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**RETROSPECTIVE ON THE
COMMUNITY SAFE ZONE PROJECT**

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ABSTRACT

Making citizens feel safe and improving their quality of life has become a universal policing task. Crime and its prevention has become the number one priority in many nations of the world. Crime must be seen and addressed in its proper text. This paper attempts to present crime in its proper context. That is, crime is a symptom not a cause. It is a symptom signifying that other things are not occurring in the community; namely: economic opportunities, educational opportunities, housing, and health issues unsolved. This paper presents a strategy used to make people feel safer and improve their quality of life.

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RETROSPECTIVE ON THE COMMUNITY SAFE ZONE PROJECT

Leonard D. Hamm

Introduction

A combination of factors, including the 1960s police-citizen crises in the United States and research findings from the 1970s prompted a shift in the policing paradigm. Often referred to as the “broken windows” thesis, Wilson and Kelling argued that a broken window in an abandoned building or car was a symbol that no one cares about property, making it ripe for criminal activity. Wilson and Kelling stressed the importance of controlling minor crimes and disorders in an effort to curb serious crime. A central thesis emerged where making citizens feel safer and improving their quality of life was to become the goal of the police. This idea sparked the development of a number of different police strategies and tactics designed to improve police community relations.¹ Thus, the early philosophy of community policing was built upon the premise that reducing citizens’ fear of crime while forming a partnership between police and the community should be a goal of police organizations. Experts like Kelling and Moore contend that the shift in the paradigm towards community policing began in the 1970s and 1980s.

While the philosophical and historical origins of community policy can be debated, community policing has always been rooted in a partnership between the police and citizens. The modern community policing movement took hold during the Clinton Administration with the creation in 1994 of the Office of Community Policing (currently the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services) and the Community Policing Consortium. A programmatic and policy face was put on the concept of community policing, and according to the Consortium, “Community policing is democracy in action, and it requires the active participation of local government, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents,

¹ George L. Kelling and Mark H. Moore, “the Evolving Strategy of Policing. Perspectives on Policing”, Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice and John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1988.

churches, schools and hospitals.” In fact, during the Clinton Administration community policing was advocated publicly by both President Clinton and Attorney General Reno as a, “changing of policing.”² Today, the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) defines community policing as a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and the fear of crime (See U.S. Department of Justice Website Office of Community Oriented Policing www.cops.usdoj.gov).

The aforementioned definition provides the backdrop for the thesis of this paper “Retrospective on the Community Safe Zone Project.” The paper examines the concept of community policing from the perspective of an urban city police chief, former Commissioner of the City of Baltimore Police Department, Leonard D. Hamm.³ The Community Safe Zones Project implemented in Baltimore City during the tenure of Commissioner Hamm serves as a best practices model for successful community policing strategies. The focus of the paper is designed to be consistent with the theme for this Symposium, “Policing, the Private Sector, Economic Development & Social Change: Contemporary Trends.”

The Community Safe Zone Project

In 2005, the Baltimore Police Department developed and implemented a neighborhood stabilization strategy called the Community Safe Zone Project (CSZP). The Community Safe Zone Project was initially launched as a pilot program within the Western District of Baltimore City. After successful implementation of the pilot program, the CSZP was rolled-out as a city-wide program in 2006.⁴

² Community Policing Consortium, “Understanding Community Policing: A Framework for Action”, Washington, D.C., August 1994 Monograph, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The Consortium created the first community policing guide for practitioners, which had been non-existent up until 1994.

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⁴ Hamm Leonard D., and John Skinner, “Baltimore Police Department: Community Safe Zone”, *Police Chief Magazine*, December 2006. The discussion of the Community Safe Zones Project

The purpose of this Community Safe Zone Project was to develop a holistic strategy that prevented drug related violence, restored community stability and promoted police community relations in targeted distressed neighborhoods. The CZSP was initially placed operationally into a targeted neighborhood for a four (4) week (28 day) cycle and was applied through six (6) consistent components:

- Targeted Enforcement
- Redirection of Non-Residential Traffic Patterns
- Coordination of Targeted City Resources
- Coordination and Deployment of Social Service Outreach Teams
- Organization Police Sponsored Community Events
- Implementation of Violence Intervention Program for “High Risk” Juveniles

Through implementation of these six (6) components, the Community Safe Zone Project immediately eradicated patterns of violence and established long term stability within the targeted neighborhood.⁵

Background

The Western District of the City of Baltimore, Maryland comprises an area of approximately three (3) square miles. However, despite its relatively small geographic size, the Western District is home to some of Baltimore’s most violent and distressed neighborhoods. Within many of these neighborhoods, patterns of violence become systemic within the fabric and culture of the community. Since 1970, there have been over 1,700 murders within the Western District, with an annual average of over 48 murders per year. It was quite common for neighborhoods within the Western District to experience significant patterns of violence within very short periods of time. Often traditional law enforcement strategies and the progression of criminal investigations lacked the ability to quickly stabilize a neighborhood.

presented herein is based on the article published in the December 2006 issue of the *Police Chief Magazine*.

⁵ Sparks, Leonard, “Police Initiative Carves Out Pocket of Peace”, *Afro-American Newspaper*, October 12, 2006.

For example, within the neighborhood of Calhoun, Baker and Stricker, eight (8) incidents of outside shootings / homicides occurred during a five (5) month period (January 2005 to May 2005). Over the course of this period an aggressive enforcement strategy coupled with the investigation of these incidents was undertaken by the Baltimore City Police in this area. However, despite the dedication of consistent enforcement resources the neighborhood remained destabilized with violence and narcotics trafficking unabated merely displaced to different time periods. The Community Safe Zone Project was implemented within this neighborhood in May 2005 and brought an immediate reduction of violence to the neighborhood, which has remained consistent since being implemented.

Program Implementation

Targeted Enforcement: As a prelude to launching the Community Safe Zone Project pilot program in the Western District, the Baltimore City Police Department utilized intelligent policing to identify violent offenders, narcotic traffickers, and habitual violators of the law, who were residing in the Western district, as well as persons living outside of the District who had contacts with such persons in the District. Once these individuals were identified in the targeted neighborhood, they were notified and required to report to the Western District Police Station House. The City Police Department assembled police officers from special units, state and federal prosecutors, as well as law enforcement officials from the FBI, DEA, ATF and the Maryland State Police. The goal of the intervention was to send a message to these know offenders to either stop your illegal activity, move out of the neighborhood, or face the possibility of prosecution to the fullest extent under law. By targeting these individuals and prompting many to move from the neighborhood, the Baltimore City Police Department was able to implement the first pilot program under the Community Safe Zone Project.

Redirection of Non Residential Traffic Patterns: Within targeted CSZP neighborhoods, it was determined that open air drug markets contributed significantly to the patterns of violence occurring within the neighborhood.

Through a variety of enforcement based initiatives the Baltimore City Police Department determined that the majority of narcotic “dealers” and “buyers” did not live within the neighborhoods where they were trafficking drugs. In addition to the neighborhood outsiders, fear prevented residents from participating in the eradication of crime or in efforts to re-establish control of their neighborhood.

Based on this evidence, the Community Safe Zone Project included a strategy where non-residential traffic within a 10 square block radius was redirected away from the impacted neighborhood. Through the use of signage and police barricades Police Community Relations Officers deterred individuals intent on unlawful activity (drug trafficking) from entering the impacted neighborhood. Residents living within the 10 block Community Safe Zone Project area were educated in advance of the changes related to new traffic patterns and were provided information on how to enter their neighborhood with little inconvenience. The redirection of traffic patterns was implemented every day for a four (4) week period. In addition, the Police Community Relations Officers would walk the entire Community Safe Zone neighborhood, going door-to-door, visiting residents and handing out crime prevention information.⁶

The use of police barricades and the redirection of traffic patterns immediately created confusion within the illegal drug market. By deterring drug buyers from entering the neighborhood, supply and demand for illegal drugs was instantly disrupted. As a result, the open air drug markets immediately died and vanished from the targeted neighborhood. Patterns of violence immediately decreased and the stability within the neighborhood was restored. With this restoration of stability, officers found residents more willing to start working with Police Community Relations Officers in creating “Block Watch” and “Citizen on Patrol” programs. This bond of trust is core to any community policing strategy, as well as to the success of the CSZP.⁷

Coordination of Targeted City Resources: Research has proven that the physical appearance of a neighborhood can often contribute to patterns of crime

⁶ Hamm Leonard D., and John Skinner, “Baltimore Police Department: Community Safe Zone”, *Police Chief Magazine*, December 2006.

⁷ Hamm Leonard D., and John Skinner, “Baltimore Police Department: Community Safe Zone”, *Police Chief Magazine*, December 2006.

and violence. As criminologist George Kelling (1996) explains in his theory called “Broken Windows,” that trash, vacant housing and graffiti can all create the impression that a neighborhood is in a state of complete deterioration. This state of deterioration encourages the criminal element and contributes to residential fear of crime.

Through the Community Safe Zone Project the Baltimore City Police Department coordinated the implementation of city resources into the targeted West Baltimore neighborhood. This coordination of City of Baltimore resources focused efforts, in part, on improving the quality of life among residents through physical improvements. These physical improvements included:

- Removal of trash and debris from streets and alleyways
- Boarding and securing of all vacant dwellings
- Removal of graffiti
- Repair of street lighting
- Removal of gang monikers from trees and poles
- General repair of streets and alleyways
- Installation of Overt Police Camera Systems (PODSS)

As a result of these physical improvements, residents became encouraged about the positive changes to their neighborhood.⁸ These physical improvements also reinforced the basic principle that criminal and drug related activity would not be tolerated within the neighborhood. The installation of the overt camera systems called PODSS (Portable Overt Digital Surveillance System) also provided tangible evidence that the changes to the neighborhood were permanent and provided a strong deterrent against criminal activity in the neighborhood.

Deployment of Social Outreach Teams: In addition to the coordination of City Resources, the Baltimore Police Department aggressively solicited private and nonprofit organizations to participate in the Community Safe Zone Project. Participating private and nonprofit organizations were clustered together into Social Outreach Teams. These teams were then deployed into the targeted

⁸ Hamm Leonard D., and John Skinner, “Baltimore Police Department: Community Safe Zone”, *Police Chief Magazine*, December 2006.

neighborhood staffing booths, walking door-to-door, meeting residents and providing a wide-range of services. Over the course of the four (4) week Safe Zone period, 40 different agencies and organizations contacted residents within the targeted neighborhoods to offer services such as lead paint testing, drug treatment, parental counseling, job placement, and child mentoring.⁹

Police Sponsored Community Events: Over the course of a four (4) week Safe Zone period, the Baltimore Police Department sponsored three (3) regular community events within each of the targeted neighborhoods. These community events were comprised of three (3) themes: Job Resource Fair, Youth Night and a Health Fair. During these community events, public and private agencies intermingled with residents and provided valuable information concerning resources. These events allowed the residents to interact with the Baltimore City Police Department in non-traditional settings and generally improved police community relations within the neighborhoods, representing an exemplary public-private partnership model.¹⁰

During October 2005 in the Penrose and Payson Safe Zone in the Western District, the Baltimore City Police Department along with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods sponsored a Youth Night Community Event where over 500 pumpkins were distributed to every child within the neighborhood. The pumpkins provided a powerful symbolic message to all the residents that the quality of life within the neighborhood was improving.

Violence Intervention Program: In January 2006, the Baltimore Police Department built upon the foundation of the Community Safe Zone Project by creating a police based intervention program that targeted "high-risk" juveniles in Safe Zone neighborhoods. The Baltimore City Police Department worked in partnership with the Department of Juvenile Services to implement a seven (7) week program that paired juveniles on probation with police officer mentors. Through this program, juveniles on probation were mandated to attend dynamic

⁹ Hamm Leonard D., and John Skinner, "Baltimore Police Department: Community Safe Zone", *Police Chief Magazine*, December 2006.

¹⁰ Hamm Leonard D., and John Skinner, "Baltimore Police Department: Community Safe Zone", *Police Chief Magazine*, December 2006.

weekly sessions that focused on conflict resolution, violence interdiction and goal development. These weekly sessions were organized in the following manner:

- Week 1: Open / Community Conferencing – Through a Community Conferencing Facilitator, juveniles and police officers discussed police community relations.
- Week 2: North American Family Institute – Juveniles and police officers participated in a team building ropes course.
- Week 3: University of Maryland Shock Trauma – Juveniles and police officers met with medical professionals from the University of Maryland to learn about career development.
- Week 4: Bereavement Center – Juveniles and police officers met with family members who had lost loved ones to incidents of street violence.
- Week 5: Police Orientation – Juveniles visited Police Headquarters and learned about policing careers.
- Week 6: “Boys of Baraka” – Juveniles and police officers had a private showing of the award winning film, “Boys of Baraka.”
- Week 7: Graduation and Placement into Baltimore Youth Opportunity Center for job skill training and educational development.

At the conclusion of the Intervention Program, juveniles who participated formally graduated and were enrolled into Baltimore’s Youth Opportunity Center. These Youth Opportunity Centers provide on-going job skills training and educational development.

Program Evaluation: The Community Safe Zone Project was determined to be the most effective community policing tool when used as a violence prevention strategy. Based on this principle, various Baltimore City neighborhoods were selected based on immediate patterns of violence. Similar to the Western District CSZP experiment, the Community Safe Zone Project was deployed into five (5) distressed neighborhoods throughout the City experiencing significant patterns of violence. In each of these neighborhoods the Community Safe Zone Project was the catalyst that disrupted the pattern of violence and provided stability.

Statistical analysis of significant violent crime has shown that after implementation of CSZP, homicide and shooting incidents over a six (6) month period decreased by **86%** in comparison to the prior six (6) month period.¹¹ The analysis indicates that the stability within the targeted neighborhood continued well after the implementation of the four (4) week Community Safe Zone Project. Continued neighborhood stability is a direct reflection of the quality of the physical improvements to the neighborhoods and to the public-private partnership developed during the implementation of Community Safe Zone Project (See Appendix A for data illustrating the reduction in violent crime).

The Community Safe Zone Project implemented in Baltimore City during my tenure as Commissioner proved to be a reliable and holistic community policing strategy that prevents drug related violence, restores community stability and promotes police community relations in distressed neighborhoods. Based on the success established within the Western District, in 2006 the Baltimore Police Department implemented the Community Safe Zone Project as a city-wide best practices strategy. Through the coordination and cooperation of police officers, residents, city workers and the coalition of resources the Community Safe Zone Project is a strong testament to the ability to establish dynamic change in violent distressed neighborhoods. Further, the Community Safe Zone Project is being implemented in other communities outside of Baltimore City, including the City Philadelphia, PA.

a. Public-Private Partnership

In addition to becoming a successful community policing initiative, the Community Safe Zone Project represents the essence of the public-private partnership. Typically, the public-private partnership is viewed as a strategy for economic and community development projects, rather than a mechanism for leveraging community policing initiatives. However, the Community Safe Zone Project mimicked the public-private partnership model being implemented at the time throughout the City of Baltimore on numerous economic and community development projects. For example, almost simultaneously with the implementation of the CSZP there was the creation of the East Baltimore

¹¹ Sparks, Police Initiative Carves Out Pocket of Peace, October 12, 2006.

Development Corporation a public-private partnership in conjunction with the Johns Hopkins Hospital System.

The public-private partnership was designed to create a bio-technology park on 21 acres of land complete with affordable housing, open space, high quality public schools and technology based education and training programs represents two of the core components of community policing: problem solving and community partnership. Incidentally, the location of the bio-tech park was located in one of the most blighted economically distressed communities in the City of Baltimore. The Economic Baltimore Development Corporation, while not in the business of community policing, embarked on an ambitious program to restore community stability in concert with Johns Hopkins Hospital, the local community, including government, police, churches, schools and community based organizations.

b. Community Partnerships and Problem Solving

The Community Safe Zone Project is a successful community policing strategy because it embraces two core components upon which all community policing initiatives should be developed and implemented. There must be a community partnership. Community partnerships imply “establishing and maintaining mutual trust.” Once this mutual trust is established and maintained between the community and the police the community policing strategy can be legitimized. That is, the police become an integral part of the community culture, and the community assists in defining future priorities and in allocating resources.” This is the true hallmark of a community policing program. The CZSP recognized this distinction and incorporated a number of activities outside of the standard law enforcement arena such as education and job training, social and health services, and controlling traffic patterns. While each of the activities alone might not appear significant, the combination of these activities represents a powerful means of establishing bonds of trust with the community.¹²

Another core component of community policing is problem solving. What problem solving does not mean is the simple elimination and prevention of crimes. Problem solving is based on the assumption that “crime and disorder can

¹² Community Policing Consortium, “Understanding Policing: A Framework for Action” (op. cit), pp.15-18.

be reduced in small geographic areas by carefully studying the characteristics of problems in the area, and then applying the appropriate resources...” and on the assumption “individuals make choices based on the opportunities presented by the immediate physical and social characteristics of an area. By manipulating these factors, people will be less inclined to act in an offensive manner.”¹³

According to Eck and Spelman, the problem solving process related to problem oriented policing is simple.

“Underlying conditions create problems. These conditions might include the characteristics of the people involved (offenders, potential victims, and others), the social setting in which these people interact, the physical environments, and the way the public deals with these conditions.

A problem created by these conditions may generate one or more incidents. These incidents, while stemming from a common source, may appear to be different. For example, social and physical conditions in a deteriorated apartment complex may generate burglaries, acts of vandalism, intimidation of pedestrians by rowdy teenagers, and other incidents. These incidents, some of which come to police attention, are symptoms of the problems. The incidents will continue so long as the problem that creates them persists.”¹⁴

Again, the success of the Community Safe Zone Project’s led to city-wide implementation of the program only after it was made operational in one area (the Western District) of the City of Baltimore. Because CZSP was initially limited to a small geographic area, the Police Department was able to tailor the community policing initiative to reflect the realities of the community and utilize the appropriate combination of resources to solve problems. Community involvement was absolutely essential for the CSZP to be successful. Where communities set priorities in conjunction with the police, there is a greater likelihood that there will be effective problem solving. It was the success of the Western District efforts that led to the identification of other areas in the City of Baltimore that

¹³ Ibid, p 15-18.

¹⁴ Eck, John E., and William Spelman, et.al., “Problem Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News, VA, Washington, D.C., Police Executive Research Forum, 1987.

could benefit from the CZSP model, particularly as they related to information sharing and issues of trust.

Global Trends

Implementation of successful policing strategies globally must be the primary goal of developing best practices in community policing such as the Community Safe Zone Project. Notwithstanding the use of some catchy name or other means of creating awareness about a community policing initiative, the premise remains the same. Community policing must include a strategy comprised of two “core components” community partnership and problem solving. While community policing might have its modern roots in the United States, the origins of community policing strategies outside of the United States may well have begun in London, England, where Sir Robert Peel established the London Metropolitan Police, and set forth a number of principles, one of which could be considered the seed of community policing: “...the police are the public and the public are the police.”¹⁵ Community policing strategies are often interwoven with comprehensive economic and community development initiatives in Europe and outside of the United States with the goal of understanding the priorities of the community, while attempting to solve intractable economic and community problems, including drug addiction and other social ills.

In Santa Marta, a Rio de Janeiro shantytown, the state government has implemented a community policing effort. Santa Marta is home to 750 favelas that are home to 1.5 million of the city’s 11 million people. It is an area of Rio de Janeiro notorious for drug gangs, drug trafficking and drug violence. To date, there are mixed reviews related to the community policing effort being implemented by the Pacification Police Unit (UPP). According to published reports, the UPP pilot program that began in Santa Marta, a favela surrounded by a middle-class neighborhood, was expanded west to Bataan and Cidade de Deus (City of God).¹⁶

¹⁵ Braiden, Chris, “Enriching Traditional Police Roles, Police Management: Issues and Perspectives, Washington, D.C., Police Executive Research Forum, 1192, p108.

¹⁶ Fabiana Frayssinet, “BRAZIL: Mixed Reviews for ‘Community Policing’ in Slums, Rio de Janeiro, May 22, 2009 (Interagency Press Services).

The community policing efforts have received mixed reviews, partly because of mistrust of the police and the history of the relations between the security forces and the favelas. In an effort to learn from the lessons of the past, the government's policy incorporates fundamentally important features such as recruiting and training police in community policing. Another relevant aspect of the recently implemented program is the social component, including social spending on health, education, sports and income-generating projects for local inhabitants of the favelas. Here we see the value of integrating social and economic development incentives to make the community policing initiative more attractive to the community, while increasing the likelihood that the community participates in a partnership with police, not dissimilar to the CZSP. Because this is the first effort by the state in Rio de Janeiro to establish a permanent police presence by security forces in a specific geographic area, it is too early to measure the success of the program. However, based on anecdotal accounts, the community policing effort in Rio de Janeiro appears to have succeeded in forging ties of trust as part of the focus on crime prevention.¹⁷

Community policing at the global level is no more than community policing at the local level. Without community policing initiatives at the local level, there would be no global community policing best practices. Community policing was designed to address small geographic areas, although the ultimate goal of a successful community policing strategy is for the community to become seamless in terms of identifying priorities and solving problems whether they be a direct result of crime or a part of the social fabric in the community in question. Communities might not share the same language or religion, but there is one thing for sure people are basically the same no matter what region of the world, what culture or religion, and therefore, their response to crime, social disorder, and the fear of crime are the same.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Community Safe Zone Project being implemented in the City of Baltimore is a testament to the success of the philosophy of community policing. As

¹⁷ Ibid, BRAZIL: Mixed Reviews for 'Community Policing' in Slums, Rio de Janeiro, May, 22, 2009 (Interagency Press Services).

community policing practices continue to evolve, there must be a commitment to collaborative partnerships between law enforcement agencies and the individuals and organizations they serve. In the absence of the community partnership, community policing will not keep pace with the needs of multi-ethnic diverse communities anywhere in the world. Several ideas follow to help improve community policing efforts globally.

- Community policing strategies must be adopted in more communities, particularly where there is an acknowledgement of problems without any ongoing solution.
- Training in community policing is fundamental to the successful implementation of community policing strategies such as the Community Safe Zone Project being implemented in the City of Baltimore.
- Organizational transformation is a critical element of implementing a successful community policing strategy. This entails the alignment of organizational management, structure, personnel, and information systems to support community partnerships and proactive problem solving.
- Community partnerships must represent collaborative partnerships between law enforcement and the individuals and organizations they serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police, including government agencies, community members/groups, nonprofits/service providers, private business and the media.
- A community policing global best practices initiative must be developed to disseminate information about what community policing strategies work.

Appendix A

Analysis of Shooting and Homicide Incidents in Safe Zone Neighborhoods

Safe Zone Location <i>10 Block Radius</i>	Violence Recorded 6 Months Prior to Implementation	Date of Implementation <i>4 Week Project Length</i>	Violence Recorded 6 Months <u>After</u> Implementation
Druid Hill at Whitelock	1 Shooting	April 11	0 Shootings 0 Homicides
Calhoun-Baker- Stricker	5 Shootings 3 Homicides	May 12 (5 weeks)	1 Homicide (inside)
Walbrook at Payson	5 Shootings 2 Homicides	July 5	1 Shooting 1 Homicide
Westwood at McKean	4 Shootings 3 Homicides	August 15	1 Homicide
Penrose at Payson	5 Shootings 1 Homicides	October 17	0 Shootings 0 Homicides
	29 Total Victims		4 Total Victims

Note: Continued analysis beyond the original six (6) month period is being conducted in Community Safe Zone Neighborhoods and preliminary findings suggest that the stability has remained consistent with original findings.



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