft at Construction Sites: Lessons From a Problem-Oriented Project, (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2003).