

1998 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing
Abstract
Public Safety in the Downtown Business District
Springfield, Oregon

The City of Springfield Police Department identified community concern with public safety in the downtown business district as an important need to be addressed to help restore vitality to Springfield's historic commercial core. The problem first came to the City's attention in 1994, when community residents and business owners identified dissatisfaction with public safety issues in downtown Springfield.

Types of problems reported include loitering, disorderly conduct, panhandling, vandalism and rowdy behavior. Consensus on the cause of the problems had not been reached. In addition to behavioral problems, local residents and the police observed environmental concerns - such as poor lighting, that contributed to crime vulnerability in the district.

The Springfield Police Department worked to obtain funding to conduct a more thorough analysis of the problems, as well as to apply the S.A.R.A. methodology to the study area. Members of the community services unit conducted initial *Scanning* of the area to gather information on the extent of problems in the area.

Based on the problems downtown, the Springfield Police put together a collaborative team to address the situation. Community Planning Workshop (CP W) conducted problem *Analysis* and data collection to analyze the impacts of public safety in the downtown.

Based on the analysis phase of this project the grant team identified two key *Responses* that would greatly assist in the improvement of public safety in the district. These include 1) providing CPTED training to business owners, and 2) implementation of an environmental lighting survey.

The Department hosted a CPTED training session for downtown business owners, managers and employees on May 27, 1998. This session utilized a PowerPoint presentation on CPTED

principles and instructed businesses on how to conduct their own environmental scan and analysis at their place of business. The second response was developed to address community concern about poor lighting.

The *Assessment* efforts of this project include the following tasks; 1) establish baseline information, 2) identification of opportunities for improvement, and 3) identification of obstacles to change downtown and 4) project limitations. The baseline of data and problem analysis established here will provide the ability to measure future successes. Project efforts have contributed greatly to the Community Services Unit's ability to address problems of loitering and disorderly conduct, as well as general perceptions of public safety in the downtown.

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Project Description:
Public Safety in the Downtown Business District
Springfield, Oregon

Scanning

The Problem

The City of Springfield Police Department identified community concern with public safety in the downtown business district as an important need to be addressed and resolved to help restore vitality to Springfield's historic commercial core. The problem first came to the City's attention in 1994, when community residents and business owners identified dissatisfaction with public safety issues in downtown Springfield.

For the past several years various City departments received complaints about public safety and behavioral problems in the downtown. Types of problems reported include loitering, disorderly conduct, panhandling, vandalism and rowdy behavior. The problem was also identified through repeat calls for service within the area and officer observations. Police patrols noted periodic high frequencies of loitering, graffiti, littering, and aggressive behavior in the area.

In addition to officer observations, business owners were concerned with the Police Department's response to perceived problems. Citizens, especially local business owners, formed an organization - the Springfield Partnership for Progress to respond to perceived problems in the area. Consensus on the cause of the problems had not been reached, some owners believed that the presence of liquor dispensing establishments was to blame, while others did not. In addition to disorderly conduct and behavioral problems, owners, residents and the police observed environmental concerns - such as poor lighting, that contributed to crime vulnerability in the district.

The Initial Response:

The Police Department responded by holding a public meeting in January 1995. Community comments from that meeting were categorized into the following four areas of concern; Police, Transient Activity, Drug Traffic and Environmental Problems. The following summarizes key issues within each category.

Police	Problem people
Lack of police presence	Drug Traffic
Lack of police response	Drug dealers
Want more police visibility	Concern by neighboring business areas
Lack of foot patrols	having traffic move in
Lack of bicycle patrol	No loitering laws
Slow police response	Fighting in business, in front of businesses
Perceived police priority issue	Bars not controlling patrons and parking
Slow evening non-emergency response	Not feeling safe outside of businesses because of pedestrian traffic
	Problem people
	Professional criminals
Transient Activity	
Illicit use of facilities	
Homeless people	
Not feeling safe outside of business because of pedestrian traffic	Environmental Problems
Panhandling on sidewalk	Lack of lighting downtown
No loitering laws	Bicycles on sidewalks
Selling merchandise on sidewalk	No city sidewalk constitutional ordinances
Excessive length of time for parking	
Concern by neighboring business areas having traffic move in	Abandoned cars
Fighting in business and in front of business	Damaged property

In response to these problems and community concerns in downtown, the Police worked to obtain funding to conduct a more thorough analysis of the problems, as well as to apply the S.A.R.A. methodology to the study area. Members of the community services unit conducted initial scanning of the area to gather information on the extent of problems in the area and to better define the types of problem activity occurring in the district. This process brought to the Police's attention additional concerns such as prostitution, public urination and a general lack of property upkeep.

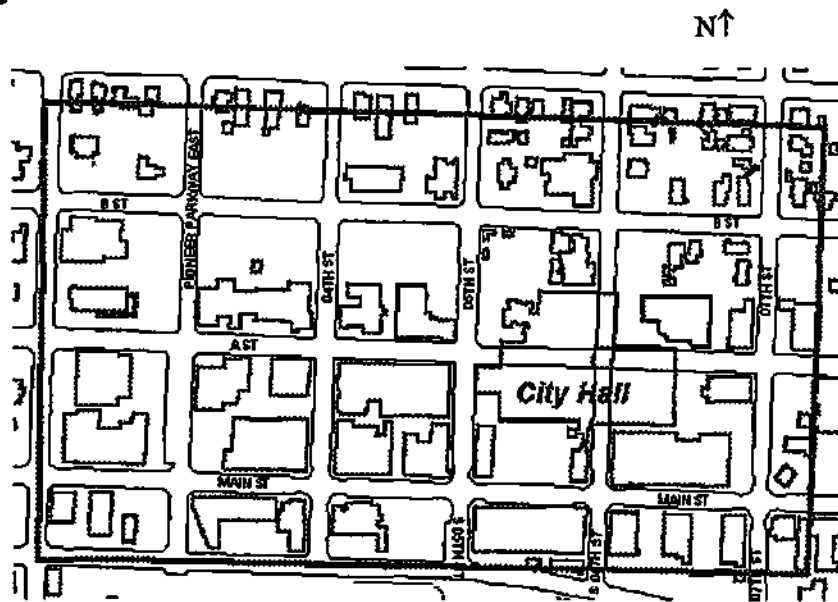
During the two-year period (1995-1997) between problem identification and funding, Community Services Officers worked with downtown business owners to apply Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) methods. This included a local café that had been the target of

break-ins, burglary and graffiti tagging. The application of CPTED included increasing natural surveillance as well as territorial reinforcement and access control improvements.

The Study Area

The downtown business district is located in the southwest corner of the city of Springfield alongside the Willamette River. The district runs from the river east for about twelve blocks and includes a two-block area on either side of state highway 126, which runs through the downtown. This area is the historic central business district of the city and contains a number of historic buildings. The area is known as the Depot District, which refers to the old train depot where the Chamber of Commerce is located. The downtown contains a conglomeration of commercial uses, social and human service agencies, and a mix of residential properties. The downtown is also home to city hall and governmental offices, including the police station, the public library and the local museum.

Map of Study Area



Source: City of Springfield, Engineering Department, 1998

Analysis

Problem Analysis: A Collaborative Approach

Based on the problems downtown, the Springfield Police put together a collaborative team to develop a response to the situation. This team included the following primary stakeholders:

- 1) Springfield Partnership for Progress, Downtown Business Association, Chamber of Commerce and Local Business Owners;
- 2) Springfield Police Department and Community Services Officers: Loretta Wilson and Tana Paterson;
- 3) City Agencies, including members from Public Works, Engineering and Development Services, and;
- 4) Community Planning Workshop, a local applied planning research program at the University of Oregon.

These partners all have primary interests in the health and vitality of the downtown community. The grant partner assigned to problem analysis and data collection was Community Planning Workshop. CPW worked with all of the primary stakeholders, as well as community residents, to analyze the character and impacts of public safety in the downtown.

Methods, data and information sources:

CPW gathered research on the public safety concerns in the downtown business district using a variety of methods and data sources, including the following:

- *Community surveys:* CPW distributed two surveys, one to randomly selected households within the city limits and one to the downtown business community. The purpose of these survey was to measure the impact of public safety problems on resident's willingness to visit the downtown district, to gauge resident's perceptions of the area and to ask questions related to the economic activity of this area. Approximately 30 percent of survey recipients returned a survey. The same survey was distributed to business owners in the downtown to gather their opinions and perceptions of the area. This allowed CPW to compare local concerns and

perceptions to community-wide opinions. Approximately 40 percent of the business owners returned surveys.

- *Intercept Surveys:* These surveys were designed to target patrons, employees and residents of the downtown area. Surveys were available at six downtown locations, including the city library, a bank, two cafés, and two retail businesses.
- *Interviews -with key stakeholders:* CPW identified and interviewed a number of important community residents and leaders to gain a qualitative understanding of the history of the district and its problems. This also provided important data on changes in public safety concern over time as some of those interviewed have been in the area for more than 20 years.
- *Review of secondary data sources:* One component of the problem analysis was to identify and review planning materials, surveys and studies conducted previous to this project. This process assisted in differentiating chronic problems and concerns from those of a more short-term nature. For example:

"For many years Downtown has suffered from a general state of neglect, delivering a message to newcomers, neighbors and residents that the community has little pride in its past, present or future. Whether the message is correct or not, Springfield's image is represented by the physical character of its Downtown."

Springfield Downtown Refinement Plan, 1984.

CPW also reviewed the Springfield Police's *Long-Range Strategic Plan for Police Services (1996-2016)* adopted by the City Council on April 15, 1996. This important document provides the institutional framework for extending the Department's traditional law enforcement approach to include community policing and crime prevention strategies.

- *Review of Local Media Reports:* CPW reviewed media reports from local newspapers as part of the assessment of public perceptions of safety in downtown Springfield. The newspaper articles provided a chronology of activities concerning downtown. They also offered a comparison of attitudes indicating the hope and frustration surrounding the downtown community.

This review assisted the CPW research team in assessing how the media has portrayed the downtown community and it also illustrated how residents and events connected to the downtown have been characterized over the course of the past five years.

Development of Analysis Tools: GIS Working Group

In response to recent developments in geographic information systems (GIS), the Springfield Police, in conjunction with city engineers, is developing an important tool for problem identification and crime analysis. With the development of GIS, the Police Department will be able to turn geographic imagery into valuable information and extract valuable information from a variety of databases. For example, with this system the Police Department will be able to:

- View the City by districts, wards, neighborhood associations, apartment buildings, shopping malls, school districts, and other structures and topography.
- Show crimes that have occurred within these areas by symbols representing crime type and location.
- Monitor a district that is experiencing a high volume of calls for service, such as the downtown district, apartment complexes and other areas of concern.
- The ability to reduce calls for service in a targeted area by analyzing the crimes that are occurring and develop a strategic plan to reduce the calls for service.
- Strategic Planning for problem identification: Identifying key issues such as trends, demographics, crime analysis, etc.
- Produce standard maps quickly and efficiently for problem identification.

This new component will be vital to the scan and analysis portion of the S.A.R.A. Methodology as applied toward the problem-solving process in the downtown district. The Geographical Information System will support community policing capabilities by involving the effort of Community Services Officers with patrol to problem-solve together throughout in the community. The GIS system will support the prevention and problem-oriented policing strategies that focus not only on crime issues, but on other problems affecting the quality of life within the community and downtown - such as environmental factors.

The Nature and Extent of the Problem:

Based on problem analysis and data collection, CPW has put together the following preliminary findings. These findings are divided into four categories: problem history, contributing factors, public perceptions and problem distribution, impact and status.

Problem history:

Public safety, low economic vitality and general problems of disorderly behavior have been problems in the downtown district since at least 1984. The overall problems have been chronic with events and periods in which problem activity has become more active. The problem downtown involves economic issues, public perception concerns, as well as issues of crime vulnerability and public safety.

Contributing factors:

Several broad-based trends and factors contribute to the general situation of downtown Springfield. The lack of economic vitality in the district reflects general changes in the local and regional economy. These changes include shifts in the timber economy that has been the key industry in Springfield for the majority of its history. Development of competing commercial areas has placed downtown in regional competition with malls and other commercial districts, which contributes to the difficulty of drawing people into the downtown.

Changes in the mix of businesses in downtown are another factor that impacts the economic and social climate within the district. The chamber of commerce and local business owners are concerned that the current business mix is fairly limited, overall diversity of businesses has been eroded. People have identified the concentration of liquor dispensing establishments as a major concern that has impact on the downtown's image - especially activity in the evening. In addition, downtown faces a "one-stop" shopping problem. In other words, patrons of the downtown limit their visits to one business and tend not to visit the area as a whole.

The final contributing factor is the regional and metropolitan context in which Springfield is located. For example, during the project scan phase it became evident that prostitution had increased over a period of a week. After research and communication between the Community Services Officers and patrol, the cause of the increase was attributed to a crack down of prostitution in the neighboring city of Eugene. Other problems that impact downtown, such as homelessness, are also shared with Eugene and difficulty to problem-solving efforts in the area.

Public Perception:

Downtown's image is an important component in the lack of activity and vitality in the area. When crime events are highly publicized they can impact people's willingness to visit the area. As long as the downtown is perceived as an unsafe place for many Springfield residents, economic vitality will be impacted. Lack of sufficient lighting in the area impacts usage in the evening. Increased property upkeep and implementation of CPTED methods can assist by increasing the general feeling of safety in the district.

Problem Distribution, Impact and Status:

Problems in the downtown district are unevenly distributed both in time and location. Specifically, certain areas are more problematic and contribute to the overall concern of public safety greater than others. These areas include the various alcohol-dispensing establishments - an area concentrated on Main Street between Pioneer parkway and 6th Street. Other locations on the edges of the study area or just beyond the downtown district's boundaries also contribute to the problem. These areas include Island Park and the river area, neighboring Glenwood (an unincorporated area), the railroad tracks and millrace area to the south, and apartment areas to the north of the downtown.

Response

In collaboration with downtown merchants, property owners, workers and patrons, the Springfield Police Department is committed to reducing the presence of behavioral problems and other public safety concerns in the downtown. At the same time the Police Department's resources are limited and have been heavily impacted by recent statewide tax initiatives. This situation necessitates increased cooperation and participation by the project stakeholders - especially downtown business owners.

Currently there is a general consensus among business owners, residents and the Police that public safety in the downtown is improving and that the problems have subsided since 1995. This project and the efforts preceding it have been an important contribution to this process. Nonetheless, the downtown has room for improvement. Based on the analysis phase of this project the grant team identified two key actions that would greatly assist in the improvement of public safety in the district. These include 1) Increasing the awareness and involvement of business owners in crime prevention efforts by providing CPTED training, and 2) general improvements to the crime environment downtown through the implementation of a lighting survey.

CPTED Training:

After thorough review of the crime environment in downtown, the Community Services Unit identified opportunity for community collaboration in diminishing vulnerability to crime. In response, the Department hosted a CPTED training session for downtown business owners, managers and employees on May 27, 1998. This session utilized a PowerPoint presentation on CPTED principles and instructed businesses on how to conduct their own environmental scan and analysis for crime prevention opportunities at their place of business. Attendance at the meeting involved less than 20 percent of the local businesses, which presented an obstacle to the comprehensive effort to reduce vulnerability to crime in the area. However, development of the CPTED materials will provide an educational tool for future use in both commercial and residential districts. *A sample of the CPTED presentation is included in the Appendix.*

Lighting Survey:

The second response was developed to address community and local business owners' interest in improving the aesthetic appeal of the downtown area as well as public safety. General opinion from a variety of sources is that safety in the downtown varies greatly according by time of day. Safety in the area at night is highly impacted by inferior lighting due to Low Pressure Sodium (LPS) lighting throughout the district.

The lighting survey effort is currently in the development and planning stages. It involves a team of specialists from various disciplines to evaluate the effectiveness of existing lighting in the downtown area. The analysis focuses on the quantity and quality of light required to discourage loitering and disorderly conduct and to increase public safety. Tasks included:

- A field survey to collect detailed information about the quality and quantity of light in the district. The survey will capture information about existing streetlights to verify type of light poles and bulbs, and verify horizontal and vertical location.
- Use of a 3D, computer generated model of the downtown area in the analysis of existing and alternative lighting schemes. An analysis of the downtown to assess lighting options. This will include testing several specific sites for quality of light scenarios.
- Production of plan view maps delineating lit areas for alternate lighting scenarios. Production of renderings for alternate lighting scenarios to help visualize the effects of using different bulbs, lighting schemes in the district.
- Prepare presentation of materials and lighting options for decision makers and downtown business owners for implementation of lighting improvements.

The project team has identified a number of concerns and potential obstacles for the implementation of the lighting project. These include; level of business owner support, Main Street is a state highway, as well as the lessons learned from previous attempts to improve lighting in the district.

Assessment

The assessment efforts of this project include the following tasks; 1) establish baseline information, 2) identification of opportunities for improvement, and 3) identification of obstacles to change downtown and 4) project limitations.

Baseline Information:

To measure the success of the Problem-Solving Partnership, Community Planning Workshop has established a baseline of problem information to guide future assessment efforts. This includes the tasks outlined in the Analysis section of this report: community problem perception surveys, review of media reports, review of previous planning and development efforts, and environmental scanning of the area.

This component of the project also involves the development of baseline materials, including statistical information, public perceptions and attitudes about the downtown, and the review of the crime environment to use in future evaluations of public safety. This baseline will allow the Police Department and other interested stakeholders to set goals and objectives for improvement efforts in the district.

Two important areas of assessment will be based on Response efforts. For example, Community Services Officers will be able to quickly scan the area in the future to see if the business owners have implemented CPTED methods at their businesses. Perceptions of safety in the area can be assessed using survey materials to measure improvements in community attitudes toward the area. Awareness of crime vulnerability and prevention options will play heavily in this effort.

The crime prevention unit will also assess the impact of the lighting survey based on future improvements and implementation of new lighting methods - both on individual properties as well as within the district as a whole. This provides the opportunity to work in collaboration with the business community, local utilities and other stakeholders to improve the crime environment as well as the general aesthetic appeal of the district. The team will develop this project as a model to use throughout the city, to extend its application to other areas of concern.

Opportunities for Improvement:

In the process of assessing the project's success to date, the grant team has identified several opportunities for improvement. These opportunities include:

- Reduction of vulnerability to crime through the implementation of CPTED methods.
- Improvements in the crime environment, such as increased quality and quantity of lighting in the district, increased natural surveillance and increased awareness of CPTED methods.
- Community involvement is essential to improvement efforts. This project represents a strong move toward increased community involvement in POP efforts. The lighting survey has increasing support from local businesses and their involvement is essential to the project's success.
- Collaboration between the Police Department and other local agencies, such as Public Works, City Development Services, and local utilities is another important opportunity for improvement. Future collaboration in the improvement of the downtown is necessary.
- Community Services Officers have increased ability to work to alter the crime environment. This includes new analysis tools, such as GIS applications and CPTED training materials, as well as opportunities for increased involvement in decisions that impact the crime environment, such as monitoring the vacancy of storefronts in the district.

Obstacles to Change:

In the process of assessing the project's success to date, the grant team has identified several obstacles to improvement and positive change in the area. These include:

- Mixed community involvement impedes the implementation of comprehensive efforts to improve public safety in the district.
- Lack of sustained effort has hindered improvement of the downtown in the past. Problems have been present since at least 1984 and various efforts have resulted in mixed success.
- Impact of statewide tax measures on city government services has created a lack of sufficient funding and human resources. These impacts have been felt in the downtown and continue to hinder improvement efforts.

Project Limitations:

- This effort would have been greatly enhanced and would have been more efficient from the start had this GIS application been in place. In the future the GIS applications will save the Department a tremendous amount of time in problem scanning and analysis phases of the SARA methodology.

- The project was also limited by the involvement of core team members. Involvement varied according to interest and ability to participate, due to limited time available for the project.
- The project was unable to fully investigate the role of land use policies in the crime environment. This limitation offers significant opportunity for further research and collaboration between the Police and Development Services.

Conclusion:

Assessment efforts will continue as the project enters into important response activities, such as the lighting survey. The baseline of data and problem analysis established here will provide the ability to measure future successes. Project efforts have contributed greatly to the Community Services Unit's ability to address problems of loitering and disorderly conduct, as well as general perceptions of public safety in the downtown.

Agency and Officer Information:

- On July 5, 1994 the Springfield Police-Planning Task Force was organized to develop a long-range strategic plan for police services (1996 - 2016). Included in this plan is the SARA methodology for problem-oriented policing, (pg. 5, section 3.1.2 of chapter three).
- In 1992, the Community Oriented Crime prevention two week course was implemented at the Police Academy, Department of Public Safety Standards and Training in Monmouth. The S.A.R.A. problem solving methodology is located in the policies and procedures of the Springfield Police Department Manual, under general order 45.2.5. Through the Western Community Policing Center, a sergeant, two patrol officers, two community service officers, and members from the Lock Out Crime project, and Springfield Neighborhood Watch attended a Developing Community - Police Teams Training in Bend, Oregon, March 11-14, 1998.
- The incentive for officers using the S.A.R.A. methodology is a reduction for the calls for service to a particular area, and an opportunity to work with members of the community in a collaborative way with a common goal to create a safer place to live and work in.
- The strategy of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design was applied as a strategy along with the S.A.R.A. methodology. Two Community Service Officers have had training in the subject, and understand its' application.

The financial resources for this project have been provided through a COPS FAST grant, from the Department of Justice. The personnel that were originally assigned to this were a team of five people, but because of an unforeseen statewide tax measure on city government services, one person was assigned to coordinate the grant and one person to administer the grant funds.

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