

**2006 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence
in Problem-Oriented Policing Submissions**

**SAFE AT HOME: A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH TO
RECLAIMING A BEAVERTON, OREGON, NEIGHBORHOOD**

Award Submission by

**Beaverton Police Department
Beaverton, Oregon**



Chief David G. Bishop

SAFE AT HOME: A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH TO RECLAIMING A BEAVERTON, OREGON, NEIGHBORHOOD

THE PROBLEM: In August 2004, complaints increased from citizens in a south Beaverton neighborhood about nuisance and criminal activity in a nearby apartment complex . Change of ownership of various apartment complexes and limited on-site management led to the slow degradation of this neighborhood. Problems included inadequate garbage collection, litter, abandoned vehicles, and run down appearance of buildings. Citizens did not feel safe in their neighborhood with open drug deals, pedestrian and vehicle traffic at all hours of day and night, and intimidation of group gatherings near their homes.

ANALYSIS: Officer observation, crime analysis, city leaders' concerns, and citizen complaints led to the police department's action to address the nuisance and criminal activity in this south Beaverton neighborhood.

RESPONSE: An initial community policing team of two officers, one sergeant and one lieutenant was created, and was eventually increased by four additional officers. The project was set up in the department's SARA database and e-mail. Officers identified problem apartment complexes and worked with landlords to improve their complex 's appearance and create awareness of criminal activity. Initial efforts were directed at litter and lighting issues, and community involvement, starting with a block party coinciding with National Night Out. Police visibility was increased; including foot patrols, which facilitated more person to person contacts. A Neighborhood Resource Center was set up within the complex.

The success of the police department's efforts created hostility with individuals involved in criminal activity in the apartment complexes prompting new problem solving efforts that included community meetings, bicycle team patrols and undercover details. Officers worked with apartment owners and HUD to evict problem tenants.

ASSESSMENT: The efforts of the community policing team and community partnerships led to 46 arrests and calls for service were reduced by 30 percent. In addition, four special enforcement missions resulted in large scale possession and distribution of controlled substance crimes, as well as recovery of stolen items and clearance of several burglary, theft and stolen vehicle cases. More important, the neighborhood's livability improved and citizens felt safe at home.

SCANNING

In August 2004, citizens who lived in our Greenway Neighborhood area began complaining about the appearance of an adjacent neighborhood. This was reemphasized during a “Mayors Walk” event which was also attended by the Chief of Police. Although most of the concerns centered on litter and noise, there were also drug and disturbance issues. It was obvious to all those on the walk that the neighborhood was deteriorating and action had to be taken to restore the neighborhood.

The Neighborhood involved encompasses approximately eighty low income, multiplex apartment units in a ten block area. A 24 hour convenience store and three schools border the perimeter. This neighborhood had been the focus of attention for the police department in 2001 for generally the same issues. As time went on, new problems and issues in other areas of the City allowed for a slow degradation of this neighborhood. Ownership of the various apartment complexes changed hands several times, effectively eliminating partnerships that had been established with the police department. Inadequate garbage collection for larger discarded items, general litter, abandoned vehicles and the run down appearance of some of the complexes were a constant visual reminder of the problems that were impacting those who lived there. Other concerns were drinking in public, open drug deals taking place on street corners, and a constant flow of pedestrian and vehicle traffic all hours of the day and night. There was a general “fear” to be out at night by the law-abiding citizens. While some community policing efforts had been used in the past, the department had primarily relied on a more traditional style of policing to deal with crime in this area.

ANALYSIS

Although the initial “eyesore” issues first gained the attention of City officials, it became apparent early on that it was only a symptom of the neighborhood’s distress. The overall condition of this neighborhood lent itself to criminal behavior. Street and property lighting was inadequate, allowing many “hidden” areas within apartment complexes. Officers who were assigned the initial project asked two primary questions of the landlord and tenant stakeholders:

- What can you do to make your neighborhood more livable and attractive to show ownership/guardianship of the area?
- What can we all do to make this area less attractive to the criminal element?

Through analysis of calls for service, the two assigned officers began to identify which apartment complexes needed the most attention , but were challenged with the fact that most of the complexes did not have on-site management. Many were owned by large real estate management companies and located out of state. They also confirmed that many of the tenants were either receiving financial assistance from the State, or were in a subsidized HUD housing program.

Some of the officers who worked this area in a patrol capacity knew that drugs, especially Methamphetamine was entrenched in the neighborhood. A total of 10 drug houses were identified as being in the neighborhood. A nearby high school, middle school, and elementary school added to the drug concern.

RESPONSE

As the project got underway, response measures were initially directed at litter and lighting issues. Two officers volunteered to head up the project from the field level. A sergeant was identified to be the point for information flow and a lieutenant was tasked with facilitating weekly updates to command. An important part of the response was regular positive feedback and support from command level officers. Most of the project tracking was accomplished by use of the Police Department's SARA data base and email.

A block party was organized to coincide with National Night Out. Officers were able to meet tenants and explain the project to them. The Police Department involved the City's public works department from the start. Public Works staff repaired lights that had been out and brought additional city lighting into the area. Officers were also successful in their requests to apartment managers to invest in additional lighting for their complexes. This was the first visible sign for the tenants that things were changing in the neighborhood. Officers also worked collaboratively with the City's Code Services to consistently enforce the City's policy on abandoned autos, removing unsightly vehicles from the neighborhood.

Foot patrols were organized on almost a nightly basis, although it was usually a two person uniform detail, some involved hidden surveillance. The uniformed foot patrols allowed officers to contact people that would not have normally been seen while driving by in a patrol vehicle. The foot patrols created a greater person to person relationship between officers and citizens.

On one occasion a mere conversation with a known methamphetamine dealer standing outside of her apartment, led to a consent search of her apartment. During the consent search, methamphetamine was discovered and a person with a felony arrest warrant was found hiding in a closet. Officers believed the daily person to person contact allowed police to develop a more open relationship with both law abiding citizens and non law abiding citizens.

A form was developed to capture each detail's result for weekly reporting up the chain of command. Although the officers were making contacts, making arrests and gaining intelligence concerning the activities in the neighborhood, they also were becoming unwelcome visitors for many who lived there.

The next few months were spent identifying and organizing the landlords, establishing a liaison with HUD, and continuing the visible police presence within the identified area.

Officers are required to use an Incident Response Card to document our responses to apartment complexes. This provides an excellent tool for property management to make decisions concerning the activities that are occurring on their property. The challenge with this neighborhood was most landlords lived off-site, or out of state and very few complexes had anyone to act as a complex manager.

BEAVERTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
INCIDENT RESPONSE NOTICE

Mgr. Contacted

Business / Apartment Name and Address _____ Bldg / Unit # _____

Date ____/____/____ Vandalism Theft Unwanted Person
 Disturbance Assault Domestic Disturbance
Incident Time _____
Excl. Time _____ To _____ Civil Standby Other _____
 Mediation

Person _____ C = Complainant S = Suspect E = Excluded _____ DOB _____
Phone _____
Person _____ C = Complainant S = Suspect E = Excluded _____ DOB _____
Phone _____

Details _____

Officer _____ DPSST _____ Phone #. 503/526-2261
Incident # _____ Case # _____

Police Supervisor Copy (White) See Back

Incident Response Card

As a result of the officers' persistence, one apartment owner, who felt strongly about being involved in the project, was eventually located. This landlord became a catalyst for communication with other owners. He became a collection point for the Incident Response Cards and helped disseminate them to the different management companies.

Officers constantly searched for ways to move the criminal element out of the neighborhood. The State's sex offender data base was accessed to locate registered sex offenders. Officers visited addresses within the neighborhood that were associated with sex offenders. Although most were within registration compliance, a couple of arrests were made and it was one more way to demonstrate police presence in the neighborhood.

As the police department began to make an impact on the group gatherings around the apartment complexes, a few were dispersed to a large park several blocks away from the neighborhood. A partnership was developed with the local park district to start a "Park Watch" with area residents providing visual deterrence for disruptive behavior.

After school started in September, School Resource Officers were brought into the communications loop of the project to provide intelligence concerning drug sales. SRO'S provided additional intelligence on drug activity within the schools and drug dealing activity nearby. The SRO'S were able to relay this information on the activity to the officers working the project where they compared it to intelligence they were getting from area residents. Once this was obtained, operations were conducted around these activities.

As fall arrived, activities dropped and it appeared that the police department might be entering a “maintenance phase” of the project. It was assumed we would be able to reduce some of the resources being put into play. However, in April 2005, officers stopped a resident of the neighborhood for a hit and run. This person menaced the officer with a weapon before running into an apartment. As officers began to establish a perimeter, approximately 150-200 people came out of the neighborhood and began engaging in anti-police antics. Officers knew the identity of the hit and run driver and it was decided that a tactical withdrawal was the proper way to proceed. The driver was later arrested without incident.

Officers also reported being harassed by some area residents who were making hostile comments and gestures towards the officers as if attempting to provoke a response. Officers would, on occasion receive threats of harm while on patrol by hostile residents making statements such as “Where’s my gun!” as the officer would pass by.

Some of area children would also simulate a gun with their fingers and point them at the officers. The area was demonstrating a level of hostility to not only law abiding citizens but to the law enforcement community as well.

At first glance, the hostility appeared to be a step back; however, officers quickly realized it was a good sign because it meant the very population the department was targeting was feeling pressure from officers and law abiding citizens. Although the livability issues were still a concern, the

department shifted its focus of the project to drug issues, and identified apartments that seemed to be the catalyst for the hostility. Through intelligence gathered by the focused patrol officers and a county- wide interagency drug team, it became apparent that Methamphetamine was fueling many of the calls for service in the neighborhood.

Six officers were identified (two from each of three different shifts) and made up the core of this effort. This allowed for the project team to be involved seven days a week. The supervision accountability structure and information flow process remained the same.

A pivotal point came when the department deployed more community policing activities starting with a “Meet and Greet” event in the neighborhood in an effort to show a non-enforcement side of the police department. The “Meet and Greet” included free refreshments provided by Starbucks Coffee and distribution of crime prevention material from a large, police decaded incident command vehicle.

Two bicycle team officers were tasked with riding the neighborhood during the day. A police department “Phantom” car – a marked patrol vehicle, no longer part of the patrol fleet – was regularly deployed around the perimeter of the area to give the illusion of the police being in the neighborhood.

Undercover details began to produce arrests and seizures of drugs. The 24 hour convenience store, which bordered the neighborhood and whose parking lots had become known for frequent hand to hand drug transactions, was targeted by these details. As intelligence was gathered during these assignments, additional connections were made back into the neighborhood. As cases developed, landlords and HUD received enough information to be able to evict involved tenants.

The Department organized a focus group meeting at the adjacent high school with approximately a dozen representatives of the large management companies that had properties in the neighborhood. During the meeting , attendees were educated on the issue of problem tenants being evicted from one property and relocating into another property while staying inside the neighborhood. Attendees were shocked when they were shown a bag of coffee representing the amount of drugs seized during the project.

Officers also approached the landlord who had been active with police to impact the problems in the area and secured a vacant apartment to use as a Neighborhood Resource Center. The landlord agreed to a rent free contract for six months. He allowed large distinctive signage that became a beacon, identifying police presence in the neighborhood. Officers not only used it as a base of operation for the directed patrols, but they would complete reports, make phone calls, and meet with citizens. Although everyone expected vandalism, or worse, to be directed at this Resource Center, it did not occur.

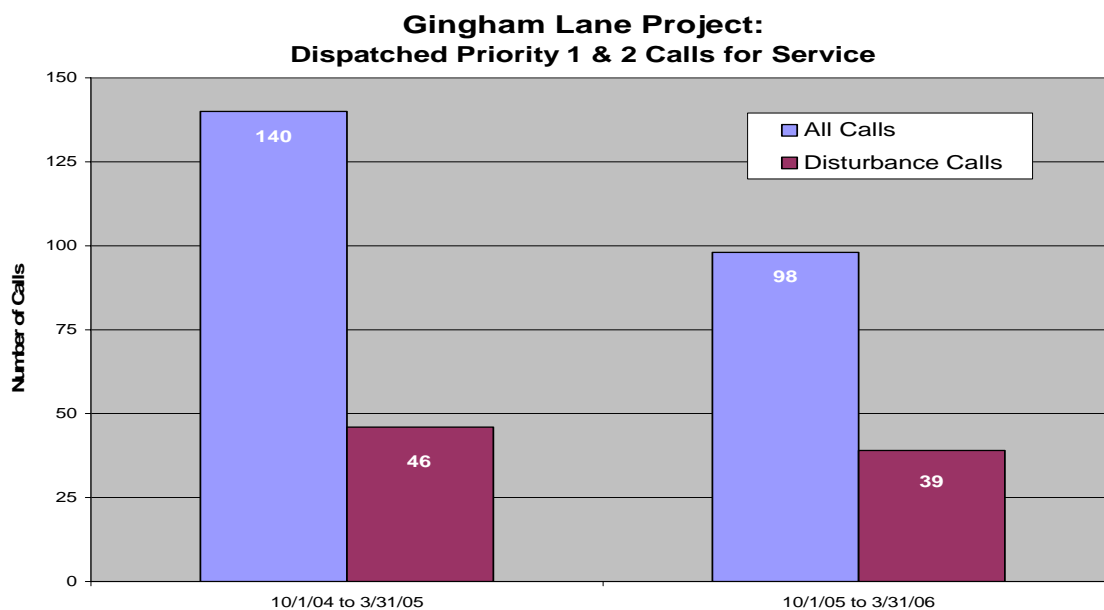
The addition of the Neighborhood Resource Center received a positive response from the law-abiding citizens. Officers were told on many occasions the Resource Center was a welcome sight and offered a sense of security to the neighborhood. On the other hand, the problem tenants showed great concern for the Resource Center. When contacting some of the problem tenants involved in criminal activity, officers were inundated with questions about the hours of operation, how many officers are there at any given time, response times from the center, and the possibility of hidden cameras.

ASSESSMENT

Litter issues were impacted, but not eliminated. The best that could be accomplished was continued pressure on management to keep a regular garbage pickup schedule. As specific dumpsters neared overflow capacity, calls were made to management. Lighting issues were improved by trimming trees that blocked street lights, changing appliances for brighter lighting, and convincing complex management to add specific lighting in alleyways and dark corridors.

One way to determine if a project is successful is by arrest statistics. During this project there were 52 arrests; 27 were for drug related crimes. Over two pounds of Methamphetamine were seized. As a result of these arrests and other intelligence from the neighborhood, 10 different apartments were identified as drug dealing locations. This resulted in 10 evictions by complex management. By networking with the various management entities, evicted tenants were prevented from simply renting from another landlord in the neighborhood.

The following graph shows calls for service between October 2004 (police menacing incident) and March 2005, compared to the same time period one year later after response measures were deployed. It shows a reduction of call response of approximately 30 percent.



Statistics rarely tell the complete story. Officers were told by many residents that they felt safer where they lived. District patrol officers reported much less questionable activity and verbal challenges by residents. Intelligence confirmed that hand to hand open area drug sales had all but stopped. The message to drug dealers; “This is not the place to do business anymore.”

Maybe the best measure of success are from the following examples:

- In one case, a car was stopped cruising the neighborhood looking for drugs, the driver told officers that this was the first time they couldn't find anyone to buy drugs from.
- In another case, a female dealer who was a target of some unsuccessful focused enforcement told officers that their efforts had made her realize that she was headed down a dead end street. She was later interviewed by a local news agency and expressed her gratitude to the officers for assisting her with changing her life style. This person attended treatment and entered a vocational training program.

A newspaper article may have captured it best when they quoted the sergeant who supervised the project; "I'm proud of what we've done down there. The officers involved have invested a lot of time and effort. They have worked very hard to achieve the goals we set for ourselves. This is an example of what can happen when citizens, property owners and the police department all work together to meet a common goal to create a safer community."

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

Although this project involved most levels of the police department, the true problem solving nucleus belonged to the six identified project officers and the “point” sergeant.

A commitment of overtime dollars to fuel some of the focused patrols was made by the administration. Most were done with a combination of on-duty and overtime resources, but the true success was the day to day regular duty work habits by officers working in this area.

There have been previous success stories which have given officers and supervisors the ability to adapt some of those response measures to fit this project. The department is small enough (127 sworn) that day to day communications and shift briefings allow for the sharing of methods that have worked in the past.

Our SARA data base is another tool to see what has taken place in the past. The department is, however, in the process of streamlining the data base and associated data entry to make it a more user friendly, increasing our ability to “tell a story” better chronologically of the project and response measures.

Our department is a community policing and problem solving agency, with a great deal of effort being made since 1995 to ingrain this philosophy into the every day work ethic of our officers.

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New police substation helps clean up crime

Nov 16, 2005, 10:37 PM PST



BEAVERTON - The crime rate is down in one Beaverton neighborhood and part of the reason may be because the police have moved in.

The apartments near Southridge High School have been a problem area for Beaverton Police. They report making 45 arrests in the neighborhood, between April and August this year, mostly for drugs.

Then the police moved in.

Moji Momeni invited the police to set up one of their neighborhood resource centers in one of his empty apartments.

So neighbors got used to seeing the police; not just arresting people, but hanging out at substation, patrolling in cars and on foot.

The number of calls for police service decreased by a third, after the cops set up the service center in September.



SAFE AT HOME

*New police team helps Gingham Lane residents
regain peace in their neighborhood*

By CHRISTINA LENT
Of the Times

Tracey Richardson
didn't feel safe in her
South Beaverton
neighborhood.

Her fear prompted her to get a dog for protection and never venture outside her Southwest Gingham Lane apartment once dusk fell.

"There have been times that I've been afraid," the single mother admitted. "I've had



verbal and physical threats not only against me, not only against my day care business, but also against my son.

"I've had threats of violence and been told to watch my back if I'm caught walking after dark.

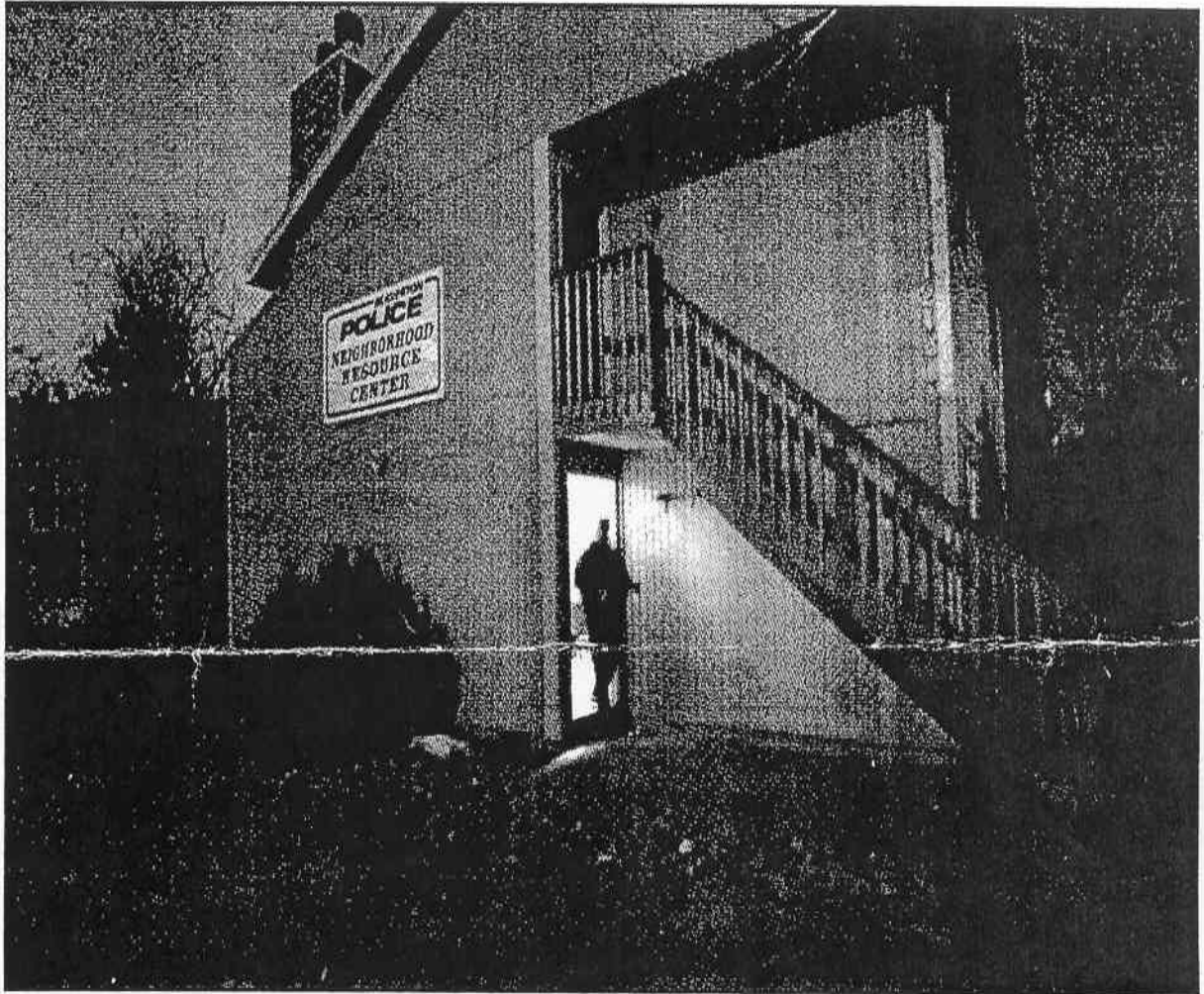
I've had two dead fish with a baby doll left at my doorstep and been told that they mean I'll be sleeping with the fishes. Once dark hit, we were inside the house for the night."

Richardson was not alone in her fear.

Other neighbors say they also couldn't walk through the neighborhood without being

■ See **GINGHAM, A6**

— SEE GINGHAM, A0



JAIME VALDEZ / The Times

WELCOME NEIGHBOR — Beaverton police have officially moved into a South Beaverton neighborhood, above, by opening a Neighborhood Resource Center on the once-troubled Gingham Lane area. Top left, Officer Rex Bennett talks about the police department's efforts to restore a sense of security in the neighborhood. Top right, Tracey Richardson, a single mother who cares for children in her apartment, talks about changes she has seen in the past several months.

■ Continued from A1

harassed and taunted.

Thanks to the efforts of a team of Beaverton police officers, the neighborhood has changed.

“Since the police have moved in, I’ve noticed a radical change,” Richardson said. “I don’t feel threatened coming out of my home anymore.

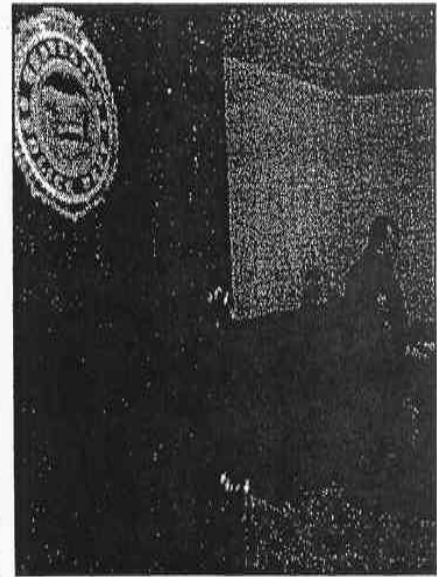
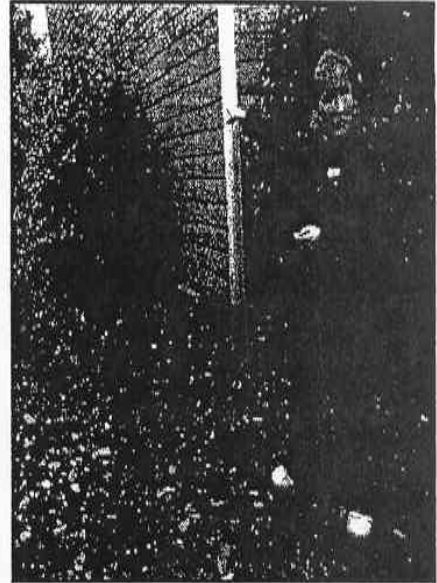
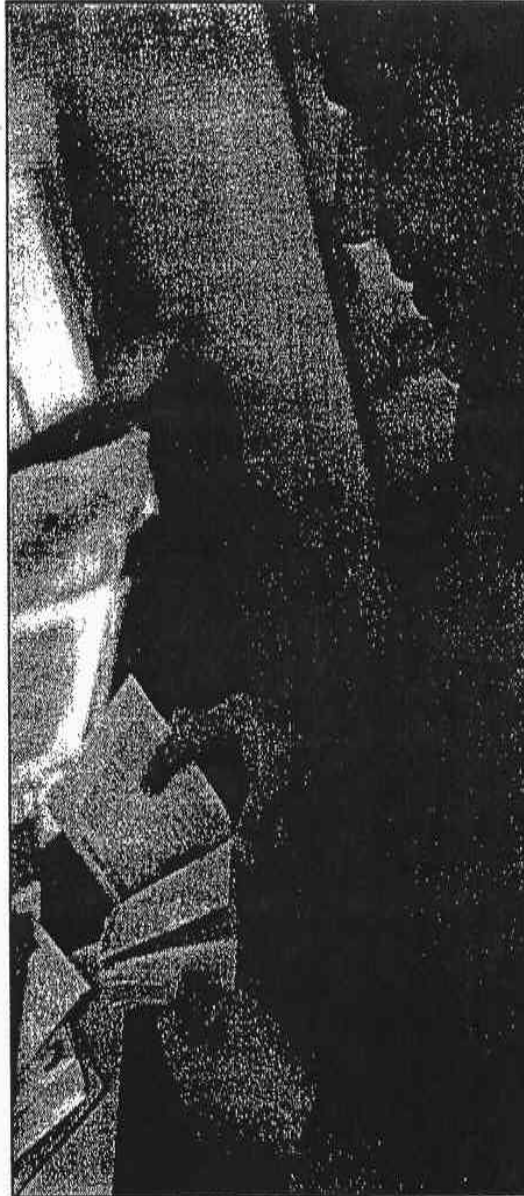
“There’s no more loud music until 1, 2 and 3 in the morning. I just generally feel safer in this neighborhood. I can take my son out and play, and don’t have nearly the worry or concern that he’ll get hit by speeding cars down in this area.”

Top priority

Beginning in April, Beaverton Police Chief David Bishop assigned a team to create a safer neighborhood after residents shared their concerns about the increasing criminal activity in the area with him during a neighborhood meeting.

Sgt. Darren Fletchall led the effort to increase police presence, create better communication between property owners and the police department, rid the neighborhood of nuisance residents and create a safer environment for citizens and officers.

“This project became a top priority for me,” Fletchall said. “I did-



JAIME VALDEZ / The Times

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD — Property manager Moji Momeni, above left, flips through a stack of incident cards that Beaverton police give him anytime they respond to a call in the neighborhood. Tracey Richardson, top right, points out a busy shortcut path next to her ground-floor apartment that often was used by suspicious people. Beaverton Police Sgt. Darren Fletchall, above right, reviews statistics showing a decrease in criminal activity since police opened the Gingham resource center.

CALLS AND OFFICERS.

"This project became a top priority for me," Fletchall said. "I didn't like the idea of people not feeling safe in their community."

"People were not free to walk out of their homes without being harassed."

That alone was unacceptable, he said.

But when considering that the neighborhood is bordered by Southridge High School to the west, Greenway Elementary School to the north and Conestoga Middle School to the south, the criminal activity raised even more concerns.

Add to that mix, officers being heckled and threatened while responding to calls for assistance, and you'll get an unstable and potentially volatile situation, Fletchall added.

"We had a major task ahead of us," he said.

Turning up the pressure

The department launched an aggressive enforcement campaign and created a project team to address the area's safety concerns.

The team included Sgt. Fletchall and officers Rex Bennett, James Patrick, Bryon Dalton, Jeremy Shaw, Matt Kingsbury and Scott Andler.

"We wanted to keep the pressure on in that area seven days a week if possible," Fletchall said.

Officers devoted more than 400 hours patrolling the neighborhood in cars and on foot between April and December.

"We spent a lot of time down here getting to know people," said Bennett. "From the beginning we drew a line in the sand of zero tolerance for any criminal activity."

"When we began enforcing those rules, we started to see a huge difference."

In time neighbors came to expect to see police officers and report suspicious activity.

"The main success of this program was getting to know the people because they became our friends and people we could trust," Bennett said. "There's a lot of good people out here who care about this community, and they are willing to help us."

Citizens told police that there were drug deals openly taking place in the street and lots of vehicle and foot traffic at all times of the day and night.

They also identified problem areas.

"There was a lot of activity that wasn't what I would consider good activity," Richardson said. "I could tell that there were adults in the

statistics showing a decrease in criminal activity since police opened the Gingham resource center.

neighborhood that were up to no good.

"They were people who had no business being here. I had never seen them before and they were looking around. I could not leave anything outside or it would be stolen."

The increased presence of police officers was a welcome addition to the neighborhood, she said.

"At first I noticed more patrols of the neighborhood and even more foot patrols late at night," Richardson recalled. "I would see them out there talking to people."

"The police made their presence more known and the activity slowly started decreasing. Before, people were in and out of the neighborhood all night long. That has really decreased. We don't see that anymore. It's dead silent now at night. It is so wonderful."

Getting the message

Moji Momeni, who owns several buildings in the Greenway Terrace development, also has noticed a change in the neighborhood.

"Low-income neighborhoods have a way of attracting undesirables who basically prey on the people who live there," Momeni said. "I truly believe the way to get rid of the rats is to turn on the light."

"With the increased patrols in this area, we pretty much eradicated the situation. It's not in existence now."

Since the project began in April, police have made 46 arrests, 23 of those related to possession of controlled substances crimes.

In addition, four special enforcement missions resulted in large scale possession and distribution of controlled substance arrests.

The effort also led to the recovery of several stolen items and the clearance of several burglary, theft and stolen vehicle cases, Fletchall said.

Between June and August, police responded to 68 calls for service compared to 21 calls for service between September and December.

"That's a 70 percent reduction in calls and much higher than I anticipated," Fletchall said. "The numbers are drastically dropping."

"In the month of September alone we went from averaging 23 calls a month to 11. For the months of October and November we

had five calls a piece."

To aid in the police department's ongoing efforts to keep the community safe, police have also worked with landlords to inform them of any calls they respond to in the area and educate them on their rights and responsibilities to their tenants.

Momeni donated the use of one of his apartments to serve as a Neighborhood Resource Center for six months.

The center serves as a place for officers to spend time in the neighborhood, complete reports, make phone calls, perform surveillance and take time to develop partnerships in the area.

"Having the community resource center here is helpful in the sense that it increases the police department's presence in the neighborhood to keep the undesirable elements out," Momeni said. "I've had absolutely positive feedback from the tenants and other people in the neighborhood."

"All of them love it and feel more comfortable and more at ease. Good people view it as a good thing. The bad people got the message and left."

A common goal

Officer Bennett said the center allows him to stay in the area for longer periods of time during his shift.

"It's right in the heart of the community and sends a message that the police here are not going to go away," Bennett said.

Fletchall agreed.

"We're in this for the long haul," Fletchall said. "This is something we're committed to. We don't want it to go back to what it was."

"I'm very proud of what we've done down there. The officers involved have invested a lot of time and effort. They have worked very hard to achieve the goals we set for ourselves. This is an example of what can happen when citizens, property owners and the police department all work together to meet a common goal to create a safe community."

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