



WELLINGTON E. WEBB
Mayor

CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

DENVER POLICE DEPARTMENT
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
1331 CHEROKEE STREET
DENVER, COLORADO 80204-2787
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July 21, 1995

95-19

John Lusardi
Police Executive Research Forum
1120 Connecticut Avenue, North West
Suite 930
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Mr. Lusardi,

Please find the attached summary of a problem solving project tackled by Denver Police Department, District One police officers at Villa Park, a large apartment complex in our city. The approaches taken in addressing the problems at Villa Park were innovative, and successful, as you can see, by the resulting decrease in demands for police services.

An area that was previously a major problem for our District One patrol officers has turned into a neighborhood of citizens who support the efforts of our department.

This problem solving endeavor was completed under the command of Division Chief Daniel J. O'Hayre, who, prior to his recent promotion, was the Captain commanding District One. All of the officers and civilians involved in the project epitomize the highest standards of police professionalism. It is with great pride that I submit this problem solving project for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David L. Michaud".

David L. Michaud
Chief of Police

By: Timothy Leary
Deputy Chief of Police

Marco Keller Vasquez

Permanent Address

4783 So Gar Way
Littleton, Colorado
(303)972-1252

EXPERIENCE:

February 1995
to present

Lieutenant, Vice/Drug Control Bureau

Responsibilities

""Commands the Vice Section and Drug Interdiction Task Force. The Vice Section is responsible for the enforcement of vice related laws in the City and County of Denver. The Interdiction Task Force is a combined local-federal task force comprised of Denver police officers and agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration. This task force is responsible for the interdiction of drugs which enter the City and County of Denver through Denver International Airport, the train and bus stations and the interstate highway systems.

July 1994 to
February 1995

Lieutenant, Internal Affairs Bureau

Responsibilities

- Supervises internal investigations of Denver police officers accused of misconduct. Conducts internal investigations of officers who are the rank of sergeant and above.

Accomplishments

- *Commended by the Chief of Police for role in a complex internal investigation. This investigation required the coordination and supervision of the entire Internal Affairs Bureau.

May 1993 to
July 1994

Lieutenant, Patrol District One

Responsibilities

- Commands patrol officers and supervisors in accomplishment of police mission.
- *Acts as station commander in absence of captain.
- Heads task force meetings involving police and community members, seeking solutions to neighborhood problems.

*Assists captain in determining staffing needs station-wide.

Accomplishments:

- Assisted captain in development of OPTION staffing proposal. District One implemented plan as test district.
- Implemented several successful community oriented policing projects, including long term program to enhance the quality of life in a major housing development.

October 1990 to
May 1993

Sergeant, Crack Task Force

Responsibilities:

- Supervised 6-man team of narcotic detectives in the Crack Task Force.
- Determined goals and objectives for team in drug enforcement duties.
- Trained detectives in appropriate investigative techniques.

Accomplishments:

- Developed new strategies to meet street enforcement demands in crack infested areas city. These techniques were featured on nationally syndicated police show "COPS".
- Began investigation which would later lead to major federal indictments and convictions of international drug traffickers.
- Successfully completed promotional process and was promoted to rank of lieutenant.

February 1990 to
October 1990

Sergeant, Internal Affairs Bureau

Responsibilities

- Conducted investigations into allegations police misconduct.
- Instructed and assisted supervisors in proper disciplinary procedure.

Accomplishments:

- Officially commended by Chief of Police for handling of investigation involving major police-community confrontation. Evaluated the police response to incident.

June 1988 to
February 1990

Sergeant, Patrol District One and Two

Responsibilities

- Supervised patrol officers in performance of police mission.

Accomplishments:

- Appointed to supervise a team of officers in "Special Crime and Tactics" unit of district.

Developed and implemented proactive response to crime problems in community.

*Appointed to the Internal Affairs Bureau by the Chief of Police, due to reputation in department.

March 1982 to
June 1988

Detective, Narcotics Bureau

Responsibilities

*Conducted investigations into drug related offenses in the Denver Area.

•Supervised confidential informants and directed their efforts to accomplishment of the police mission.

*As "Case Agent", coordinated and supervised the efforts of officers from multiple state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Accomplishments:

* Awarded over 35 official commendations, for police actions, including two separate "Merit Awards" for investigation of complex, multi-state drug trafficking organizations.

*Due to reputation as investigator, assigned to position at the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, multi-agency task force.

•Successfully completed promotional process and promoted to rank of sergeant.

•During assignment as narcotics detective, was also trained and assigned as a hostage negotiator. Awarded official commendations for the handling of hostage and barricade incidents.

December 1975 to
March 1982

Officer, Denver Police Department

Responsibilities

•Assigned as a patrol officer in a high crime, minority populated area of Denver

Accomplishments:

•Received over 20 official commendations for police actions and arrests.

•Received appointment to the Vice Bureau, due to reputation as officer.

September 1972 to
December 1975

Cadet, Denver Police Department

Responsibilities

•Performed non-police functions in various bureaus of the Denver Police Department.

•Attended Metropolitan State College.

Accomplishments

•Appointed as a "Cadet Leader" and supervised younger cadets.

•Maintained a 3.0+ GPA (on a 4 point grade scale).

- Appointed as a Denver Police Officer.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY:

- Member of the Mile-High Optimist Club

EDUCATION:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| May 1995 | •Obtained Bachelor of Arts in Management, University of Phoenix at Denver. |
| September 1992 | •Graduated from the "Dale Carnegie" Public Speaking course. |
| 1975 to Present | •Attended over thirty professional and department sponsored classes and seminars, including leadership, management and supervisory courses. |
| June 1975 | •Associate Degree in Applied Science, Criminal Justice from Metropolitan State College, Denver. |

INTERESTS:

- Enjoy hobby in Amateur Radio, Camping and Fishing

REFERENCES:

- Available upon request

Villa Park Apartment Complex
Denver, Colorado
Problem Solving Project
Submitted to the Police Executive Research Forum
by:

Denver Police Department
1331 Cherokee Street
Denver, Colorado 80204 (303) 640-3567 FAX (303) 640-1511

David L. Michaud
Chief of Police

The Villa Park Apartments is a large complex located near the western city limit within two blocks of major thoroughfares. The buildings are 30-40 years old. They had initially been upscale apartments popular among singles and professionals. But as maintenance lagged and populations shifted the apartments became less attractive to it's former clientele. The complex is now bordered by a large fenced public storage mini warehouse complex, an open area gulch with a small creek passing through, another large apartment complex and an older neighborhood featuring single family dwellings and duplexes. Several multi-unit buildings in the area sit boarded up, badly damaged and covered with graffiti.

By Fall of 1993 District One police noted there were nearly 100 calls for police service at the complex during the average 28 day period. The sound of gunfire was common. Graffiti, drug dealing and illegal gang activity prospered.

District One Sector Three Commander Lieutenant Marco Vasquez was assigned to identify the root causes of the problems and then to act in the role of leader and catalyst to improve the conditions.

Lieutenant Vasquez gathered pertinent data from all in-house sources as well as obtaining first hand accounts documenting the problems. Assisted by two Community Resource Officers, Technicians Lynda Stephenson and Virginia Lopez, he made connections with the City Councilwoman representing the area, Ramona Martinez, the Villa Park Neighborhood Association, and numerous other sources, public and private, to obtain a clear understanding of the conditions.

All the data gathered, combined with results of a survey and observations made during several walk through inspections provided a clearer picture of the conditions giving rise to crime problems.

It was learned that more than 2,000 people inhabited the complex, most of whom are Spanish speaking with little or no English language skills. Many of the residents were undocumented aliens living in overcrowded conditions paying exorbitant rents. The parking lots were literally obstacle courses marked by crater sized chuckholes and abandoned vehicles. The grounds were littered with old furniture, mattresses and trash.

The majority of the residents were families living in substandard conditions and endangered by the lawless few who viewed the complex as their turf.

The inspection team documented a number of physical improvements the management and ownership were requested to make. They found, for instance, there were no screens or screen doors. Some units

had no heat. One building containing 28 separate units provided hot water to all from just one 40 gallon hot water tank. A letter detailing numerous code violations and substandard conditions was forwarded to the absentee owner who, after tedious research, was found to be living in Nebraska.

The owners responded with a pledge to assist the police in any way to correct the conditions. They ordered the resident managers to cooperate fully and vowed to make the necessary improvements.

Lieutenant Vasquez pushed for, and received with some reluctance, a vacant unit to use as a store front for his operations. He selected the most remote location in the heart of the daily gang and drug dealing section. Gang graffiti was painted over by the officers, doors and windows were replaced, a telephone was promised by the managers, and a large police decal was posted on the windows to identify the store front.

Donations from the private sector, including McDonalds and Nobel Sysco among others, provided the fare for a grand opening of the store front. Lieutenant Vasquez brought in his own grill to barbecue donated hot dogs and hamburgers and obtained volunteer services of many other officers including his wife, Rosa, also a Denver Police officer. Sergeant Gary Osborne and his son, a Jefferson County Deputy Sheriff, also assisted along with Technicians Stephenson and Lopez. A handful of Explorer Scout Police Cadets, including Mario Vasquez, Marco and Rosa's son, also

volunteered.

The grand opening was intended to be an ice-breaker, hoping to begin to establish some sort of rapport and trust between the law abiding residents and the police.

Response was slow at first. Many residents shied away, reluctant to take part. But when the Mounted Horse Patrol arrived as scheduled, the children began to flock around the horses. K-9 officers put on a display of the special skills their dogs possess and bomb squad detectives demonstrated their remote controlled robot.

It was more than the kids could resist. They responded and the parents gradually followed. All were greeted by Spanish speaking officers and volunteers who invited them to eat and drink while explaining the purpose of the store front. The grand opening was a huge success.

During the next several months, the store front was the base for many operations. Foot beats and bicycle patrols were used intermittently, paid for in part by creative use of "Impact" funds made available through the Mayor's office.

Officers identified every child in the complex and prepared a list for Santa well in advance of Christmas. Every request was filled through the annual KYGO radio Christmas is for Children program,

and a huge party was held at the store front featuring an officer-volunteer Santa. More than 1,000 gifts were presented along with candy canes and other special treats.

Another program developed at the store front involved volunteer Spanish speaking officers organizing a well-attended after school homework assistance group. Yet another involved domestic violence education and counseling services provided by Denver Victim Assistance team member Beth Brody. But the real basis of the entire operation was old fashioned police work, and the lawless sector didn't appreciate it. The store front suffered numerous incidents of vandalism, graffiti and threats.

Foot beat officers made on-sight arrests of hoodlums and thugs. Drug houses were identified, raided and busted. Guns and other weapons were recovered, fugitives were arrested and the entire area was becoming safer and more livable. Dozens of abandoned vehicles were hauled to the crusher and the trash and litter were removed.

Despite the improving conditions, store front officers were learning of several disturbing practices allegedly being used by management. There was a great deal of frustration with the lack of meaningful improvements to the property.

Many residents reported having never seen nor signed a lease. Management allegedly offered to provide a copy of the lease upon

request only in exchange for a \$500.00 cash fee. The parking lot continued to look like a bombed-out zone, and many of the documented substandard conditions were not being addressed.

Lieutenant Vasquez initiated numerous communications with the ownership and management attempting to see some action to correct these conditions. After reasonable attempts were exhausted, Lieutenant Vasquez put together a team of inspectors from Zoning, Health and Hospitals, social services, police and elected officials to do a walk-through inspection. The owner was served a series of notices and orders demanding that conditions be improved.

Response from the owner and managers included evicting the store front, removing the police decals and phone service, attempting to order officers off the premises and filing an internal complaint alleging improper police conduct.

Lieutenant Vasquez kept the pressure on, continuing foot beats, patrols and support services. At one point the owner directed his attorney to meet with the District One command to attempt to neutralize Lieutenant Vasquez' operation.

The attorney was provided documentation to show the history of problems at the complex and dealings with the owner and managers. He was also given a brief explanation of the support the police were receiving from City Council and the official neighborhood association. He immediately withdrew and declined to continue to

represent the owner.

Within a short time the entire complex was sold at "bargain basement" price to a new owner who is proving to be serious about correcting problems and improving the property.

The area is no longer crime ridden and unsafe and at the time of this writing, is generating only about 8 calls for police service in the average month. Of these, several are generally unfounded 9-1-1 hang ups at pay phones.

Although somewhat lengthy, this narrative is merely a brief review of the operation. Numerous details and in-depth descriptions were left out in the intent of brevity.

The point to be made is simple. There is no magic formula for success in Community Policing. It simply involves exactly what Lieutenant Vasquez and his team demonstrated in this case. First, we must accept the responsibility to identify the problem and it's root causes. Next, we must assume a leadership role in attacking the problem, acting as a catalyst to get all other entities, private or public, involved in the solution. And the final ingredient is nothing more than a generous dose of old fashioned police work.