LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING: A FEASIBILITY STUDY

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THE MIDLAND ENVIRONMENT

The city of Midland, Texas is located between Dallas/Ft. Worth and El Paso, along Interstate 20 in West Texas. The city is primarily dependent on the cil and gas industry to employ its citizens. The estimated population of the city is 100,000. Of this population, 12 percent are black. 30 percent are Hispanic and 58 percent are white. The city government is a mayor-council form of government and one council member is elected from each political precinct.

The city's police department is composed of 208 employees, of which 157 are sworn police officers. These men and women are dedicated to the protection of life and property and the maintenance of peace within the community. The city's crime rate is well below the national and state averages, in comparison to other cities of the same size. However, Midland has encountered the same problems as many other cities, with a growing drug abuse problem, increases in property crimes, and increases in armed robberies.

Midland, currently experiencing a depressed oil and gas market, is finding that the city's resources and funds are limited. The police department is presently suffering from a manpower shortage and tight budget restraints.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ιn	tr	0	du	C	-	ic	n				,																							100
Hi	st	0	rv			•								*	8									*		,		4	*			•		200
ih	at		Is		C	or:	ı mı	ur	ì	ty	/	O:	- 1	er	t	ed		20	1	i	c	ir	g	?				-		٠			1	C
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Co	nc	1:	.15	i		n				*											*								•				2	(0)
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INTRODUCTION:

In these times of rapid social change, soaring crime rates. overcrowded prisons, and growing drug abuse problems. law enforcement must make a commitment to stem this tide of wholesale criminal activity in the communities of America. Furthermore. law enforcement agencies across the nation must be creative and strive for new citizen oriented programs to assist in the reduction and deterrence of crime in these affected and infected communities. Law enforcement must obligate itself to enhance the quality of life in all communities, and to reduce the fear of crime for all citizens. This is a large undertaking for the police in America: however, many police agencies across the country have already begun to address these problems. Agencies, such as in Dallas, Houston, New York City, and San Diego, have begun citizen oriented programs to deter and reduce criminal activity in their respective communities. With these citizen oriented programs, the police have reached out and invited the citizen to assist in a joint effort to deter crime, and to put oride back into the community. Therefore, the first important step of a quality program has been taken.

The quality of citizen oriented programs depends entirely on attitudes. First, the attitudes of the police must be changed to respond to the needs of the community. Second, the attitudes of the public must be changed toward the police. The public, for the most part, perceives the police as reactionary by nature and ineffective as protectors of life and property. In many cases, the public is frightened of the police. Why does such a rift

perceives the police as ineffective? To answer these questions, and to find that one important ingredient to change the attitudes of the police towards each other, one must look to the past to see the future.

HISTORY:

The purpose of this brief overview of the history of law enforcement has three primary objectives: first, to follow the idiom of law enforcement in America, second, to find how the rift between the police and public began, and third, to find that important ingredient to incorporate the public in assisting the police to deter criminal activity. To follow the idiom of law enforcement in America, one must look to the origin, "Mother England".

In 1829. Sir Robert Peel sponsored a bill creating the London Metropolitan Police. This bill encompassed the visions of what Sir Pobert Peel thought a police organization should be. He believed that the police should be uniformed, control crimes and disorders by preventive patrol, paid, and be organized in a quasi-military command. Sir Robert Peel saw the London Metropolitan Police as a proactive or preventive organization, thus, the beginnings of modern English policing was established.

The early preventive tactics of the Metropolitan police were successful, and crime and disorder declined. The police proved their worth by putting down riots in London and in Birmingham, England. Although the police were mainly the preventers of crime and disorders, they took on other duties of public service. They not only filled the community's needs as watchmen, but also took on several other duties including lamplighter, calling time and watching for fires. After proving such worth and benefit to society, the Metropolitan police was accepted by the people of London. Moreover, the London Metropolitan police was considered as a model for law enforcement

in America.

In 1844. New York City combined the day and night watch to form the first organized police department in the U.S. New York fashioned the police department after the London Metropolitan police. Boston and Philadelphia followed a short time later. None of these colics departments were uniforms until 1855. At this time in history the police and the idea of policing spread quickly. In ten years, cities as far west as Milwaukee had created police departments. The police were organized in a quasi-military command structure. Their task was the prevention of crime and disorder, and they provided a wide array of services to the public. Each city created its own police department and each political precinct and ward were responsible for hiring its own police, causing decentralization of the police and developing relatively autonomous police units. The police established close relations with the neighborhoods and neighborhood leaders in which they lived and worked. Decentralization of the police had one major strength, it gave police close contact with the public. The police knew the citizens and this allowed the police to spot troublemakers. identify local problems, and provide an array of public services to the residents.

During the 1900s, pressures for reform started within the police system. The most notable representative of police reform was August Vollmer. Vollmer began his career in 1905, as the head of a six man police department in Berkeley. California. Vollmer offered a vision of policing around which the nation's police rallied.

In this time period, prohibition was at its worst. The police came to be symbolized by Hollywood as inept and venal. The creation of the Keystone Cops was reflective of the Hollywood concept of police. During this time period the police were struggling with corruption within the ranks fueled by bootlegging profits, and public confidence declined. Vollmer and his colleagues were concerned with these turns of events, and the effect on the broad social issues of policing. The change in social morals, increases in crime, and corruption were seen by the reform-minded police as symptoms of erosion of the family, church, schools, and neighborhoods.

American youth. In Volimer's view, the police should continue their traditional law enforcement role by making arrests and processing adults and juveniles through the court system.

However, Volimer also saw a need for juvenile bureaus to handle problem children and problems within the family. Furthermore, Volimer saw the police mission as one that would take a more active role in case work for social agencies, exploit their expert knowledge of the community, and place themselves at the hub of community activities with youth and families. Vollmer gave the police an ideal to strive toward.

Vollmer's protege, G. W. Wilson, became the architect of the new police model. Wilson believed that instead of broadening the police mission as Vollmer had proposed, the responsibilities of the police should be narrowed. This new model of policing concentrated on combating street crime. The close ties with the

community were broken, police no longer patrolled areas in which they lived, assignments were changed often, and the police began to use automobiles for patrol. Civil service was created to break political ties and to promote officers. The basic police authority was centralized and modified from law and politics to law only (criminal law). This model of policing has dominated in the U.S. even today.

Until the 1930s and 1940s, police tactics were based on crime prevention and conspicuous foot patrol. As the automobile became a more important aspect of the American way of life, and reform minded chiefs broke police officer's ties to the neighborhoods, more of the officers were assigned to the automobile. The motorization of the police was completed by the end of World War II.

The rationale for the police using automobiles for anti-crime patrol was manifold. Police administrators believed that police cars moving randomly and quickly through the city streets would create a feeling of police omnipresence, to deter criminals and assure the citizens of their safety. One of the primary goals for the police was to respond to any crime within three minutes. Police administrators saw this quick response as essential to deter criminal activity and reduce the fear of crime to the citizen.

In the 1960s, police strategies underwent a crisis. With the riots of Los Angeles, civil disorders, and minority unrest, the hostility towards the police was at its peak. The minority community resented tactics by the police to suppress civil disorders and enforce the laws. The minority leaders saw the

police to suppress civil disorders and enforce the laws. The minority leaders saw the police as brutal and harsh in the handling of civil disorders. Furthermore, the minorities believed that the police caused many of the civil disorders by their tactics. During this time of high tension and civil unrest, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Crime was critical of other criminal justice agencies and their strategies. The President's Commission continued to endorse both preventive patrol and rapid response to calls by the police. This commission agreed that improvement of policing would come as a result of fine-tuning police organizations. equipment. and that the basic strategy of policing was satisfactory. 10 Police community relations programs were proposed to offset the negative results of preventive patrol. Even though the President's Commission reported that crime could be controlled by preventive patrol and rapid response, the fear of crime was ascalating more rapidly than crime itself. Citizens refrained from using public and private facilities, took self defensive measures, abandoned city streets and parks, and in many cases, abandoned the inner cities as well. 11 Research studies were initiated to identify the necessary action needed to reverse these trends.

The 1970s and 1980s were the eras of research for policing. Strong anti-crime efforts were developed in the U.S. Although the police were instrumental in the development of many anti-crime programs, hany cities with traditional strong neighborhoods created their own programs. Research revealed that

anti-crime groups were relatively effective in deterring crime and reducing the fear of crime in neighborhoods. Police experience and research suggests that police action, in itself, is limited in its ability to prevent and investigate crime. ¹² To be effective, the police must return to the neighborhoods and work closely with the citizens.

The most promising development in the U. S. today is community oriented policing. Many of the major cities have either implemented this type of program or are experimenting with it. Community oriented policing is an attempt to reintegrate the police officer into the community, to change the community's attitudes toward the police, and reduce criminal activity. This program is possibly the policing model of the future. What is community oriented policing? Is it something new, and what is the impact on the community?

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING?

The philosophies of the concept of community oriented policing guides and directs the police to be responsive to the needs of the public. It is an attempt to bring officers closer to the communities served, to improve the rapport with community residents. ¹⁴ This rapport fosters a two-way exchange of information between the police and the public. With the initiation of this exchange of information from the public, the police can better understand the needs and concerns of the citizen.

Information is the lifeblood of police work. Acquiring, processing, and interpreting information are critical elements of any effort to deal with crime and other community concerns.

Without complete and accurate information on an aggregate level, the policing effort is difficult. Linkages between the officers and citizens becomes a critical dimension of law enforcement which may serve to establish a conduit through community needs and values are translated into police activity. The interaction emphasized by community policing programs can be seen as a nexus which transforms officers into proactive agents of social control. 15

The philosophies of community oriented policing not only guides and directs the police officer to acquire information and be responsive to the needs of the community, it also addresses four specific goals which are the essence of the program.

- 1. Problem solving: The community police officer will not only provide traditional police service for the community. but he will also become a problem solver. The officer will also work in partnership with community organizations and individual citizens to deliver a comprehensive set of services through referrals, interventions, and linkages with governmental agencies. 16
- 2. To deter and prevent crime: The community police officer will not only use traditional methods to reduce criminal activity, but will organize the neighborhoods to become involved in prime prevention tactics. The officer will attend meetings. host speaking engagements, make business and home visits. participate in juverile activities, and make business and home security checks. With the planning and organizing of these activities, the police officer will assist the citizen to become crime conscious and thus, reduce the amount of crime in the neighborhoods.
- To reduce the fear of crime: In many neighborhoods. the fear of crime tends to escalate faster than crime itself. To reduce the fear of crime in the neighborhoods the community police officer will be conspicuous and highly visible, to project the confidence that crime can be controlled. The officer will interact with the citizen to acquire information and seek advise to address specific problem areas in the neighborhoods. Furthermore, the officer will be community based and be readily accessible to the public. He will work the same neighborhood. day in and day out, and week in and week out, to develop a

rapport with the citizens and to project a positive image of the police. With his high visibility, accessibility, rapport with the public, and with his conspicuous presence, he will give the citizens a sense of safety. Therefore, he will be successful in reducing the fear of crime in the neighborhoods that he serves.

4. To enhance the quality of life for all citizens:

The community police officer will not only enhance the quality of life of the citizens by controlling crime, he will assist the citizens in solving a multitude of neighborhood problems. These problems will range from the clean-up of the neighborhood environment to crisis management interventions. He will be the link between local covernment and social agencies to deliver a solution to virtually any neighborhood problem. With the assistance of the citizens, the officer will address these problems and deliver a satisfactory solution to enhance the quality of life for all citizens. Therefore, the philosophies of the concept of community oriented policing assists to identify responsibilities of both, the police officer and the citizens, as they attempt to resolve problems in the neighborhood. These philosophies allow the police officer to attain these specific goals to affect the concept of community oriented policing philosophies. However, for the police to attain these goals and to implement a quality community priented policing program. it must involve continuous planning and adjustments by both the police and the citizens.

Probably the most researched, successful, and effective community oriented program is the Flint neighborhood foot patrol

experiment. Research has revealed that through the Flint experiment the foct patrol officer has become a catalyst in the community and has projected a positive image of the police to the citizens. Therefore, the Flint experiment should be addressed at this time.

In January 1979, the Flint, Michigan police department was provided a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott foundation to provide funding for the implementation of an experimental community based foot patrol program.

Flint's neighborhood foot patrol program was unique in a variety of ways. It emerged from an initiative which integrated citizens into the planning and implementation process through city wide neighborhood meetings in 1977 and 1978. It attempted to ameliorate three distinct problems: (1) the absence of comprehensive neighborhood organizations and services; (2) the lack of citizen involvement in crime prevention; and (3) the depersonalization of interactions between officers and residents. The program began in 1979 and consisted of twenty-two foot patrol officers, assigned to fourteen experimental areas, that included twenty percent of the city's population. The activities of the foot patrol officer addressed seven basic goals:

- To decrease the amount of actual or perceived criminal activity.
- To increase the citizen's perception of personal safety.
- To deliver to Flint residents a type of law enforcement service consistent with the community needs and ideals of modern police practice.

- 4. To create a community awareness of crime problems and methods of increasing law enforcement's ability to deal with actual or potential criminal activity effectively.
- To develop ditizen volunteer action and support of, and under the direction of, the police department, simed at various target crimes.
- To eliminate citizen apathy about reporting crime to the police.
- To increase protection for women, children, and aged.

The Flint programs were a radical change from the traditional role of policing. Flint's foot patrol was taken out of the downtown areas and placed in the neighborhoods to be accessible to all types of socioeconomic groups. The foot patrol officer did more than just involve the citizen in crime prevention efforts and organizing reighborhood watches. He became a catalyst in the community, delivering a comprehensive set of services through referrals, interventions, and links to governmental and social agencies. 19

The foot patrol officers not only provided the traditional reactive police service, but they hade a conscious effort to focus on the social service aspect of their job, bringing problems to a resolution. The foot patrol officer developed a relationship with the citizens since they worked the same area. day after day, and week after week. These foot patrol officers began to identify problems and gained the cooperation of the citizen to solve these problems. The foot patrol officer gained such respect in the community that a trust was built between the police officer and the citizens. Therefore, the citizens were willing to share information and advice with the foot patrol officer. He addressed many community-level problems by targeting

specific troubled areas around the reighborhood, therefore, the citizen felt safer and were satisfied with the program. In fact, the program was so successful that the prime rate decreased in these targeted areas by 8.7 percent and the calls for service decreased a dramatic 42 percent. The reduction of calls for service received by the Flint Police Department was attributed to citizens in the targeted areas handling minor neighborhood problems themselves. The Flint experiment was such a success that the citizens of Flint passed a tax increase in 1982, to expand the foot patrol program to the entire city. The citizens also passed a tax increase in 1985 to continue and maintain the present sixty-four foot patrol beats.

The Flint experiment demonstrated that the good neighbors in every community are willing to assist the police by providing information to a police officer that they know and trust. The Flint foot patrol officers reported they often received information at less risk than undercover officers and they felt safer while walking their beats. The Flint experiment gave the police an opportunity to interact with the citizens and to tap their thoughts, ideas, needs, perceptions and facts about incidents. The Flint experiment also gave the taxpayers a voice in the deployment of the police, and a right to decide on the process of policing.

The Flint neighborhood foot patrol experiment continues to be the subject of much research and study. This research ranges from how the public perceives the foot patrol to the impact of foot patrol on the community. Robert Trojanowicz and Bonnie

Pollard designed and conducted an interesting study entitled.

Community Policing: "The Line Officer's Perspective". This study entailed numerous questions pertaining to how the foot patrol officers perceived themselves. This research revealed some very interesting responses from the foot patrol officers.

The research revealed that the foot patrol officer felt more a part of the community, felt more involved in community groups, and felt more responsible for people on their beats.

Furthermore, the foot patrol officer had greater job satisfaction and felt safer while at work.

This study demonstrates that the reintegration of the police into the neighborhoods, interacting with the citizens, can not only be beneficial to the police, but also to the community.

The concept of community oriented policing is nothing new to the police profession. Theoretically, numerous police departments across the country have developed programs to work closely with the public. Some of these programs were successful while some were not. Experience has demonstrated that the factor of success depends on the ability of the police to change. The implementing and maintaining of a quality community priented policing program requires changes in the philosophies and values of the police department. Therefore, the police strategy and tactics must change to fit the needs of the community, where there is diversification of the kinds of programs and services on the basis of community needs and where there is considerable involvement of the community with the police in reaching their objectives. 21

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING:

The positive aspects of community briented policing evidently outweigh the negative aspects. However, the need to address the negative aspects of community oriented policing is in order. The following are concerns and problems that affect community oriented policing:

- 1. Citizen participation: The concerns of police officers who are involved in immunity oriented policing experiments have indicated problems with citizen participation. According to Officer Rick Retz. the coordinator of the Houston Police Department community oriented policing experiment, "... the community tends to relax and participation decreases as the problems of crime and the fear of crime are reduced in the neighborhood." Officer Retz also stated that, "... citizens tended to have a quick burn-out ratio where their expectations are not met quickly enough. This problem lies equarely on the shoulders of the community police officer to affect continuous involvement and participation from the citizen."
- 2. Movement of the criminal element: The city of Terrell. Texas Police Department implemented a community oriented policing program and targeted a specific area that was infested with the sale and abuse of narcotics. The police department used a saturation technique to attempt to control the sale and use of narcotics in the targeted area. The police department also attempted to involve the residents of the targeted area to assist the police in solving these problems. According to Deputy Chief Jim Donaldson, of the Terrell Police Department. "... the program

was effective and the sale and use of narcotics was decreased, due to the efforts of the citizens and police officers. We have seen that the criminal element has moved from the targeted area to the selling and using of narcotics from inside vehicles. Therefore, the criminal element has become harder to detect and has moved to a different area of the community."

Resistance to change is the inevitable by-product of any social experiment, regardless of the setting, employees, whether laborers or professionals, tend to resist changes that affect their jobs, and the police officers are no exception. Adding to this reluctance to change is the fact that police officers are very conservative, making them even more resistant to change. Their very nature heightens that tendency towards conservatism. The police officer is confronted daily with a barrage of human crises, focusing almost exclusively on the results of human failure and error, not success. The police officer spends his day dashing from call to call in a climate of high stress and dangerous situations. This further complicates his role and mandate to enforce the law as it is, not always as the community wants the law enforced.

These factors contribute to the feelings of the police officers' reluctance to change. In many cases, the police officer feels that community oriented programs are a waste of time and not real "police work", but only a "grin-and-wave squad." Therefore, the police officer can be the greatest threat to the concept of community oriented policing.

To resolve this dilemma. It would behave the police administrator to analyze and scrutinize departmental philosophies, values, and mission statements to determine if these policies move toward the community priented policing philosophies.

CONCLUSION:

The realization that the police have become alienated from the public, and that quick response and preventive patrol have little affect on criminal activity, prompted research to address the isolation and ineffectiveness of the present traditional model of policing. Researchers have revealed that the police officer should be reintegrated into the community to interact with the citizen. The development of the philosophies of community priented policing were established. These philosophies identify specific goals and concerns to bring the police officer into the community. The police officer will project a positive image while initiating activities to enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

The concept of community oriented policing is possibly the future policing model of decades to come. This concept addresses many aspects of assisting the community to solve problems and to create a positive atmosphere for both the police and the public. With the assistance of the public, the police will project that image and confidence that some control of criminal activity in our society is possible. There are however, negative aspects of community oriented policing.

Many police administrators argue that community oriented programs are not cost effective or productive, and that the reduction in criminal activity is minimal. They also argue that the concept of community oriented policing places the police officer in a position to become politically corrupt.

Furthermore, they feel that this type of program will not mesh

with the high technology of today's police departments.

There are many pros and cons to the aspects of community oriented policing. The positive and negative aspects of this program may be argued for many years to come. However, the real success of a quality community oriented policing program depends on the ability of the police to change. The philosophies of the traditional police model require change to address the needs and concerns of the community. Without the change in these philosophies of the police, a program such as community oriented policing will not be successful.

In summation, to implement a quality and successful community oriented program, the police must take the initiative and demonstrate to the public compassion, caring, and concern of the community's needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following recommendations are for the purpose of implementation of community oriented policing within the city of Midland, Texas. These recommendations are based on an experimental or targeted area versus city-wide implementation.

- 1. Change in philosophies: To implement a quality and successful community priented policing program, the police administrator must analyze the present police mission of the Midland Police Department, to determine if the philosophies and values of the department are consistent with the concept of community priented policing. These philosophies and values should be to direct and guide the police to be responsive to the public's needs.
- 2. <u>Commitments</u>: It is necessary for the city government to make a total commitment to provide essential funding and city services to initiate quality community oriented program. Without these commitments from elected officials, the mission of community oriented policing would be in serious jeopardy. It is obligatory that the city government realize that funding and city services are important to affect quality community oriented policing programs. Without this total commitment by city government, the networking system of the program will fail.

The police must obligate themselves to deploy the necessary manpower to affect a smooth implementation of the program in the targeted area. This program requires the support and total commitment from the entire police department. Without this total commitment, the program will be difficult to maintain.

3. Citizen surveys: The initiation of a survey by the police department is necessary to determine the problems and concerns of the targeted area. These surveys should consist of criteria that effectively determine the needs, wants, ideals, and perceptions of the neighborhoods. These surveys should be distributed to a cross section of the neighborhood, to understand how the public perceives the police and how they would like to be policed.

The purpose of the survey is manifold: first, to gather pertinent information and input from the public, second, to assist the police in determining specific problems affecting the neighborhood. This information is critical in determining how to plan and develop a quality program.

4. Selection of personnel: The most important characteristic of community oriented policing is the selection of the most qualified personnel. The community police officer should have self motivation, be independent, and innovative. The officer should also have quality communication skills.

compassion, taking and be friendly. These qualifications are necessary and important to ensure a quality program.

The community police officer will not only serve as a catalyst in the community, but he will also perform the traditional functions of policing. The officer will make apprehensions and calls for service in the designated area. He will maintain the highest degree of communication with the citizen to project a positive image of the police to the neighborhood. The selection of quality personnel is essential to a successful community program.

- 5. <u>Decentralization</u>: Once the program is in place, it will be necessary that the police officer be community based to be accessible to the public. Therefore, it is necessary that these officers assigned to the targeted area be decentralized from the police department. The community police officer will receive and answer calls from a community based center, located within the neighborhood. This concept gives the citizen an opportunity to interact with the same police officer, day in and day out. This concept of community oriented policing is important to develop a trust between the citizen and police officer.
- A. Equipment: The community based police officer should have the necessary equipment to perform virtually any task to deter or prevent crime in the community. This equipment could consist of bicycles, which would have a two-fold purpose. First, officers could move quietly and efficiently through neighborhoods that are experiencing increases in home burglaries; second, the officer will be in better condition to comply with current departmental policy in regards to physical fitness.

Patrol vehicles should also be utilized to respond quickly to crimes in progress and citizens in need of police services. The patrol vehicle can also be used in conjunction with directed foot patrol activities in the targeted area.

7. Personnel evaluation: This recommendation of personnel evaluation is being addressed at this time because of the importance of such evaluations. The police administrator and mid-level management must understand that with the implementation

Department, that the present evaluation system of personnel will drastically change. The current system provides evaluation of the officer's productivity by means of numbers of apprehensions and traffic violation citations. The community based police officer should not be evaluated under the present system. This officer should be evaluated by his activity in the community and his problem solving abilities. It is imperative that the present policy of evaluation be changed to be consistent with the philosophies of community priented policing.

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