



Seattle Police Department
Nomination - Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing

Summary

In response to 8 youth related homicides in 18-months in a small uniquely situated community made up of a large Spanish speaking population at the southern border of Seattle began a problem-solving effort that has changed the face of that small community. As the violence rose, the police department realized that enforcement action alone would not solve the problem. They began an aggressive campaign to address some of the underlying problems that were the cause of the violence. With initial successes, Mayor Greg Nickels directed his staff to convene a group of stakeholders to launch an effort that would become known as the South Park Action Agenda.

A community meeting was held that brought together a group of diverse stakeholders, including Police, Parks, Planning and Development, City Light, the Mayor's Office and over 160 community members and business leaders. At the initial meeting community members spoke of their struggle to keep their kids away from gangs and violence and the need to build a strong relationship between children and police officers. They asked that officers who understood the culture be assigned to work in the community, emphasizing the need for understanding and trust if there was any hope of a long-term solution. In addition to the public safety issues, the group addressed the other issues fostered that sense of isolation and hopelessness many felt. The group agreed to form five committees to develop specific strategies and recommendations around the issues of youth, environmental and physical improvements, community engagement, business and transportation and public safety. Each committee was chaired by a resident and staffed by a "team lead" from the city.

Initiatives to assess the problem took place, including a CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) assessment, door-to-door surveys, "living room forums" and a review of crime statistics looking for trends and patterns. Based on this information a variety of responses were put into place. The enforcement actions included emphasis patrols during peak hours of activity and coordination with gang officers and other federal and local agencies, as some of the suspects were associated with the MS13 gang. Interestingly, while the violence and crime had been the impetus for the work, the community soon focused beyond that. The real work of building relationships and developing a community that inhibited illegal activity was underway.

While the South Park Action Agenda is a work in progress, with short, mid, and long-term goals associated with it, since it began the look and feel of the community is much different. Most importantly, there have been no youth related homicides since 2005. The information that follows outlines the work that has been done since those times, as well as an acknowledgement that many of the foundational supports that have been put in place will need constant tending for long term success.



**Seattle Police Department
Herman Goldstein Award**

Project Description

Scanning:

Within the City of Seattle sits a small community called South Park. The area is physically located on the southern most border of the City and is boxed between the Boeing Plant and the Duwamish River with a mix of residential and small business. It is a community of 3,000 residents. Its demographics are unlike any other community in Seattle. Approximately 37% of the residents are of Hispanic origin, (many speaking English as a second language) compared to 5.3% in other parts of the city. 11% of the residents live in poverty and 89% of the children qualify for free or reduced-fare lunches. Unlike the citywide average of nearly 90% of people over 25 having completed high school, in South Park that figure is approximately 33%. In addition, most services must be sought outside the community. There is no post office, full-service grocery store, bank or neighborhood service center. Additionally, there are inadequate public transportation options to connect South Park with other neighborhoods where services can be found. Violence and crime have plagued the neighborhood with an increase in gang-related activity and gun violence. This hit a crescendo in 2005, in an 18-month period there had been eight youth related homicides in this small community.

A number of factors played into the rising level of crime and violence the community was experiencing. Given the depth of the problem, looking to the police department to quell the violence and bring some semblance of safety to the community was, at best, a short-term solution. Recognizing this, an aggressive campaign to address some of the underlying

problems that were the cause of the violence began. Together with the Latino Advisory Council, the police department began a pilot project that focused on gang intervention and violence prevention initiatives. Initial responses showed promising results. However, all who lived or worked in the community knew that this was not going to bring any lasting changes. To support the initial efforts, in 2006 Mayor Greg Nickels directed his staff to convene a group of community members, business leaders, service providers and city staffers to launch an effort that would become known as the South Park Action Agenda.

Analysis:

The first step in the process was to hold a forum that brought together a group of diverse stakeholders, including Police, Parks, Planning and Development, City Light, the Mayor's Office and over 160 community members and business leaders. The goal of the forum was to gather information and get input from the community as to what they perceived as the problems and a commitment to be part of the solution. Over and over community members spoke of the lost youth, their struggle to keep their kids away from gangs and violence and the need to build a strong relationship between their children and the police department. They asked for police officers that understood the culture many had left in their Native countries. They also expressed a need for understanding and trust to be established if there was any hope of a long-term solution. In addition to the public safety issues, the group addressed the other issues that helped to foster the sense of isolation and hopelessness many in the community felt. One other bit of information that came through clearly was, that although the forum was well attended, there were many others, probably at higher risk, that did not attend out of fear or hopelessness. Clearly additional outreach was needed. Action steps were developed that included the formation of five committees that would do additional

outreach and develop specific strategies and recommendations around youth development, environmental and physical improvements, community engagement, business and transportation and public safety. Each committee was chaired by a South Park resident and staffed by a “team lead” from the city.

Committee members, supported by city staff and resources engaged in an extensive process to outreach to the South Park community in a series of “living room forums.” Several residents hosted gatherings in their homes, attended by neighbors. The groups discussed neighborhood issues and completed a neighborhood survey. City Staff also attended regularly held community events and asked community members to complete a shortened “street version” of the survey. Additionally, this shortened version of the survey was posted online and advertised to the South Park list serve. The process yielded 227 surveys (111 long, 82 street, & 34 online). Overall, 46% of those completed identified themselves as Latinos, and English speakers completed 54%.

In addition, the Youth Development Committee included four youth leaders who initiated, organized, and facilitated a youth forum where a diverse group of 40 teenagers completed a South Park Action Agenda Youth Forum survey, participated in small group discussions, and enjoyed socializing with each other at the South Park Community Center. Information gathered from these activities supported the needs voiced by committee members, and reinforced feedback from previous youth forums and planning documents.

Response:

Based on all of the accumulated information a Vision for South Park was created as well as community goals for each of the five committees. They are as follows:

- ◆ **Youth Development:** Create and maintain a vibrant South park community that provides unlimited opportunities for youth and families to thrive.
- ◆ **Environment & Physical Improvement:** Seek a variety of improvements designed to improve the quality of life in South Park, promote economic development and protect public health and safety.
- ◆ **Community Engagement:** Create and maintain a neighborhood where all community members feel welcome, are informed and educated about the decisions impacting the neighborhood, and have a voice and vote in the decision making process. Educate and train community members and providers so they are able to outreach to residents in a language appropriate and culturally competent manner. Create and maintain an environment where the great diversity, culture, history and traditions of South Park residents are valued and appreciated.
- ◆ **Business and Transportation:** To create and maintain a neighborhood where frequently purchased items are available in the neighborhood; where there is robust access to mass transit or an alternative to driving into and out of South Park; and where there is a successful industrial sector.
- ◆ **Public Safety:** To ensure a neighborhood in which the community can safely live, do business, and interact with others, now and for generations to come. Must be founded on cohesive community that is engaged, empowered, and focused on common goals and priorities.

Within each of these subcommittees, specific strategies were developed, with short, mid and long-term recommendations regarding initiatives that, if implemented, would lead to the stated goals* .

Short Term Recommendations	
Action Item	Results
Reduce violence in the community through police emphasis patrols, including foot and bicycle patrols. Identify specific times and crime issues to provide effective emphasis patrols.	See crime stats at end of report
Encourage interaction and engagement of the community in culturally and language appropriate ways.	Translation of documents into Spanish, including a medical release form that previously had only been available in English. Provided interpretation services at all public safety community meetings.
Make physical improvements to the community, including increased lighting; clean up of	Community Clean-up: Part of the issue that existed in this community was the physical environment. To address this several community clean-ups were done. There was one that

* This is only a portion of the recommendations made. The focus of this document is public safety, specifically police response, so only those recommendations pertaining to that are highlighted.

<p>high crime areas, and implementing CPTED principals whenever possible to reduce the opportunities for crime and disorder problems.</p>	<p>involved only the youth and they cleaned up a park that had been neglected and unused because of the illegal activity that had been going on there. Additionally, through the CPTED assessment, a location that had been identified as a high-crime area was also a perfect spot for a community park. The community applied for and received a \$50,000 grant to clean it up and turn it into a park.</p>
<p>Action Item</p>	<p>Results</p>
<p>Establish a Middle/High School Truancy Program to curtail unexcused absences from School.</p>	<p>A small grant was received to work with 20 youth from the community that had serious truancy problems. One of the officers worked directly with the youth and their families to address the issues around the truancy and to hold the kids accountable to a contract requiring them to attend school. An outgrowth of this was the establishment of the Getting Youth Beyond Barriers in School (GYBBIS) Program. When youth are suspended for truancy, fighting and insubordination they saw it as a positive, they were officially released from the responsibility of attending classes and were free to “hang out” without any consequence. The GYBBIS Program set up an alternative for kids who have been suspended. They were required to report to an off-campus location where they continue to work on their academic development and are held accountable for their behavior.</p>

<p>Assign School Resource officers to work with schools that South Park Youth attend.</p>	<p>The SPD eliminated the School Resource Officer program several years ago because of staffing issues. Despite this the Southwest Precinct has assigned each Community Police Team officer to work directly with the high school and middle school that the South Park community feeds into.</p> <p>One of the CPT Officers has developed a relationship with the schools and the community, working to bridge the gap that often exists in this community. He has been instrumental in bring information from the community to the schools and visa-versa. He has developed a level of trust among the community and the service providers that have allowed him to work extremely well in this capacity.</p>

Action Item	Results
<p>Increase the amount of police presences and involvement at community events.</p> <p>Increase and continue existing youth outreach programming with the Seattle Police Department.</p>	<p>Several projects have addressed the ongoing need to build strong relationships between youth and the police. Included in those are:</p> <p>Role Reversals: This was an opportunity for the youth to put themselves in the shoes of police officers, and police officers to put themselves in the shoes of the youth. In role reversals a scenario is given and the groups acts out the others response to the scenarios. In the beginning when the role reversals were done, each scenario ended with the youth (acting as officers) in physical confrontations with the police (acting as youth.) As the groups began to share and work together, the end result of the scenario became less and less violent and more cooperative.</p> <p>Donut Dialog: Much like the Role Reversals, this was an opportunity for youth and police to sit down in a non-confrontational setting to discuss why they do what they do. It allows for the other to see the person behind the role and has been instrumental in developing a deeper appreciation for the issues each face.</p> <p>Back to School Make-overs: This was an opportunity for girls, who traditionally opted out of the sporting events to participate with adults in a way that was more comfortable to them. Much</p>

like the popular “make-over” shows, the girls were treated to a day of pampering. From haircuts, to make-up tips, to manicures, pedicures, and fashion advice, they were engaged with adults in a non-threatening manner. For many it was the first time they had seen adults in a non-confrontational role. Towards the end of the day some of the girls began to discuss issues that they had never shared with anyone before and provided adults with insight as to why some of the girls were struggling.

Youth Academy: a nine-week Youth Academy was established to provide the youth with an opportunity to learn more about the Police Department and the Criminal Justice System. Included in this were opportunities for the kids to participate in hands-on activities and to learn about a variety of jobs that exist within the criminal justice system, from court clerks, to interpreters to police officers, to jail guards. A second seven-week Youth Academy followed the first and was tied to the low Washington State Assessment & Learning Scores in math and science. This Academy focused on the science and math of criminal investigation. The kids worked hand in hand with the Crime Scene Investigators to solve crimes using basic science and math techniques, giving them some real world context into how math and science can be used in the real world.

Mid-term Recommendations	
Action Item	Response
<p>Increase the number and type of youth activities.</p> <p>Support Multicultural events.</p>	<p>Sports events: partnering with the community center and the Parks department, late night activities were set up to draw the youth into the community center, a variety of activities including the traditional “late-night basketball”, bicycle safety programs, dodge ball tournaments, chess classes and scrabble tournaments were available for the kids. In addition, one of the officers took on the role of coaching the wrestling team at the High School where most of these kids attend school. Through this he became a trusted mentor and supportive adult for the kids. He was able to engage them outside of his role as a police officer, became familiar with their teachers and special issues they face academically and provided them a positive environment in which they have been successful and received positive attention. One of the youth he has mentored is doing his senior project on “Staying out of Gangs”, using his own personal experience as the basis for his project.</p> <p>West Side Story Project: A unique collaboration between the 5th Avenue Theatre and the Seattle Police Department. The West Side Story Project was developed as a way to use the West Side Story play as a vehicle to discuss gang violence with youth attending Seattle Public Schools. An advisory team was created</p>

Comment [AZD1]: bicycle safety programs

	<p>and the work that resulted was an ambitious and engaging partnership in which youth attended forums, created individual artistic interpretation, discussed violence, visited the 5th Avenue Theatre backstage and watched the new production of this classic story. We know too well that youth gang violence is a problem across our country. While there have been many attempts to begin and maintain community dialogue, results have varied. This project, although grand in scale, is fully replicable in any city or town. With this in mind, a presentation was given at the Police Executive Research Forum in Chicago for those interested in developing new strategies to address youth violence. This partnership has proven to be a benefit to the youth of Seattle, the community at large and the SPD.</p>
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Long Term Recommendations

Action Item	Response
<p>Encourage minority groups to actively participate in community organizations such as the South Park Neighborhood Association and serving on public safety committees that meet with the Seattle Police Department.</p>	<p>The South Park Community continues to stay engaged with the Southwest Precinct and the officers who patrol their community. In the two years since the SPAA has formed opportunities for community involvement continue to improve. Last year during national Night Out (against crime) South Park hosted one of the largest community BBQ's in the city. Providing opportunities for community members and police to interact in a friendly, non-confrontational manner. Through efforts like this the</p>

	<p>relationship between the community and police has continued to grow and strengthen.</p> <p>The Latino Advisory Council continues to provide leadership and guidance to the large Spanish speaking population. Their commitment to improving relationships between the community and the police has fostered a new group of community leaders that are committed to this ongoing process.</p>
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Analysis:

The above initiatives reflect only a small number of the overall achievements that were accomplished by the South Park Action Agenda. They are however, a great source of pride for the community and the City of Seattle.

To say that the community of South Park has been transformed is an understatement. The biggest and most significant outcome since the South Park Action Agenda was begun is that there have been no youth related homicides in the community. Given the rate in which youth were being killed prior to this effort, this is a huge success to the community.

Physically the Community looks much different. Sidewalks have been cleared of debris and overgrown foliage, lighting has improved, and people are on the street engaged in positive and productive activities. Parks that had been the sole domain of drug dealers, prostitutes and other criminals are now filled with families and children. A new library has been opened with access to computers and Internet that previously required a cross-city commute to access. The most dramatic makeover is the Community Center. It has become the heart of

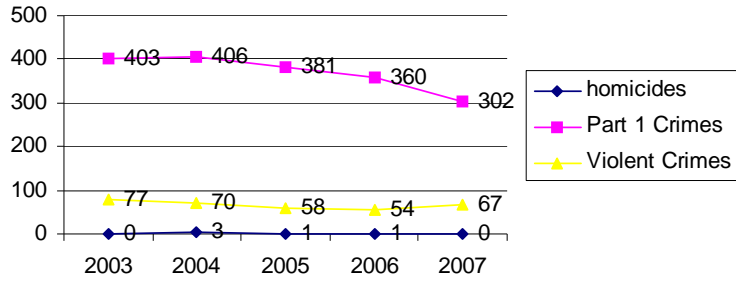
the community. Kids flock to the center before and after school, in the evening and late at night. They come for the activities and for the adults who work and volunteer their time. A recent incident shows just how much has changed. As a late night program broke up, a car filled with youth drove by the center, with one of the passengers displaying a gun. In the past the youth that were threatened would have gone home, gotten their gun, and set out to find the offenders. On this occasion, they returned to the community center and told the adults about what had just transpired.

It is clear that the youth who live in this community are still exposed to and recruited by the gangs that will always prey on their vulnerability. What has happened in South Park is that there is now a counter-balance. The seductive marketing of the “gangs” and what they represent will lure some youth, despite all that is offered. But the vast majority of the youth, given the option, will choose a more productive and safer course. The work of the South Park Action Agenda has given them that choice, one that has ultimately changed a community and the people who live there.

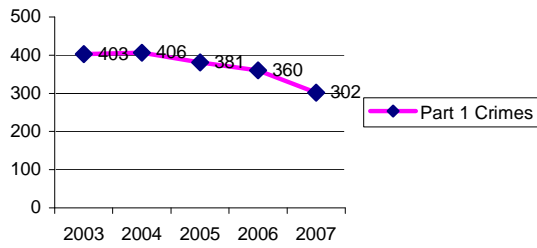
The vitality and viability of the South Park Community has improved dramatically over the past two years. The attached charts show that reported crimes have dropped significantly. More astounding is that as the city sees another upswing in the number of gang related shootings, none of them have occurred in South Park. While there is still much work to be done, the City of Seattle and the Seattle Police Department have cemented the partnership they began in 2005. The voices of those in South Park have been heard and are now part of the fabric that makes up this diverse and growing City.

South Park Crime Statistics – 2003-2007

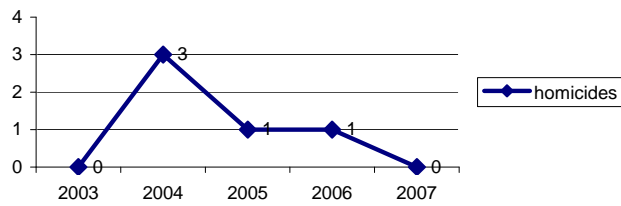
Total for CT 112



Part 1 Crimes - CT 112



Homicides - CT 112



Agency and Officer Information:

The problem solving initiative was initiated and adopted at the top of the Organization, with both the Chief of Police and the Mayor authorizing resources. The Seattle Police Department had provided all employees extensive problem solving training during the late 1990's. Many of the people involved in the project had been involved in the training and understood the problem solving process. No additional incentives were given to officers who participated in the effort. While there was no formal manual that was used to guide the group through the model, other projects that have been addressed in the past were clearly tailored to the SARA problem-solving model. A variety of issues and problems were identified in the scanning portion of the project and are outlined in the project description. Because of the wide spectrum of stakeholders participating and the commitment of resources from the Mayor and the Chief, the group had a number of areas from which to draw on needed resources. As you can see from the Project Description, the community members undertook a lot of the work themselves.

Project Contact Person:

Cathy Wenderoth
Strategic Advisory
610 5th Avenue, PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986
206-733-9338
206-684-5525
cathy.wenderoth@seattle.gov