

The City of Joliet has been involved in the Neighborhood-Oriented Policing (NOP) since late 1991. Joliet is a city of just under 84,000 approximately 45 miles southwest of Chicago with a significant African-American and Mexican population. Although this blue-collar City has recovered from the depressed economic circumstances of the 1980s, the gang and drug culture that emerged during that decade still maintains a hold on many of Joliet's neighborhoods.

The Parkwood neighborhood was designated a NOP area in April of 1994; approximately a year before the Joliet Police Department reorganized the patrol division to implement NOP on a city-wide basis. This NOP area was formed because of numerous resident complaints of drug and gang activity. A study of the area, which included an analysis of calls for service and an environmental survey, confirmed that long-standing problems at Parkwood had gotten worse.

Scanning

The Parkwood area is located in the far northeast section of the city, attached by a tether of highway to the nearest portion of Joliet (approximately 10 minutes away). The neighborhood is surrounded by unincorporated Will County and is under the Will County Sheriff's jurisdiction. Being so isolated, ("Joliet police" tended to be in the area only when responding to a call for service. Most patrolmen had developed an out-of-sight, out-of-mind mentality. The attitude of the police was obvious to the gang members who controlled the area and they decided to capitalize on it: informants estimated that drug sales exceeded 1.5 kilos of crack cocaine every week. Increased violence accompanied the high drug sales as more and more criminals filtered into the area to get their share of the profit. More and more complaints from citizens prompted the Police Department to assign two veteran officers to the area. Because this traditional approach made little impact on the problems in the area, the assignment of extra officers only lasted for a few months. Finally, the Neighborhood-Oriented Policing Team (NOPT) assigned one officer to address the problems in the Parkwood area.

The first step taken by NOPT in this problem-solving effort was to examine the environment that contributed to the numerous problems. Although the area's isolation from the rest of the City was a major factor, the logistics of the neighborhood itself proved to be the biggest factor in supporting the continued criminal activity. The Parkwood neighborhood is accessible from only two directions,. From the south, one comes up through the Park District to see a beautiful scenic area and a neighborhood of well-kept, upper-middle class homes. From the north, the entry from Route 6 immediately places a person into one of the highest crime areas of the City. This northern end of Parkwood is completely comprised of rental property. In an area only three blocks long, there are over 3 00 individual rental units. At the heart of this congestion is a strip of twelve four-unit apartment buildings. These buildings

face the area's main street and are backed by an unused, wooded area owned by the Park District. An analysis of area incidents showed this particular part of Parkwood to be the focus of criminal activity. Surveillance revealed why.

Any vehicle in, or passing through, Parkwood must use the main street (where the problem apartment buildings are located) at some point. Gang members would gather in front of the buildings to monitor traffic: looking for customers to purchase drugs and watching for rival gang members. The location of these apartments gave the gang members an unobstructed view of anyone coming into the area. The gang members thus had the opportunity to run into any one of the apartment buildings, or into the wooded area behind the buildings, long before the police could observe them. Contact with citizens living in the area confirmed that they believed drug dealing to be the source of problems in the area. Related problems were identified as subjects blocking the road when talking to friends or selling drugs, shootings, large numbers of subjects gathered in the area for gang partying, and loud music.

Analysis

Although purely traditional policing strategies appeared to have had little impact, some law enforcement was needed to gain initial control of the area. First, **No Parking/No Standing/No Stopping** signs were placed along the street in front of the problem apartments to discourage people from blocking the main roadway. This allowed the officer to order subjects out of the roadway and issue parking tickets if needed. Then, because most of the activity occurred on the apartment property, it was determined that a meeting with the landlords was necessary. Since the landlords did not live on the property, the Department wanted to make sure that the landlords were aware of the seriousness of the problems caused by their tenants. NOPT also planned to make the landlords aware of the fact that they could sign a trespass agreement with the Joliet Police Department. This agreement between the City and a property owner is a legal document that allows the Joliet Police to patrol an owner's (private) property and arrest trespassers; in other words, the police (as designated agents of the City) become the complainant on behalf of the owner. As part of the agreement, the owner also posts **No Trespassing** signs on the property and submits a list of tenants and authorized visitors to the Department.

Parkwood residents and police agreed that it would be necessary to rid the apartments in question of problem tenants and encourage the landlords to do a better screening of potential new tenants. Building managers would also need to be stricter in the enforcement of existing lease terms regarding parking, drinking alcohol in front of the buildings, loud music, etc. In addition, apartment driveways were always filled with vehicles which provided a gathering place as well as a hiding place for gang members. Designating those driveways as fire lanes in which no cars could be parked would give officers another enforcement tool to help re-

establish order in the neighborhood. Cooperation from the landlords regarding these proposals would enable the police to eradicate the criminals on their property and weed out the problem tenants, some of whom were actively dealing drugs. With trespass agreements in place, NOPT officers and patrol officers could saturate the area to arrest violators and send a message to area criminals. And citizens living in the area were eager to play a major role in this initial effort by reporting any suspected criminal activity to their NOPT officer.

Response and Initial Assessment

The meeting with the landlords, however, proved to be almost useless. Although the landlords did sign trespass agreements and provide a tenant list, they would not post No Trespassing signs and refused to establish an authorized visitor policy. Without the public notice provided by the No Trespassing signs, the agreements proved to be unenforceable against trespassers. And, even when increased citizen cooperation with NOPT and patrol led to the arrest of drug dealers in the problem buildings, landlords refused to take any steps to evict the troublemakers. It was determined that without landlord cooperation a new strategy would be needed.

The crime analysis triangle consists of three segments: offenders, victims, and location. Removing one of the segments will probably prevent a crime from being committed. In Parkwood, the victims are the residents who must deal with the gang members. It is difficult to affect that segment of the triangle because many residents cannot afford to move out or to secure their apartments and cars with expensive security devices. The offenders are the gang members and drug dealers in Parkwood. Concentrated traditional efforts in the past, and some newer NOP tactics, had had limited success: the logistics of the buildings make it extremely difficult to observe and arrest offenders and, even if arrested, they were not evicted or were replaced by others. The last leg of the triangle is the location, the apartment buildings themselves. Without a relatively safe place to gather and sell drugs the related crimes could, in part, be prevented or more easily apprehended. This was the most logical segment of the crime analysis triangle to attack.

Modified Response

A meeting was set up with the City Manager, the City's Corporate Counsel, and the Director of Neighborhood Services. At this meeting, it was determined the worst apartments should be dealt with first. Police reports, reports from other city agencies, and police and citizen observations indicated that Peter Remus Properties had the most calls for service, gang activity, drug dealing, and the most tenants actually involved in criminal activity. Remus owned five buildings: 1006, 1008, 1010, 1014, and 1016 Parkwood Drive. These buildings were in such disrepair that only undesirables seemed to want to live there. Remus might not have had to comply with any requests to assist the NOPT officer.

but he did have to comply with the city building code.

The City agreed to extensively inspect the Remus buildings for code violations. Remus would then be given time to make repairs and work with NOPT to clean up the crime and disorder problems, or face having the buildings shut down. The City conducted inspections in July of 1994. On August 9, 1994, the City Manager held an administrative hearing with Remus to which NOPT was invited. At this hearing, the inspectors from Neighborhood Services revealed numerous violations that needed to be corrected. Remus was told to comply or submit to vacating and closing two of his buildings. Remus refused. On August 10, 1994, 1006 Parkwood and 1008 Parkwood Drive were vacated and the buildings were condemned and boarded up.

In the following months, Remus began to evict some problem tenants and make repairs to his remaining three buildings. This proved to be a short-lived effort. On May 19, 1995, the City conducted a final inspection of the remaining buildings and found numerous violations of the building code. Although Remus was told that the remaining buildings would be condemned if he did not repair them immediately, he made no further efforts. On June 29, 1995, the remaining Remus Properties - 1010, 1014 and 1016 Parkwood Drive - were vacated, condemned, and boarded up.

Assessment

At any time of day or night, between 30 to 100 people would be gathered around the buildings on Parkwood Drive; drinking, selling drugs, and committing other disorderly acts. This area now lies silent. The streets are no longer blocked and complaints of loud music are no more. The apartment buildings next to the Remus Properties still contain some problem tenants, but the major drug dealers from Remus' buildings have left the area or been arrested. Remus' response to the closure of his buildings suggests that his only intention was to make money without taking any responsibility for his tenants. However, forcing Remus to be responsible for his buildings and his tenants did have an impact on a private owner who owns 1012 Parkwood Drive. After seeing the surrounding buildings being closed, this landlord contacted NOPT. The landlord voluntarily entered into a trespass agreement, made repairs to his building and property, and fenced in his parking lot. This owner continues to express a desire to work with NOPT to insure a safe environment for his tenants and benefit the entire neighborhood.

MAPLE RD. RT. 6

PARKWOOD 2300 FT.

SEE DRAWING

2215

2223

2205

BOGDAN LN.

2205

2215

2200

BOGDAN LN. 920 N.

2201

2207

2215

2221

DOOGWOOD

COTTONWOOD 908

2203

2211

2219

903

BEECHWOOD 900

MULBERRY 804 N.

BASSWOOD 710 N.

ARBOR

TAMARACK

2019

2115

LONGWOOD 700 N.

2211

BELMONT 700 N.

← Remus Properties

