

**THE BILL BLACKWOOD
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**ASSESSING THE NEED TO EXPAND THE RESIDENT OFFICER PROGRAM
IN THE CITY OF PASADENA**

A Policy Research Project
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ABSTRACT

Never before have the citizens of Pasadena and their local police department joined forces in such a collaborative effort to reduce crime, minimize fear and improve the quality of life in the development of neighborhood standards than with the implementation of TEXAS' first Resident Officer Program. While it can be argued that this program is a "break" from the traditional reactive mode of policing, distinction should be made between other facets of policing as it relates to overall program effectiveness in a preliminary sense.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the need to expand the Resident Officer Program in the City of Pasadena. This research in brief, summarizes an overview of its development and implementation as a problem-solving strategy to reduce violent and drug related crime from targeted neighborhoods and to provide a safe environment where law-abiding citizens can live, work, and raise families in the absence of fear. One of the expectations realized by the implementation of the Resident Officer Program has been in the area of citizen awareness educating citizens on how they themselves must accept a certain degree of civic responsibility, and by providing them avenues to insure the safety of their fellow citizens in the neighborhood. The conclusion of this research indicates that to expand the Resident Officer Program would no doubt be welcomed by the citizens in the targeted neighborhoods who have felt ignored and besieged for some time and delighted that the police were stepping up the response to their concerns. By creating a network of resident officers, each structuring their program to the needs of their respective neighborhoods, alliances with the community would be greatly enhanced. As a result, we can forge a cost-effective platform from which new programs can be launched in the areas of problem solving and community concerns, and consequently set the standards by which future endeavors will be judged.

Introduction

Recognizing the need to change course in the direction of how we provide police service, the Pasadena Police Department, under the stewardship of Chief Tommy Shane, launched the State of Texas' first Resident Officer Program. Fashioned after the nation's first resident officer program in Elgin, Illinois, this radical new approach to policing, hopefully, will demonstrate the Pasadena Police Department's commitment to improving the basic quality of life of residents by empowering and encouraging them to be actively involved in the improvement of their neighborhood. The Resident Officer concept entails having a Pasadena Police Officer volunteer to live in a geographically defined neighborhood identified as needing more direct police attention due to criminal and social decay issues. The officer's purpose is to provide basic police service while identifying problems which effect police, the community and the quality of life in the neighborhood, and to implement solutions to these problems in the form of a partnership with his/her neighbors. This affords the police an opportunity to be a part of the solution in solving neighborhood issues, as, conversely, being apart from the solution. In return for this task, the city of Pasadena furnishes the officer with a home, pays the utilities, supplies a bicycle, and provides a marked patrol car. The officer's home telephone number is also published and the officer is expected to respond to any situation needing their immediate attention (Resident Officer Manual).

The purpose and intended outcome of this research project will be to assess the need to expand the Pasadena Police Departments' Resident Officer Program. This will include a review of the history and development of the program and its impact upon a specific target neighborhood within the City of Pasadena. An objective of this research shall illustrate how

police departments, in light of endorsing some aspects of community and problem solving policing, can construct, coordinate and operate a program such as this, which, in my view can significantly improve the delivery of city services and improve the quality of life of citizens in a particular neighborhood. Hopefully, this research project should serve as a guide for those interested in "jumping off a cliff" toward new programs in getting a better handle on the manner and extent in which we treat and serve our customers - the citizens.

The intended audience of this research will generally be police administrators, policy and program implementors and evaluators, as well as those in city government who see beyond the "bean-counter" approach to cost-benefit analysis. Quite frankly, any police department, regardless of size and complexity would benefit from this research, particularly if we focused on the common denominator of what heightened our alert in the City of Pasadena - that being neighborhood decay and fear.

Pertinent to this project are the many sources of information that illustrate the need to look for new approaches in the way we police. How the Resident Officer Program came into being will be discussed as part of a large plan of action resulting from a major revitalization process implemented by the Mayor and City Council. Suggestions of improvement in the area of program effectiveness are raised in an attempt to explain the difficulty in providing a scientifically designed research experiment which proves a causal-effect relationship that the program works, and therefore, should necessarily be expanded.

Historical and Theoretical Context

Currently, the City of Pasadena is a growing and ethnically diversifying enterprise. Since 1990, both residential and commercial development have taken place at unprecedented rates- particularly in the south part of the city (Pasadena Plan 1996). What emerged in 1991 as a result of a revitalization discussion in a Pasadena Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee meeting was "The Pasadena Plan - A Blueprint For a Better Pasadena". With many of Pasadenas' older neighborhoods going into decline, concern was generated among citizens that without maintenance, improvement and public safety, these neighborhoods would continue to deteriorate. Recognizing this as a serious matter of concern, chamber officials organized the Pasadena Revitalization Task Force, which as a consequence, formed the "Pasadena Plan." Comprised of nearly 500 volunteers of citizens and business people alike, these volunteers were interested in working toward the multitude of physical and social improvements identified throughout the city, but more specifically directed in the city's north end. Pasadena Plan participants represented a large spectrum of people whose composition in terms of age, ethnicity and race, social economic status, education and a variety of other characteristics were reflective of the city. This diverse makeup is considered by many to have represented a solid foundation underlying the Pasadena Plan and its 67 goals for Pasadena growth and improvement. Goals ranging from public safety, housing, tourism, transportation, and natural resources to urban designs, education and business/economic development (Plan, 11). What follows is an excerpt from the Pasadena Plan as it pertains to public safety: Pasadena should be a city where people are (and feel) safe in their homes and neighborhoods, on their streets and in their businesses, and all projects recommended in the plan should be carried out with an eye toward the security (real and

perceived) of residents and visitors (p. 11).

With emphasis on a "strong customer service ethic" and the police departments' recent moves toward more effective planning, research and facets of community policing, it is hopeful that these trends will continue to yield community satisfaction (Pasadena Plan, 1996). Including but not limited to the aforementioned trends, the Pasadena Plan endorsed the continuation and expansion of community oriented/problem-solving policing by "adding more resident officers, maintaining and increasing the department's work with neighborhood groups and children and implementing other work programs, e.g., creation of storefront police stations and/or creation of bicycle patrols when appropriate" (Pasadena Plan, p. 58). Clearly, we can see the commitment to make new strides in how we deliver police service to the community. However, as David Bagley (1996) argues, police performance would not solely be measured by levels of activity rather, "measurement should reflect what the police accomplish in society" (p. 50). More on this later.

Theoretically speaking, if one prescribes to the view that "social order pertains to man", concerns as an individual for a secure and stable life within an orderly community are paramount. "What follows, is, that attention is focused on the social, normal and legal actions that insure public safety, economic well- being and ones' freedom to pursue happiness among other contractual relations" (Souryal, 1993). Clearly, each of the aforementioned attributes were missing in the .35 square mile area of the Pasadena Heights subdivision. "The prevailing view, nevertheless, is that police ability to control crime depends more on citizen initiative than on police initiative" (Greene, p.12). Not necessarily the most "crime-infested" area in the city, the Heights area experienced many problems associated with gangs, drugs, criminal mischief, and

disturbances. Residing in a home purchased by the City of Pasadena, the officer lives there rent free. From responding to such calls as "drive-by shootings" and searching for an elderly woman's cat, to even taking a senior citizen in poor health to church, resident Officer Manny Pizano has turned his neighborhood around. By being a part of the community he serves, the resident officer exhibits a sense of belonging and true ownership to the neighborhood.

Pasadena city council appropriated \$56,000.00 to purchase a home for the Resident Officer Program which was encumbered from the police narcotic suppression fund. Initially, a \$128,000.00 dollar grant from the Houston-Galveston Area Council provided funding for two resident officer positions, but due to various concerns among city and police officials - which is common for any new program of this magnitude - a "wait and see" attitude prevailed before expanding to a second officer. The citizens who reside within the target neighborhood supported the concept as witnessed by their first community meeting which was held at a local fire station. Nearly 150 people turned out to meet Officer Pizano who was soliciting their input as to the identity of problems within their neighborhood.

Review of Literature

Never before have the citizens of Pasadena and their local police department combined resources in a collaborative manner to reduce crime, minimize fear and improve the quality of life in the development of neighborhood standards as has the Resident Officer Program. Northwestern Political Science professor Welsey Skogan's Analysis of a direct link between disorder and crime, along with James Wilson and George Kilings', 1982 Atlanta Monthly publication of "Broken Windows" and other scholars noted for their work concerning the various facets of Problem Oriented Policing, essentially gave rise to a radical new approach in

how the Pasadena Police Department carried out its policing strategy.

One of Skogan's key findings was that "in neighborhoods with higher crime levels, disorder was linked more strongly with crime than were other characteristics of the areas poverty, instability of the housing market, and predominately minority racial composition among residents (1990). Skogan goes as to say that disorder as a "percussor to crime" plays a significant role in the decline and eventual decay of the neighborhood. "By lowering community morale and giving the neighborhood a bad reputation throughout the city, disorder both in itself, and through increased crime undermine the stability of the local housing market: fearful residents moved out, and real estate values plunged (Skogan, 1990).

There is little doubt that "fear of crime is one of the most complex phenomenon in criminology insofar as it cannot be measured precisely" (Haghighi and Sorenson). Following this assessment is what W ARR (1984) describes fear as: "fear of crime has acquired so many divergent meanings in the literature that it is in danger of losing any specificity" (p. 681). Although the complexity of assessing the concept of fear is generally accepted, it can, nevertheless be measured with some degree of accuracy. A more rigorous approach to evaluating the impact of the Resident Officer Program as it pertains to citizen fear of crime might be to control for the following variables: gender and age, race and ethnicity; social economic status; victimization experiences and the media. General background information taken from the National Opinion Survey on Crime and Justice 1995 (NOS CJ) might provide additional relevancy concerning citizens who are fearful of criminal victimization and how this information relates to the problem solving approach of the resident officer.

Gender and Age

According to several researchers, the most consistent findings are that women and the elderly are more fearful of crime than are men (Haghighi and Srenson, p 17). These same researchers base the high degree of fear among women and the elderly as it relates to their respective "feelings of vulnerability" in criminal episodes.

Race and Ethnicity

Although race plays a significant role in the analysis of crime fear (Haghighi and Sorenson) particularly among the African Americans, this area of measurement "suffers from lack of attention in the literature" (p. 19). Parker (1993) Compared African American and Hispanic survey respondents and found that Hispanics, who reported the greatest likelihood of victimization, also record higher on the fear factor than did their African American counterparts.

This analysis should serve as a wake up call for the resident officer due to the ethnic makeup of the present target neighborhood - presently being 60 percent hispanic and 40 percent elderly Anglo. Parker concludes his findings by suggesting the greatest concerns about being victimized were among Hispanic women.

Socioeconomic Status

Given the lack of information relating to the fear of crime and one's socioeconomic status, data suggests that there is a higher degree of fear among the underclass than the nonpoor, most probably due to their "higher likelihood of actual victimization, particularly with regard to street crime" (Will and McGrath, 1995).

Victimization Experience

Conflicting results among the relationship between victimization experience and the fear of crime make it difficult to reach a relevant conclusion. "Despite this discrepancy there is a consensus among researchers that those who characteristically reflect the highest form of crime are those who are least likely to be victimized (Haghighi and Sorsenson, p. 21).

The Media

Sensationalism and distortion as reported by the media tend to produce fear among all citizens, particularly the display of violent acts on a continued basis. "This element is particularly important because the media tend to distort the types of criminal victimization occurring and exaggerate true accounts of criminal victimization in the community" (Haghighi, p.20).

As a footnote, to summarize the National Opinion Survey on Crime and Justice with regards to its findings on the respect of fear and crime, the category that generated the most concern among respondents was the idea of being burglarized while no one was at home - which consequently might lend credence to the evidence of burglars being shot and killed as intruders by tenants and landowners. Quite naturally and without further explanation is the finding that over one third of Americans generated concern about themselves or someone in their family being sexually assaulted (NOS CJ, 1995).

Successes

Just as the Elgin, Illinois Resident Officer's Program means of recognition soared early on, the Pasadena Police Resident Officer Program was hailed throughout the media as a new way

of doing police business - "taking it back one neighborhood at a time". Various articles were written in the Pasadena Citizen, and the Houston Chronicle, as well as receiving television media exposure from Channel 13 (ABC) and Channel 26 (Fox) news.

Mary Ann Wycoff (1992) argues that there are two ultimate goals of police efforts to deal with crime: the reduction of actual crime and the increase of citizen comfort. Although results are somewhat inconclusive as it relates to the reduction of crime based upon a non-scientific method of measurement, clearly the Resident Officer Program has increased the level of "citizen comfort" - witnessed by the written survey conducted after only six months in operation. The primary purpose of the survey was to gauge the residents opinion as to the overall value of the program - not necessarily its overall effectiveness as it pertains to perception regarding quality of life issues in their neighborhood. In this particular survey, residents of the target neighborhood were asked to respond to a series of statements about various quality of life issues by circling a number which corresponds to their level of agreement. A summary of the responses to the survey revealed the following:

- . 80% felt that the program had improved the delivery of other city services.
- . 95% felt that the program had improved the quality of life in the neighborhood.
- . 96% felt that the program had made the neighborhood a safer place to live.
- .96% reported an increased understanding of the Pasadena Police Department function.
- .98% felt that the program should be expanded to other areas of the city.

These numbers overwhelmingly demonstrate that the Resident Officer Program has received widespread acceptance and support from the residents of the target area and that it has made substantial progress toward fulfilling the mission to "reduce actual crime and increase

citizen comfort" which consequently takes into account the concept of fear. Most importantly, the program established a renewed partnership between the police and the community.

Police efforts to date can be described as quite remarkable. Not only has the police department marshalled wide citizen support for the expansion of the Resident Officer Program, preliminary indications suggest that the residents in the target area have more confidence in the police department and were more likely to report problems to the police - illustrated by the 19% increase in calls for service - a sign of improved citizen trust. Major increases in burglaries, criminal mischiefs, discharging firearms and thefts were reported from 1995 to 1996.

It should be noted, however, that this is an analysis of calls for service, not actual crime reported in the U.C.R.

During the resident officer's "first year in existence, citizens who reside in the target neighborhood (with the assistance of the officer) formed a chartered neighborhood association. Having now raised \$7,000.00 in funds, this association has been very active not only in their own neighborhood but throughout the city as well. The Resident Officer Program parallels that of George Kelling's assessment that "no efforts at restraining order in the community will be successful in the long run without the development of a full partnership between citizens in the community and the criminal justice institutions that affect conditions in the neighborhoods" (p. 234). The goal of this partnership is for citizens themselves to "own" the problems facing their community, as well as the solutions that emerge (p. 234). A further review of the literature suggests that due to the implementation of various alternatives to traditional policing, today, our neighborhoods are becoming safer and we are attempting to restore the peoples' confidence that crime can be reduced and that quality of life can be significantly improved.

Discussion of Relevant Issues

I agree with Kelling and Stewart (1989) when they describe a transcendental approach to what neighborhoods all across the country have evolved:

Today, the case for the devolution of power and control over services, indeed, the case for a self-help approach to problem solving, has spread from the intellectual and political elite to residents within communities and neighborhoods. No longer are citizens in many communities willing to hear from remote politicians what government cannot do and citizens should not do; citizens are demanding new kinds of accountability and responsibility; and neighborhoods are becoming sources of polity rather than mere locales in which people live and work.

The problem as I see it, is that while it can be argued that "if we believe that the origins of many problems are within neighborhoods and involve disputes, disorders and conflict, as well as serious crime, a more proper presentation of police is that of problem identifiers, dispute resolvers, and managers of relations - not merely persons authorized to arrest criminals" (Kelling 1989). Shifting gears in this respect, the Resident Officer Program has clearly redefined the roles of the police in the neighborhoods.

LAPD Chief Willie Williams posits that some of the upper echelon in the department adamantly believe that the prioritizing of the department's resources "should be the exclusive purview of law enforcement's professional's" (1996). Chief Williams categorizes this shift in priorities as "cost-benefit". By alerting the public to the various choices to be made and the cost of said choices - many of them difficult - the citizens will be in a better position to assist us in prioritizing our services.

Echoing these sentiments is former LAPD Chief Daryl Gates when he asserts that the "public's perception of what needs to be done is often at odds with that of the police" (1992). Chris Braiden (1997) suggests that who is better able to tell the citizens what service they should receive rather than the police? Most police agencies do in fact dictate the level of service provided to the public because we (the police) have the monopoly -" we are the only market in town". This is why the Resident Officer Program is such a valued asset to the community and to the Pasadena Police Department. This, in part is due to its characterization as "comprehensive neighborhood management" by performing the following roles:

- . controlling gangs
- . assisting the elderly
- . developing youth programs
- . organizing neighborhood cleanup campaigns
- . working with code enforcement and HUD officers in an effort to enforce nuisance abatement
- . graffiti removal
- . coordinate other city services

It is evident that the Resident Officer Program performs each of these functions which reflect the public's needs in a collaborative effort to promote public safety. What follows is that the priorities of the police in general have gradually changed over time, with emphasis now being placed on "peripheral" activities such as neighborhood decay and the like. Carter (1996) posits that when "officers begin performing diverse tasks that produce a better quality of life for citizens, they build broader expectations in the publics' mind about what the police should do" (p.

81). "Officers, when assigned to a permanently assigned district or even more specific, a neighborhood - are in the best position to observe, identify and solve problems from the bottom up". (Goldstein, 1990). More often than not, this radical change in policing has spurred hot debate: "Are they (police) agents or servants of the neighborhoods?" (Kelling, 1989).

While it can be argued that the Resident Officer Program is a "break" from the traditional, reactive model of policing, distinctions should be made between two concepts of policing which serve as a basic foundation for its expansion into other high crime neighborhoods. Larry Hoover (1996) best illustrates these distinctions as follows:

Problem - oriented interventions may involve modifying a community's infrastructure, but there is an end point to the intervention. Changes are made and the police "withdraw". It is an intermediate level of order maintenance responsibility. This is not so with community-oriented policing. The police come to a neighborhood, and are there to stay as generalist government agents responsible for the quality of life in the microcommunity.

"Agents or Servants?", certainly this issue deserves further explanation but for purposes of brevity will be omitted, for it is far beyond the scope of this research to entertain such a claim.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research project has been to assess the need to expand the Resident Officer Program to other targeted neighborhoods throughout the city of Pasadena. By implementing the Resident Officer Program, city and police officials have taken a more responsive approach to the needs of the neighborhood - an approach worthy of expansion. What the program intended to accomplish was to establish a partnership between the officer and his/her neighbors in an attempt to identify various criminal and social issues which affect the police, community and the quality of life in the targeted neighborhoods, and cooperatively develop and

implement solutions to their various issues. My position is that the program has accomplished these goals and should therefore be expanded to other neighborhoods.

Based upon a written survey of the residents who live in the target neighborhood only six months after the program's implementation, 98 percent of the respondents felt that it should be expanded to other neighborhoods in the city. Additionally, preliminary findings also suggest that the respondents in the neighborhood felt that the Resident Officer Program had a positive impact on the reduction of crime and gang activity and by motivating the citizenry to form alliances and associations to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Realistically speaking, the weaknesses inherent in this research project is the fact that empirical proof that the Resident Officer Program's impact on controlling crime throughout the neighborhood is lacking. Additional scientific research is therefore needed to gauge the Resident Officer's impact on crime effectiveness.

While still in its infancy, the Resident Officer Program has demonstrated to be a worthwhile, highly regarded program. The changes accomplished thus far in such a short period of time indicate that further expenditure of funds and personnel needed to expand this program are warranted. By forming alliances with the various businesses and civic organizations throughout the city, we can develop a method of securing the necessary housing needed to reach out to other areas of the city. By creating a network of resident officers, each structuring their program to the needs of their particular neighborhood, while at the same time coordinating efforts in areas of substantial concern, we can forge a cost-effective platform in the areas of problem-solving and community policing which will consequently set the standards by which future such programs will be judged.

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