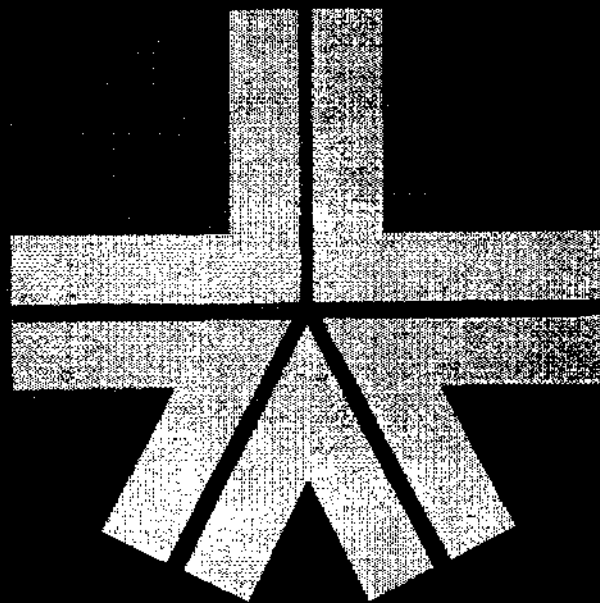


Problem Solvers

95-48



**"Carré St-Louis"
Summer 1994**

Montreal Urban Community Police Service

"CARRÉ ST-LOUIS" SUMMER 1994

The A.C.E.S. (Concerted action in elaboration of solution) program has two specific mandates : Increase the citizen's level of security, which is being severely tried as the neighbourhood deteriorate; and reduce, if not eliminate, the traffic of drugs and related crime. In order to correct this situation, A.C.E.S. uses a mixture of prevention, information education and repression tools.

In the Carré St-Louis, drugs consumption and trafficking constitute the main offenses reported but it appears that the W problem at hand is truly one of public disorder trough its apparent signs : untidyness and insalubrity.

On May 1994, the A.C.E.S. program supervised a team of four police officers who were specially assigned to find a permanent solution of this public park problem by applying the principles of P.O.P. as described in different criminology documents.



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CARRÉ ST-LOUIS

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Carré St-Louis is a public park located in the middle of a residential area in downtown montreal, a crowded area because of its size. Every year, it is taken over by troublemakers who ruin the quality of life of citizens, visitors and residents of the neighbourhood.

WHO IS THE CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM?

Drug dealers have made the park a trafficking area. Several small groups settle in the eastern section of the square for long periods, smoking marijuana and drinking beer. The lawn is almost bare, stripped of grass here and there. The ground is littered with waste and broken glass. At the periphery in the streets and alleyways, there is graffiti on the walls of apartment buildings. From behind the buildings, emanates a strong urine odour, and regularly hypodermic syringes are founded by kids. In resume, the criminal activities consist of drug trafficking and social deviance in the form described above.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THE PROBLEM AND HOW?

The residents are afraid of the activities in the park: consequently their houses are depreciating. For many years, residents have been asking the police to do something.

Visitors no longer use the park even if it is still the only green space available in this neighbourhood. Businesses are victims of misdemeanours and other **property-related crimes. The City of Montreal incurs additional repair and restoration costs and watches helplessly while a historic park deteriorates.** Police District 33 has to come set aside additional resources to answer calls and take numerous repressive operations.

HOW DID THE SERVICE HANDLE THE PROBLEM IN THE PAST?

Every year, District 33 police officers are pressured by residents. Complaints are collected by different interest groups (political parties, fringe groups, etc). This approach turns the real issues into a media event. Police District 33 tries to solve the problem through multiple meetings with pressure groups. Up to now, many large-scale operations have been undertaken to fight drugs dealers and prostitution. To increase police presence in the area, no District 33 resource was spared. Still every year, the plot is replayed, the same actors show up again on stage. The crisis management team has to start all over again.

WHAT INFORMATION WAS COLLECTED ABOUT THE PROBLEM?

In the area concerned, there are 490 private homes. Thirty-five (35) residents were polled. Here is a summary of the poll: 50% of women stay away from Carré St-Louis because they are afraid.

78% of residents think that the police is doing average or mediocre work. Periods of observation confirm the comments of the residents, especially concerning the problems of social deviance.

An analysis of the situation shows that there are few criminal offenses, repressive measures were taken pursuant to municipal rules and regulations. Meetings with Montreal City officials (horticulture, public health, parks) were held to assess the extent of the damage done. Consultations with external institutions : three hundred (300) invitations were sent out to residents of the Square. The police met about fifteen residents who offered suggestions and participated in the action plan. In the first two weeks of the project, twelve police cadet officers were busy establishing an inventory of the sources of insalubrity (neglected lawns, broken windows, graffiti, syringes). The police met with residents to determine the sources of insecurity (insufficient lighting, defective signals, etc).

WERE THERE ANY DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING THE INFORMATION?

In District 33, the four police officers assigned to the program met with resistance from their colleagues and from specialized sections of the Service. Their approach was perceived as a public relations operation. Police information was not circulating.

Moreover, the twelve cadet police officers assigned to the program were withdrawn a month later because of pressure from the union. From outside police circles, different pressure groups organized a campaign to discredit the action plan. They described the plan as a clean-up operation designed to remove undesirable and fringe elements of society from the park.

WHAT WAS THE GOAL OF THE PROBLEM-SOLVING EFFORT?

In the light of the information collected and the observations made, we defined our goals. To reach the main goal we established intermediate and specific goals.

A. Main Goal

Turn the Square into a permanently safe, accessible and pleasant park.

B. Intermediate Goals

1. Maintain law and order in Carré St-Louis;
2. Reduce the feeling of insecurity in residents.
3. Develop in police officers a problem-solving attitude.

C. Specific Goals

1. Provide police personnel with the appropriate training.
2. Take action against offenders.
3. Develop a network of partners.
4. Create and maintain links with citizens and businesses.
5. Take action against urban dilapidation.

6. Inform police officers on patrol of the activities of A.C.E.S. (Concerted action in elaboration of solution) and encourage their participation.

WHAT STRATEGIES WERE DEVELOPED TO REACH THAT GOAL?

The strategies developed include a combination of preventive and repressive measures.

- Training

Four police officers from District 33 were assigned to the program. Their training focused on the following main aspects of the project:

- > The evolution of police practices in the last decades;
- > The emergence of the concept of community policing;
- > Presentation of different partners and agencies that can work in tandem with the police [probation, parole, S.C.C. (Correctional Service of Canada) welfare, housing board];
- > Immersion Day at The Portage Detoxication Center;

- Community mobilization

About 15 residents were mobilized and served as intermediaries between concerned citizens and District 33. They were involved in every step of the process. Activities were organized in the Carré St-Louis to get the community involved.

July 29, 1994 - Crime Prevention Day

At the different information stands there were 42 persons representing 6 **community organizations.**

September 10, 1994 - Cleanliness Day

The day was devoted to rallying residents to get involved in a common cause - deal with the sources of insalubrity and uncleanness.

- With the help of Montreal City services, teams of residents, students of Police Technology and police officers were all involved in cleaning up. In the afternoon, there was a drug prevention information stand, two information stands for engraving (ex. Bikes, objets of value), and two other stands from CLSC (free health clinic) for medical prevention advice. Six hundred (600) hot dogs were served to people in the area.

- Mediation strategy

About 300 leaflets were handed out to users of the Square, informing them that Municipal regulations shall be systematically applied in the coming days. Police officers were available to discuss the purpose of the action plan with users of the park. It was explained to them that no citation shall be given out to offenders without prior notification. This period of public awareness building lasted for a week. Demonstrations on July 9, 16, and 30, 1994 were in the form of civil disobedience marches.

City of Montreal;

- > Repair and maintenance teams for maintenance, improving urban furnishings, planting and signalization;
- > Garbage collection from streets and pavements;
- > Parking lot inspection, bus and bus stop development;
- > Permit delivery service to promote special events.

Others;

- > Tandem (a municipal crime prevention organization) for community-based crime prevention on Crime Prevention Day;
- > Mount Royal and St-Louis/Park Extension C.L.S.C. (Local center of community services) for medical prevention advice on Crime Prevention Day;
- > Sun Youth bike Patrol for Crime Prevention advice;
- > Lafleur Inc. ("fast food" restaurant) gave out free hot dogs, refreshments, desserts on the Cleanliness Day.
- > Cadet officers' Bureau
twelve cadet officers for special events
- > Police Technology Service, of Maisonneuve College.
Ten students for urban dilapidation screening and for Cleanliness Day.

- > The School of Criminology of the Université de Montréal.

One student on training participated in coordinating the action plan.

WAS THE GOAL ACHIEVED?

For evaluation purposes, residents of the territory targeted by the police intervention were polled for eleven business days by students of the School of Criminology of the Université de Montréal. A questionnaire of 39 questions was used to measure different effectiveness criteria. About 88 residents were polled. 95% of the residents use Carré St-Louis. Today they think it is a nice, very clean park. Of those polled 90% are pleased with police work. The effectiveness of the repressive measures carried out by police was noted by residents. Many subjects who deal directly or indirectly in drugs are known today by police intervenes. Some were imprisoned, some changed their habits and sought help (therapy). On the whole, the number of civil disobedience and protest movements did not rise as anticipated by organizers. They saw for themselves that the action plan was not a foolish attempt to throw people out of the park. The results obtained were so positive that residents of a Senior citizens home (Foyer Rigaud) situated nearby now visit the park they had abandoned in the last five years. But the conditions that create public disorder will always remain. Hence, the Partnership Committee consisting of the Police, social workers and citizens should not be disbanded.

We should take advantage of the leadership skills of some residents and support the efforts they are making to provide crime prevention and **entertainment activities in order to keep their place in Carré St-Louis.**