

*Delray Beach Police Department***Mario's Market Problem Oriented Policing Project**

*Officer Jimmy Horrell and Officer Javaro Sims
Delray Beach, Florida
Started 1994 — Ended 1996*

Mario's Market is within a twelve block area targeted for narcotics eradication and overall improvement. In April of 1994 the citizens surrounding this area converged to discuss the level of criminal activity and its general deterioration. The area termed the "West Atlantic Avenue Business Corridor" was renowned for the open narcotics trade, large unruly crowds and occasional violent crime, such as robbery or murder.

This area is truly the "gateway" to the central business district of the City of Delray Beach and offered home buyers and business investors their first impression. Because of the area's debilitated buildings, unkempt vacant lots and large numbers of loiterers many potential investors were deterred from committing to the growth of Delray.

For many years, the citizens and police officers had accepted this area as irretrievable. They handled calls traditionally without attempting to intervene or resolve the on-going criminal plague. With the advent of Community Policing and Problem Solving Policing, the citizens began to expect more from the police and were no longer willing to sacrifice their safety or quality of life to complacency. Through the request of citizen groups such as Mad Dads, the Delray Merchants Association, and the Community Redevelopment Association, the Police Department committed eight officers full-time to the eradication of narcotic sales and to the improvement of the area.

Mario's Market soon became the focal point of the newly formed "Foot Patrol." This awareness of improving Mario's Market was by no means accidental. Upon their assignment to the Foot Patrol, Officer Horrell and Officer Sims realized that Mario's Market provided an ideal location of criminal possibility. Located at the entrance and exit of interstate 1-95, Mario's allowed potential drug buyers to exit 1-95, drive one block, purchase illegal goods and quickly return to 1-95 undetected by law enforcement.

Unfortunately, along with the narcotic trade, came the opportunity for drug buyers to be robbed or assaulted, which was also a frequent occurrence.

To complicate their task, the officers were confronted with a distrusting business owner, who was also non-cooperative and a property owner who was not interested in the building's appearance or quality of the area. Despite several set backs, the officers were not deterred from their task and set out to win-over the business owner and gain his cooperation. In a very calculated way, the officers approached him and asked to assist him in painting the building, installing fencing and lighting, re-sealing the parking lot, striping the parking lot, and landscaping the entire property. With the completion of the fencing and installation of lighting, the business owner came to respect the officers as partners and extended his full cooperation in thwarting the narcotics trade around his business. He removed arcade games, removed or relocated telephones which were used by drug dealers, and began maintaining the exterior of his business.

Officer Horrell's and Officer Sims' approach to this monumental problem was the classical use of the SARA model and deployment of Kelling and Wilson's "Broken Windows" theory. To begin their analysis, the officers met with local residents, business owners, and local political forces. Through their discussions several problems were identified and potential solutions were developed. The officers then recruited additional resources, such as the Department's Narcotics Unit for enforcement purposes, local businesses for donations of materials, outside departments (Department of Health, Multiple Agency Narcotics Task Force, Alcohol and Beverage, etc.), and other local government departments (Streets, Public Works, etc.). The officers then managed the use of these resources until the area was no longer a viable spot for the local drive-thru drug buyers or a convenient location for drug dealers.

When the Foot Patrol officers attempted to intervene in the narcotics trade, the dealers would enter Mario's and immediately begin playing the video arcade games located next to the front door. Between the pay phones and video games the drug dealers were able to appear legitimate in their loitering around the business. The Foot Patrol officers assisted the business owner in removing the video games, but were not

as immediately successful with the pay phones. When the business owner requested the phone company to remove the phones, he was threatened with a civil law suit, based on a contract signed by him. Not to be deterred, Officer Hone 11 contacted Code Enforcement and determined the phones were installed without permits. This fact alone did not allow the phones' removal, but it did give the business owner and the Foot Patrol leverage to have the phones moved from the protected awning of the building into the parking lot exposing the dealers to the direct sun and rain. As minor as this move seemed, it reduced the loitering to a small number which would immediately scurry upon the approach of the police.

Now the problem was the ability of the drug dealers to run around the building and escape via an alleyway south of Mario's. Mario's is bordered to the south by two residences with one of the residences being a meeting place and central distribution point of narcotics being sold within the "West Atlantic Business Corridor.*" Officer Horrell began plans to limit the mobility of the dealers by installing fencing across the south property line of Mario's Market. The property owner was very reluctant to spend any money on the property, but under the threat of Nuisance Abatement, he agreed to pay for the fencing. Officers Sims and Horrell coordinated and supervised the installation of the fence to the point of walking through permits and scheduling the actual installation. Within two weeks (which is unheard of in a bureaucracy) the fence was installed. Once installed both officers monitored the fence for vandalism. It became apparent that the drug dealers were scaling the fence causing the fencing to pull away from the poles. Officer Horrell and Officer Sims decided to coat the top of the fence with a durable axle grease obtained from the City's garage facility. With the grease applied, there was no longer a problem with individuals climbing the fence. Instead, the offenders cut the fence at a location not readily visible. However, because of the officers' diligence the opening was immediately observed and repaired with materials from the City's Parks Department. Since the last repair, there have been no other incidents of vandalism and the escape route has been effectively cut off.

The officers were now faced with the drive-thru traffic created by the back alley and the open driveway in front of the business. Through coordination with the Public Works Department and the Fire Department, a barrier was erected at each end of the

driveway. The barrier was constructed from materials being removed from a City park and was erected at no cost to the Department or the City.

The front driveway was another problem that required some very creative thinking. The officers were faced with a great number of bicycle thefts from the store when patrons left their bicycles unattended. The solution was to install a bicycle rack which allowed persons to lock their bicycles while shopping inside. Combining the problem with the drive-thru narcotics traffic and the theft of bicycles, the officers decided to install a bicycle rack in the middle of the driveway, eliminating the possibility of obtaining narcotics while sitting in a car and then immediately driving away. A local bicycle shop donated the rack as long as the owner of Mario's agreed to display the bicycle shop name on the rack. The negotiations for the rack and its placement were coordinated by Officer Horrell and Officer Sims. With the assistance of other Foot Patrol members, the rack was installed and the driveway was effectively cut-off.

Up to this point, the majority of the officers' focus had been in eliminating the accessibility to the property while improving its appearance. Now the officers began to focus on the dealers and their activity. They turned their concentration to the lack of lighting which reduced the effectiveness of surveillance and allowed the dealers to operate in the recesses of the property and the alleyway behind the property, and the vacant lot which allowed the dealers to loiter and coordinate their sales.

Officer Horrell and Officer Sims contacted a local Florida Power and Light (FPL) representative and requested the installation of lighting in the alleyway which would illuminate the alley and Mario's east and west parking lots. Within a month, FPL installed three security lights known as "Liberty City Lights." These lights were developed after the Liberty City riots and are reported as bullet-proof. The lights cost approximately \$18.00 per month which is paid by the City Of Delray Beach.

The vacant lot to the east was conveniently situated providing the drug dealers a location to solicit without the threat of police intervention. Since it was private property owned by an absentee owner, there was no way to enforce trespassing or loitering. Officer Horrell and Officer Sims contacted the property owner and assisted him in installing "NO TRESPASSING" signs which gave the police a legal reason to investigate individuals hanging out on the property. This significantly reduced the

loitering on the property, but forced the drug dealers to stand on the sidewalk. Because of mandated landscaping requirements by the City, the dealers found a convenient trash can under a large tree which provided both shade and a place to sit. Given the mandate by the City that the trash can could not be removed from the block, Officer Horreil identified another spot on the block which would place the receptacle in the sun and fulfill the City's requirement.

As a last deterrent to the drug dealers and possible maintenance factor, Officer Horreil built a black box, covering one end with dark lexan and attaching a piece of coaxial cable. The box was mounted to look like a video camera on the outside of Mario's and aimed to give the appearance of monitoring the parking lot and the vacant lot. To reinforce the illusion of the camera, officers hid across the street and watched criminal activity. The officer would then approach the offenders and give a detailed account of the activity and advise them they had been monitoring them via the camera.

Because of the officers' efforts and their unique approaches, the drug dealers virtually abandoned the area and began setting up in other locations throughout the "Corridor."

From the lessons learned by the Mario's experience, officers are working with the surrounding businesses and are making great progress in revitalizing the twelve block area.

In addition to esthetic improvements officers made numerous arrests for drinking in public, sale of cocaine, possession of cocaine and marijuana.

Several other crack houses in the area were closed by being condemned by Code Enforcement or by calling the owners, all being in the same block or general area of Mario's Market. Officers still continue to monitor the area and have observed a decrease in drug sales and robbery activity.

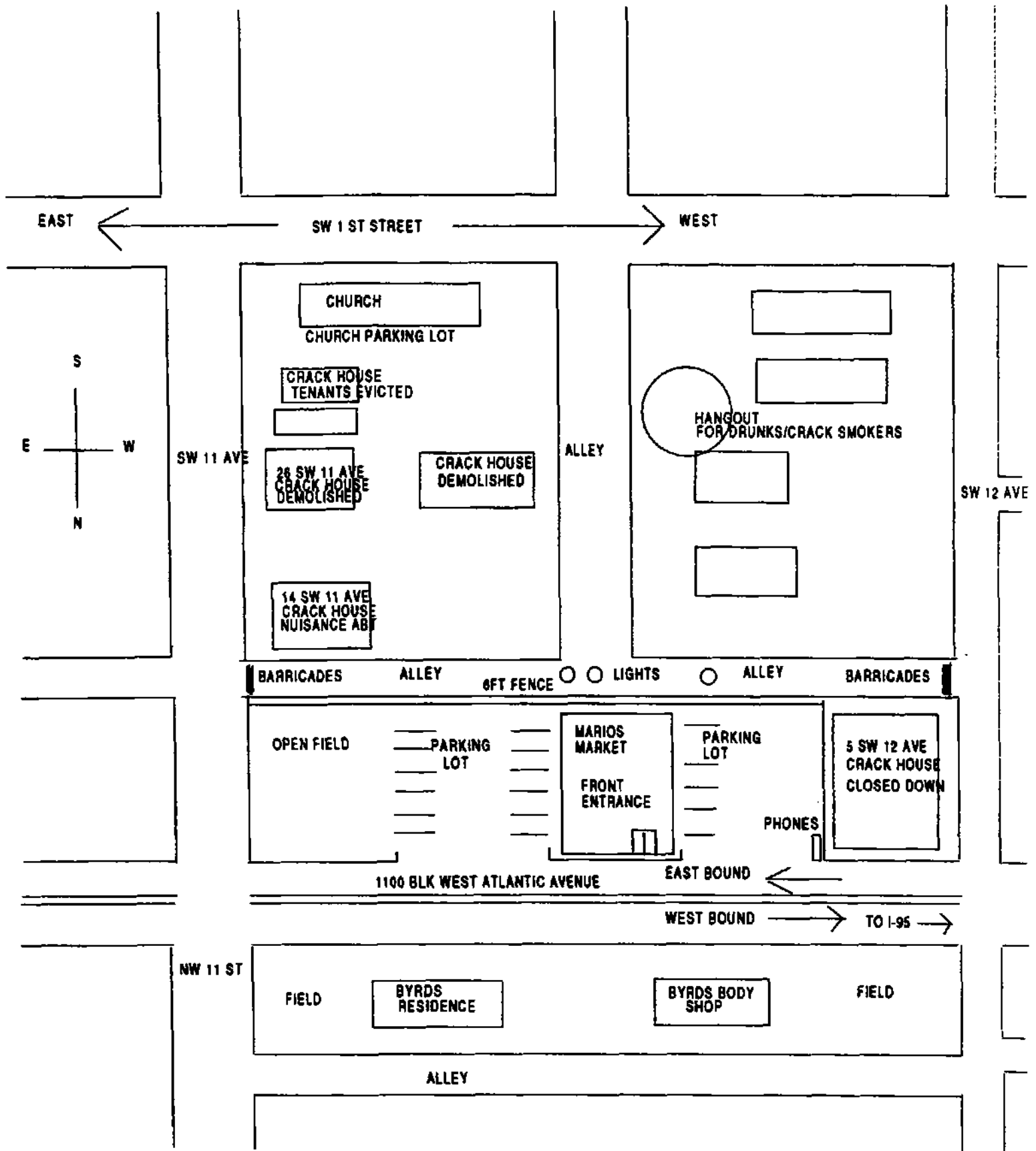
The concept of POP is being applied along the twelve block area that the Foot Patrol is responsible for and the following is a list of other projects or programs that the Foot Patrol has been responsible for.

- A community service program where individuals report to one of the Foot Patrol officers to do their community service, consists of cleaning up trash

along the roadway or assisting officers in other areas of the city that need cleaning. A total of 1500 hours have been logged so far.

- Foot Patrol officers have closed several drug houses and had several torn down by the City (17 NW 5 Avenue) { 24- 26 NW 6 Avenue) (14 SW 11 Avenue) (5 SW 12 Avenue) (40 SW 13 Avenue) (26 SW 11 Avenue).
- Several individuals have been helped into drug and alcohol programs by the Foot Patrol Unit.
- Officers had the owners of the BI-LO Market install cameras and lighting in order to reduce the crime rate.
- Due to the officers' efforts, several drug dealers have even left the area and gone to other cities.
- A survey was also conducted within this twelve block area to find out how many stores sold alcohol and how much. This was done due to the large problem of consuming alcohol in public, public intoxication, and alcohol related problems on West Atlantic Avenue. What the survey revealed was that there were fourteen businesses that sold alcohol and a majority of those businesses sold carry-out which was mostly by a single can or bottle. The survey revealed that approximately 950 cases of beer are sold per week which equals to 22,800 individual cans of beer being sold. Multiply that by weeks per year it comes to over 1 million, 185 thousand and 60 cans of beer are sold per year in this twelve block area. This figure is considered low because it does not take into account for the holidays.

DIAGRAM FOR MARIOS MARKET 1130 WEST ATLANTIC AVENUE, DELRAY BEACH FLORIDA.
 PROJECT INITIATED BY OFFICER SIMS/OFFICER HORRELL
 DRAWN BY A/SGT HORRELL
 1994-1996



1130 West Atlantic Ave.

