

THE HAWTHORNE HUDDLE

MOTIVATING RESIDENTS TO RECLAIM A NEIGHBORHOOD

MINNEAPOLIS POLICE DEPARTMENT, MINNESOTA

- THE PROBLEM:** The Hawthorne neighborhood in North Minneapolis was devastated by a high incidence of crime, including narcotics trafficking, vandalism, and burglary; streets covered by litter; poor rental property management; and a declining housing stock.
- ANALYSIS:** The Minneapolis Police Department and its Community Crime Prevention/Safety for Everyone unit of the Community Service Bureau analyzed crime data from the neighborhood in 1996. Using police reports and crime maps, the department identified the number, types, and location of apparent criminal activity. The statistics confirmed the concerns residents expressed. A rise in the number of rental properties, a decline in housing conditions, and poor screening of tenants added to the crime problem.
- RESPONSE:** A large group of people—including residents; the faith community; the police; city, county, and Federal agencies; nonprofit organizations; and a corporate foundation—worked together to develop a strategy to combat crime and improve neighborhood conditions.
- ASSESSMENT:** The number of executed narcotics warrants dropped from 108 in 1997 to 51 in 1998; vandalism incidents dropped from 366 in 1997 to 198 in 1998; and burglary decreased from 240 in 1997 to 181 in 1998.

SCANNING

Minneapolis' Hawthorne neighborhood, a 77-square-block neighborhood in North Minneapolis, is home to approximately 7,000 residents, one-third of whom are younger than 17. Juvenile Probation Office data indicate that the number of juveniles on probation in the Hawthorne area is the highest in the city. In addition, seventy-five percent of the housing stock is rental, and almost half of the residents receive some form of Hennepin County Economic Assistance.

In 1996, drug trafficking and vandalism had been problems for at least 5 years in the Hawthorne neighborhood, and there was no sign that the problems would end soon. Past problem-solving efforts had been hit-or-miss, and there was little cooperation or sense of community among residents. Residents had no political clout with city or county government and showed little, if any, commitment to resolving neighborhood problems. They also expressed feelings of abandonment by city and county services, and residents believed that city officials had

made a conscious decision to ignore the criminal element plaguing their neighborhood.

Drug Dealing and Other Crime

A major interstate highway that flowed along the eastern edge of the neighborhood provided easy access to customers from the perimeters of Hawthorne. During one community meeting, two city officials observed more than 40 cars and a steady stream of pedestrian traffic at a drug house over a 2-hour period. The neighborhood was plagued by an increasing number of aggravated assaults, and random gunshots and drive-by shootings were common.

Civil Disorder

The narcotics trade in the area spawned a variety of quality-of-life problems, such as litter, poor housing, vandalism, loud music from cars and homes, and unleashed dogs barking loudly. Everywhere one looked, streets, yards and sidewalks were strewn with waste paper, broken glass, discarded plastic bags of clothes, and miscellaneous pieces of furniture. The market value of houses fell and some homeowners could not afford to leave: Their mortgage balances were higher than the market value of their homes. A Neighborhood Business Association analysis indicated that there was no economic viability or corporate investment in the Hawthorne area.

Residents confirmed that crime and disorder were major problems in a 1996 survey of 150 Hawthorne households conducted by the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitali-

based planning and implementation program that supports initiatives to address housing, economic development, crime and safety, and other neighborhood-identified concerns. NRP and the police department also conducted focus groups to learn about residents' concerns. According to residents, the top concerns in the neighborhood were litter and crime, including drug-

related crime, vehicle theft, vandalism, and burglary.

Police patrolling Hawthorne were discouraged by the magnitude of its social disorder. An overall sense of despair prevailed among residents and government agency staff facing the area's problems.

ANALYZING THE PROBLEM

The Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) and its Community Crime Prevention/Safety for Everyone (CCP/SAFE) unit of the Community Service Bureau analyzed crime data from the neighborhood in 1996. Using police reports and crime maps, the department identified the number, types, and location of apparent criminal activity. The statistics confirmed the concerns residents expressed in the NRP survey.

Narcotics Trafficking

MPD's analysis of 911 calls and citizen complaints showed that most drug activity occurred during the time that the department's Community Response Team (CRT), which deals with low-level street narcotics, prostitution, and other livability issues, was not present in the neighborhood. CRT worked a fixed schedule, usually during the work week. Most neighborhood drug dealers were aware of the schedule, and their busiest day of the week was Sunday. Most customers came from the immediate or nearby neighborhoods. The neighborhood was divided into four quadrants, and narcotics warrants issued in 1996 were equally distributed among the four.

The consequences for drug trafficking were not serious. A U.S. Attorney's Office study of 40 executed search warrants showed that of the 55 individuals arrested and charged with some level of felony narcotic behavior, 22 had 5 or more previous arrests for a variety of offenses. Of these 22, 3 were juveniles; of the remaining 19 individuals, each had been arrested 13 or more times.

Resources That Helped the Hawthorne Neighborhood Succeed

Organizations contributing funding and/or staff time to this effort included:

City of Minneapolis

- n Housing Inspections
- n Minneapolis Lead Program
- n Minneapolis Police Department
- n Minneapolis Public Schools
- n Solid Waste and Recycling
- n Water Department

Hennepin County

- n Children and Family Services
- n County Attorney's Office
- n Juvenile Probation
- n Sentence to Serve
- n Training and Employment Services
- n Welfare Fraud

Federal Government

Nonprofit Agencies

- n Accessibility
- n Hawthorne Area Community Council
- n Legal Aid
- n Loaves and Fishes
- n North Memorial Hospital

Churches

- n Berean Baptist Church
- n Faith Tabernacle Church
- n On-Fire Ministry
- n St. Phillip's Catholic Church
- n Zion Lutheran Church

Major Corporate Sponsor

- n In 1994, the General Mills Foundation granted \$3 million over 5 years for new and rehabilitated housing in the Hawthorne neighborhood. In addition, the Foundation gave \$200,000 for block club initiatives.

Training

In 1997, the entire Minneapolis Police Department received 8 hours of POP training, which was supported by a Federal grant. Also, all new officers in the Minneapolis Police Department receive 8 hours of community-oriented policing training during their academy experience. To gain an appreciation for the problems of urban youth, recruits work a full week (40 hours) in an inner-city youth organization through the Police-Community Training Partnership program.

Some of these individuals had been arrested between 38 and 41 times, and some of their violations were for repeat narcotic felonies. Of this group, not one received active jail time. The only risks for offenders were financial loss or the slight chance of criminal justice system response.

Poor Property Management

According to city housing inspections data, as drug activity increased and homeowners moved from the neighborhood, the number of rental properties grew. Rental property owners became increasingly part of the problem, allowing properties to decline while continuing to collect voucher-paid rents from Hennepin County Economic Assistance. Approximately 10 percent of homes had been sold to neglectful landlords, and another 30 percent were managed by owners with little, if any, experience. Many owners did not screen tenants and showed no interest in improving their management skills. The Minneapolis Community Development Agency refused to build any new housing or to reinvest in existing housing stock because of the ongoing drug trafficking and other problems.

Lack of Coordination Among Government Services

The Hennepin County Department of Children and Family Services conducted an analysis of government agency service delivery in the area and found that agencies had overlapping clients and that there was little coordination among the agencies to address the families' problems. It often was the case, for

example, that a family actively involved in drug dealing was receiving county economic assistance, on juvenile probation, receiving housing inspections complaints, and under supervision from a county Children and Family Services case worker. However, none of these services were coordinated.

RESPONSE

To organize the community, the MPD's CCP/SAFE unit sponsored a variety of neighborhood meetings and encouraged residents to participate in block clubs. A crime prevention specialist, Hillary Freeman, a civilian member of the MPD, attended these meetings and became actively involved in facilitating communication among community organizations and assisting residents and others in the neighborhood to solve Hawthorne's problems. Freeman trained block club members on how to use the ordinances and other tools available to the community for reducing crime. Residents used the block club meetings to record problem addresses and to identify next steps for action by both residents and police. Updates were provided at the next block club meeting, allowing residents to see the fruits of their labor.

Residents and Community Leaders Organize

As block clubs began to form, residents increasingly worked together to define neighborhood problems and to take ownership for resolving neighborhood issues. Residents became highly motivated to reclaim their neighborhood and regain a sense of control over their daily lives. They began actively to observe and record suspected criminal activity on their blocks and to report their observations to the MPD 4th precinct CRT. Approximately 200 residents became actively involved in the 14 block clubs formed in the Hawthorne neighborhood.

The MPD's Freeman met with leaders of faith organizations to solicit their assistance in problem solving. As a result, clergy from each of the neighborhood churches created a ministerial group that continues to meet monthly to address common concerns and to work with neighborhood residents.

Community members also continue to meet monthly at 7:30 a.m. in what is called the "Hawthorne Huddle." The General Mills Foundation originally organized the meetings in 1997 as a way to solicit feedback about projects it had funded in the neighborhood. Over time, the meetings expanded to address wide-ranging neighborhood concerns and now operate as a think-tank on policy issues that affect livability in the neighborhood. Participants include block club leaders, members of the clergy, police and other government staff, representatives of nonprofit organizations, and elected city and county public officials.

The Neighborhood Strategy

The MPD worked with other government agencies and the community to develop the following strategy to reduce crime in the Hawthorne neighborhood:

- n Increase enforcement of existing laws, including the State nuisance law, property license laws, and weapons ownership laws.
- n Establish partnerships among community residents and organizations and other city and county agencies.
- n Establish a sense of community by adopting shared community standards and by working with corporate partners who could influence policymaking and provide funding and volunteers for community initiatives.

The MPD's goal was to reduce the number of criminal narcotic arrests executed at specific addresses, the number of vandalism incidents, and the number of residential burglaries.

Neighborhood residents and the faith community developed standards of conduct for the community. The General Mills Foundation provided funding for a community dinner, at which block club members, faith community leaders, the MPD, and other government agencies met to agree upon the standards and to commit resources in support of them.

Government Agency Coordination

City and county agencies began to communicate with one another and developed a more holistic approach to service delivery to the community. They formed the Project Empowerment Team, whose participants included city and county agencies, Minneapolis Legal Aid, the North Memorial Family Practice Clinic, the Training and Employment Assistance Program, and other interested community partners. The team's purpose was to address family issues from an early intervention/prevention perspective and to match needy families with appropriate resources.

Strategy Implementation

Increased Enforcement. The police did the following to increase enforcement in the Hawthorne neighborhood:

- n Used the Computer-Optimized Deployment Focus on Results, or CODEFOR, system to focus enforcement efforts on problem locations.
- n Strengthened enforcement of the Conduct on Premise ordinance, a city housing inspection ordinance that addresses nuisance behavior—such as loud music and parties, narcotics and weapons possession, and prostitution—on rental property.
- n Encouraged stronger enforcement of the State Nuisance Law, which is enforced by the County Attorney's office civil division and addresses such nuisance behavior as narcotics and weapons possession and prostitution in or

on homeowner-occupied property, businesses, shelters, and bars.

Aggressive enforcement of the State Nuisance Law and Conduct on Premise ordinance began January 1, 1997. As a result, enforcement action was taken against 17 properties that had accounted for 875 police calls-for-service within 1 year.

Government Agency Coordination. The Project Empowerment Team offered community resources to 55 families demonstrating problem behaviors. Of those 55 families, only 5 were unwilling to use the resources.

Resident Initiatives. In response to residents' community standards for the neighborhood, Minneapolis Solid Waste and Recycling issued 300 "dirty collection" tags. The department placed dirty collection point tags at properties where residents did not place their garbage in proper containers and allowed it to scatter around the yard. This enforcement had two direct results: First, commitment to enforce the community standards was demonstrated, and second, a clean neighborhood did help to deter crime.

To provide young people with positive activities in their community and to steer them away from vandalism, residents and area churches created the Clean and Green Program, an antilitter project that offered youth a stipend for their work on Saturday mornings to clean up their neighborhood. The community also established a Safe House where children could be involved in positive, supervised activities and receive assistance with school work. Support for these initiatives also came from NRP, General Mills, grants to block clubs, and churches.

Rental Property Improvement Initiative. Through NRP funding, rental property owners received rental property management training and funds to increase and improve their security initiatives. NRP set

aside \$20,000, which was matched by the rental property owners, to install fences, locks, and lighting.

ASSESSMENT

The results of efforts to improve the Hawthorne neighborhood were measured through the MPD's crime statistics, a second NRP survey, and focus groups conducted with block clubs and other stakeholders. The MPD evaluated crime statistics weekly, and twice a year, the MDP and NRP requested feedback from residents.

The reduction of crime in Hawthorne has been significant:

- n Narcotics violation warrants declined 50 percent, from 108 in 1997 to 51 in 1998.
- n Vandalism incidents showed a similar reduction: from 366 in 1997 to 198 in 1998.
- n Home burglaries decreased from 240 in 1997 to 181 in 1998.

Home burglaries declined primarily because of education: Block club members were taught how to reduce burglaries by increasing the security of their homes and by reducing the opportunity for becoming a victim of crime. Also, as neighbors got to know one another, they became an extra pair of eyes, watching one another's houses.

Initial indicators for 1999 show a decreasing trend in narcotics arrests, vandalism, and burglary of dwellings.

Hawthorne Area Crime Statistics 1996–98

	1996	1997	1998
<i>Narcotics (Search warrants executed)</i>	103	108	51
<i>Auto theft/ theft from auto</i>	186	176	262
<i>Vandalism</i>	286	366	198
<i>Burglary of dwelling</i>	196	240	181

NRP conducted a survey of residents attending block club meetings in late 1998, and respondents indicated that they felt safer in their community and that crime was decreasing. Community feedback sessions showed that the goals of reducing crime and social disorder and organizing the community had been successfully accomplished.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Hawthorne Huddle, contact the Minneapolis Police, Downtown Command, 29 S. 5th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55402; phone: 612-673-3198; fax: 612-673-3940.