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**MORE EFFECTIVE PLACE  
MANAGEMENT: AN EVALUATION OF  
COOK COUNTY'S NARCOTICS  
NUISANCE ABATEMENT UNIT**

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***Abstract:** This chapter describes an impact evaluation of the Narcotics Nuisance Abatement Unit (NNAU) of the Cook County (Chicago) State's Attorney's Office (CCSAO). A central feature of the program is its emphasis on citizen and police cooperation in identifying properties on which drug sales are occurring. The program began in August 1990 and has become part of a community-based drug control strategy targeting buildings that are sites for drug trafficking or sales of drug paraphernalia. Neighborhood groups, police and other government agencies contact the program to make it aware of such nuisances. The NNAU employs three strategies: voluntary abatement, prosecutorial abatement and community outreach. The current chapter deals with the NNAU's effects on residents' perceptions and on subsequent drug dealing. A survey of residents living on blocks with and without abatement actions produced no evidence that evictions had any impact on citizens' perceptions of drug activity, other signs of disorder or feelings of safety on the block. Follow-up observations found no signs of drug dealing at eight of the ten abated buildings studied or on the blocks on which they were located.*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes an impact evaluation of the Narcotics Nuisance Abatement Unit (NNAU) of the Cook County (Chicago) State's Attorney's Office (CCSAO) (Lurigio et al., 1993). The primary objective of the abatement program is to rid neighborhoods of drug activity and drug-related crime through the abatement of drug houses and drug paraphernalia dealing. A central feature of the program is its emphasis on citizen and police cooperation in identifying properties where drug sales are occurring.

The CCSAO created the NNAU in response to the alarming growth of drug arrests in Cook County. The program began in August 1990, and has become part of a community-based drug control strategy targeting buildings that are sites for drug trafficking or sales of drug paraphernalia. Neighborhood groups, police and other government agencies contact the program to make it aware of such nuisances. The NNAU attempts to abate nuisances by employing three strategies: voluntary abatement, prosecutorial abatement and community outreach. As of May 1997, the NNAU received over 10,000 complaints of possible nuisances, leading to over 5,000 voluntary and 200 court-ordered abatements.

Our study of the NNAU was built on earlier research regarding the procedures and outcomes of nuisance abatement programs around the

country (see Smith et al., 1992). It examined the program's effects on residents, landlords and drug dealers, and assessed program-related changes in the social character of targeted neighborhoods. Attention focused on signs of disorder such as visible drug dealing, prostitution, graffiti and litter.

The current chapter deals with the NNAU's effects on residents' perceptions and subsequent drug dealing. (For a description of the program's impact on landlords, see Smith and Davis, this volume.) The first section provides an overview of the impact of drugs on communities, of citizen anti-drug initiatives and of drug abatement strategies across the U.S. The second section discusses the NNAU's history, structure and protocol for processing cases. The third section presents the results of our evaluation of the program, involving a survey of residents living on blocks with and without abatement actions and observations of targeted properties and blocks following abatement. The fourth section summarizes the major research findings and draws conclusions about the program's effectiveness.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **The Impact of Drugs on Communities**

Drug sales and the variety of crimes they spawn have affected every major American city. Drugs have had an especially devastating impact on poor communities, and are both a symptom of and a factor in the continued decline of those areas (Johnson et al., 1990). Considerable evidence points to the deterioration of the inner city. Since the 1970s, middle-class residents, businesses and jobs have been fleeing to the suburbs. Among other factors, this exodus has left the poor increasingly isolated and economically disenfranchised (Wilson, 1987). The spread of illicit drug trafficking has aggravated these conditions.

Drugs have contributed to the decline of inner city communities. Johnson et al. (1990) argues that drugs have created a criminal underclass heavily involved in drug distribution, sales and consumption. Members of this underclass often engage in violent and disruptive behaviors that have had a devastating impact on the poor. Scholars have compared the psychological effects of living in underclass neighborhoods to those of living in a war zone (Garbarino et al., 1991). In a 1988 national survey of poor households, 40% of the respondents identified illegal drugs and drug problems as the number one issue facing the nation (Lavrakas, 1988). Similarly, a national survey of law

enforcement executives indicated that citizens in their jurisdiction considered drug trafficking the country's principal crime problem (Lavrakas and Rosenbaum, 1989).

Researchers have extensively documented the relationships among drugs, crime and neighborhood disintegration (Clayton, 1981; Gandossy et al., 1980; Inciardi, 1986). Citizens typically perceive visible drug sales and abuse as signs of social disorder and degeneration (Skogan, 1990). When residents become acutely aware of active drug dealers and prospering drug houses, they conclude that citizens and the police have lost control of the streets. Residents soon begin to view their community as an inadequate environment to raise children and establish businesses (Davis and Lurigio, 1996).

### **Community Initiatives Against Drugs**

Criminal justice experts have suggested that perhaps the best hope for curtailing drugs in inner city neighborhoods lies with the cooperation and involvement of local residents (Heinzelmann, 1989; Lavrakas, 1985; Rosenbaum, 1988). Police departments have implemented numerous innovations, including drug hotlines, Crime Stoppers programs (Rosenbaum et al., 1989), and community policing strategies (Eck and Spelman, 1987; Rosenbaum, 1994; Sparrow et al., 1990). Furthermore, the federal government has investigated and promoted grassroots anti-drug projects. In short, law enforcement authorities are acknowledging that the police alone cannot carry out effective anti-drug efforts at the community level. Citizen involvement in the fight to rid neighborhoods of drugs is crucial.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, citizens joined ranks with law enforcement in anti-drug initiatives. Citizen programs to combat drugs have assumed a variety of forms, from visible street patrols to anonymous telephone hotlines. These programs have appeared in hundreds of communities and are endorsed by neighborhood residents. Citizens dissatisfied with governmental responses to the drug problem are now acting in creative ways to "take back the streets" from gangs and drug pushers, and to restore their neighborhoods to places where people can live and work without fear or disruption (Davis and Lurigio, 1996; Rosenbaum et al., 1991).

Drug house-specific municipal ordinances and novel applications of already-existing ordinances and state laws pertaining to "nuisance abatement" or "public safety" are among the newest and potentially most powerful weapons being developed to combat drugs in the private housing sector. Drug house laws vary in content and form (Finn and Hylton, 1994). For example, some involve civil remedies, others, criminal

sanctions. Some may be brought by neighborhood residents, whereas others require the intervention of the police or district attorney. The laws are significant because they give property owners a strong incentive to prevent drug sales on their premises. They also afford some protection to property owners who might otherwise be subjected to intimidation or retaliation when they try to evict dealers. However, simply having these laws is not enough. In order for the laws to work, citizen cooperation is extremely important.

### **National Study of Drug-Abatement Programs**

Drug dealers often operate from indoor locations. They may work out of their own homes or apartments; sometimes, they take over entire buildings. In other instances, they seize control over one of the many abandoned buildings in low-income, inner city neighborhoods. The locations frequently become the sites of both drug sales and use: Crack houses and shooting galleries are neighborhood locations where drugs can be bought and used on the premises.

People unfortunate enough to live near drug houses seldom have the luxury of simply escaping the problem. The best solution for most of them is to move to a similar neighborhood in another part of town that probably has the same drug and crime problems as the area they just left. However, in the late 1980s local law enforcement began to discover a promising strategy for getting rid of drug dealers (i.e., drug abatement programs), which involves better place management (Eck and Wartell, 1996). These programs may prove to be among the most effective tools that either police or citizens can use to combat neighborhood drug problems (Green, 1996).

Smith et al., (1992) conducted a national study of drug abatement programs. They investigated the effects of a variety of mechanisms to eliminate drug houses from neighborhoods. The study had three components: a survey of the nation's largest cities to examine existing efforts to eradicate drug houses; a legal analysis of drug house ordinances and laws, and the court challenges abatement efforts have faced; and an in-depth exploration of five drug abatement programs in Alexandria, VA; Milwaukee, WI; Toledo, OH; San Francisco, CA; and Houston, TX.

Smith et al. (1992) found that abatement actions had considerable exposure in their communities. Community awareness was highest in Houston and Toledo, where properties were often visibly closed as a result of abatement actions. It was lowest in Milwaukee, where abatement actions frequently consisted of just a private letter and a quiet eviction. Hence, abatement program methods clearly affected levels of community awareness.

Overall, residents in the sample neighborhoods strongly supported abatement efforts. Across the five cities, 93% of the respondents believed that the specific abatement actions taken in their neighborhoods were warranted and appropriate. Abatement actions were also related to a number of favorable changes in residents' perceptions of their neighborhoods. One in three respondents believed that the actions had reduced drug sales, while one in four believed that the actions had reduced drinking and the number of kids hanging out. The abatement actions had mixed effects on how respondents felt about their neighborhoods. In some instances, abatement actions alerted residents for the first time, to the serious drug problem in the neighborhood, leading them to report that they liked their neighborhoods less and that they were less safe since the abatement action.

## **PROGRAM HISTORY, STRUCTURE AND CASE PROCESSING**

Street-level drug trafficking is an important element of Cook County's illicit drug economy. The strategic use of residential and commercial buildings for drug activities is a critical aspect of this economy. Drug houses have benefits over street-level dealing because they afford traffickers invisibility and other defenses to protect them from law enforcement. The number of such establishments is not precisely known; nonetheless, local law enforcement officials estimate that they are quite common in most areas of Cook County where drug sales and abuse are prevalent.

### **Program Origins**

As shown in Table 1, arrests in drug houses have accounted for a significant percentage of drug arrests in Chicago. Prior to 1990, the Chicago Police Department and other law enforcement agencies in Cook County were primarily responsible for targeting drug houses. However, at that time no systematic or coordinated efforts addressed the problem at the county level. The police department's emphasis on drug house investigations was then sporadic: other drug crimes, other crimes in general and other policy matters were always competing for police resources. Furthermore, targeting drug houses and following through with subsequent arrests did not insure that these properties would remain free of drug activities; drug dealing could, and often did, resume in the property after the police presence diminished.

**Table 1: Arrests in Drug Houses — Chicago, 1988-1990**

Year	1988	1989	1990
Arrests in properties	5,672	5,704	4,202
Arrests in properties as % of total drug arrests	17%	16%	14%
<b>TOTAL DRUG ARRESTS</b>	<b>33,068</b>	<b>35,662</b>	<b>31,080</b>

*Source:* (1) Arrests in properties: personal communication from the CPD. (Figures do not represent official reports of that department); (2) Total drug arrests: CPD Annual Reports for 1988, 1989, and 1990.

In the late 1980s, not-for-profit community organizations in Chicago, and to a lesser extent in suburban Cook County, became aggressively involved in combating drug dealing. Drug houses created an eyesore in neighborhoods, threatened to depress property values, and were associated with increased levels of public nuisances (e.g., graffiti, "corner groups" of men and adolescents hanging out on the street) and serious crime. Community groups employed a variety of tactics to discourage drug dealing on these properties, both independent of and in collaboration with law enforcement agencies. The activism of some of these organizations was influential in the decision to initiate a CCSAO narcotics abatement project.

In late 1989 and early 1990, the CCSAO approached the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) to request funds for implementing a pilot drug abatement unit in Cook County. In 1990, the CCSAO submitted a grant proposal to the ICJIA and funding was approved. The NNAU was established on August 1, 1990 and completed its first 15 months of operation on October 31, 1991. Funding of the initial 15 months of the project totaled approximately \$900,000, including an ICJIA award of \$650,000 and a one-fourth matching-funds allocation by the CCSAO. The ICJIA subsequently funded the program for a second (November 1, 1991 to October 31, 1992) and a third (November 1, 1992 to October 31, 1993) year. The program now operates with county and state funding.

### **Narcotics Nuisance Abatement Legislation**

Statutory provisions for the abatement of drug houses existed prior to the NNAU's creation. In 1915, the state legislature adopted the Lewdness Public Nuisance Act, Chapter 100<sup>1/2</sup>, sec. 1-13, Illinois Revised Statutes. Although this legislation did not specifically address drug

houses, it provided the statutory impetus for civil and criminal abatement of public nuisances. In the amendments added to this statute in 1957, and in the enactment of the Illinois Criminal Code of 1961, Chapter 38, sec. 1, provisions for the abatement of drug houses were specifically mentioned for the first time in Illinois law. Subsequent amendments to these statutes and to the Cannabis Control Act, Chapter 56 Va, sec. 701-719 and the Controlled Substance Act, Chapter 56 Va, sec. 1100-1603, advanced the possibility of nuisance abatement as a means for reducing drug houses.

This early legislation neither conformed to current definitions and methods of abatement nor clearly provided for circumstances in which property owners had no knowledge of the nuisances. Hence, provisions in the earlier statutes existed only for voluntary owner abatements, subject to penalties if alleviation of the nuisance did not occur; but all of this was directed at property owners who knew of the nuisances. Furthermore, no clear provisions were available for forfeiture of properties gained through illicit drug and drug paraphernalia profits.

In 1982, the legislature adopted the Narcotics Forfeiture Act, Chapter 56Va, sec. 1651-1660, which outlined forfeiture of real and other properties obtained from the receipts of illicit drug profits. The Drug Paraphernalia Act Chapter 56 Va, sec. 2101-2107 took effect in 1983 and applied forfeiture of illegal drug paraphernalia but not of real property. Amendments in 1990 and 1992 to Chapter IOOV2 provided greater statutory clarification for both the abatement of drug houses and the encouragement of voluntary abatement by property owners subject to civil prosecution. Also clarified was the definition of a drug house: any property where two arrests for illicit drug activity have occurred within a 12-month period. The elements of the 1990 and 1992 amendments were defined and implemented in large measure by Cook County State's Attorneys Cecil Partee and Jack O'Malley, with the assistance of administrators of the CCSAO's Narcotics Division.

## **Narcotics Nuisance Abatement Unit**

The CCSAO specified for the county two general objectives of the NNAU: the eradication of drug houses, and the elimination of drug paraphernalia dealers. The NNAU executes up to four stages of activities to abate drug nuisances: identifying potential drug houses; investigating potential drug houses; abating drug houses; and monitoring abated properties.



### *Identification of Drug Houses*

To identify potential drug houses, the unit receives referrals and complaints from a variety of outside sources and agencies, and also accesses internal information from the law enforcement community in the form of existing arrests. The NNAU then screens referrals to select appropriate cases for investigation. Program staff enter the selected cases into the NNAU database for case management and tracking.

The NNAU receives referrals from a variety of sources: law enforcement agencies, community organizations, citizens, federal and municipal government agencies, CCSAO assistant state's attorneys (ASAs) in charge of narcotics case preliminary hearings and other CCSAO units. Referrals and complaints of potential drug houses from citizens or community organizations are registered directly to the NNAU staff by telephone or letter. A publicized 24-hour telephone hotline is available for anonymous referrals. ASAs routinely scrutinize drug cases to identify those that should be referred to the NNAU.

### *Investigation of Drug Houses*

Each case that the NNAU identifies for abatement is assigned to an ASA and an investigator. The team verifies the existence of a drug problem at the referred property, establishes the nature and extent of current and past drug problems at the property, and identifies the alleged offender(s) and the owner(s) or manager(s) of the property. The team uses several sources to retrieve this information, as the NNAU relies a great deal on the records and resources of other agencies. The Chicago Police Department's RAMIS computer system is an important investigative resource for the NNAU. RAMIS (Random Access Management Information System) is a computerized listing of all arrests and offenses occurring in Chicago, including arrestees' names, offense locations, dates and other descriptive information. The NNAU uses the RAMIS system to determine whether drug arrests have been made at properties alleged to be drug houses in Chicago, and, if so, to verify the number of arrests at the properties and the names of offenders who have been arrested for drug sales or use at those addresses.

The unit also: searches for potential abatement cases through direct contacts with local police officials; reviews records and documents of local housing and health departments, the Chicago Housing Court, and municipal corporate counsels; and interviews neighborhood residents and tenants of the targeted property. If the individual who made the complaint is known and available, he or she is then interviewed. The investigators then surveil the property to discern whether drug activity

is occurring at the site. In addition, the NNAU unit scrutinizes the records of the county Recorder of Deeds, the Tax Assessor's Office and the Treasurer's Office to determine property ownership and management.

### *Abatement of Properties*

The ASA assigned to the case and the NNAU's supervisor review the information obtained during the investigation of the targeted property. Together, they decide how to proceed with the case by considering the following guidelines: (1) If recent arrests for illicit drug activities have occurred on a property, the unit initiates proceedings by sending a letter to the property owner requesting that he or she voluntarily abate the problem. (2) If a past history of arrest(s) exists at the property, but two arrests have not occurred in the last 12 months and/or visible signs of current drug or other illegal activity in and around the property are apparent, the NNAU monitors the property. Under some circumstances, it informs the property owner of the monitoring. In addition, the unit informs relevant law enforcement officials about the complaint, and asks agencies having other means of investigatory authority (health and building code violations) to monitor and report drug activities on the property. (3) If visible signs of potential drug trafficking or other illegal activity are apparent in and around the property, but no current or past records of arrests exist, the unit initiates the above monitoring procedures. (4) If neither a history of drug arrests nor visible signs of drug activity are apparent at the property, the case remains open and the unit monitors it for a period of time. Furthermore, the unit retains records of the referral in the event that a subsequent complaint is made about the property.

In cases identified as drug houses, the unit tries to determine if the property owner is involved in the illicit drug activity, which could provide sufficient grounds for criminal prosecution. In those cases in which the owner is not believed to be a party to the drug activities, the unit initiates a formal process to encourage voluntary abatement of the problem. This encouragement is always backed up by the potential of a civil suit for non-compliance.

### *Post-Abatement Monitoring*

The NNAU monitors abated properties to ascertain whether they remain free of illicit drug activities. The NNAU's post-abatement monitoring includes a periodic review of police arrest records, direct communications from police and community organizations, and periodic visits to

abated properties. When the NNAU is advised by a landlord that a problem individual has been evicted, an investigator is dispatched after 180 days to verify that the individual in question is no longer on the premises. Because the program had only five investigators to cover the entire county, its use of the Chicago Police Department's RAMIS database was one of the most effective ways of becoming apprised of whether abated properties remained free of drug-selling activities. Although investigators may determine that a narcotics problem has been resolved, the property is still monitored to insure that the unit is aware of any reoccurrence of the previously existing nuisance.

### **Linkages with Outside Agencies**

Linkages with local police officials, government agencies, community organizations, private citizens and, to a lesser extent, federal law enforcement agencies involved in drug control, are critical to the design and success of the NNAU. The NNAU is primarily a reactive unit and depends on these agencies and groups in two basic ways. First, the NNAU generally does not initiate the identification of drug houses. Instead, it relies on referrals from these other agencies and groups. Second, these agencies and groups are the primary sources of information the NNAU uses to investigate targeted units, decide on abatement proceedings and monitor abated properties. The NNAU also relies on the CCSAO's ongoing relationship with law enforcement agencies for assistance with drug house investigations, referrals of cases, follow-ups on NNAU referrals, and access to computer information and intelligence. These cooperative working relationships are mostly voluntary.

The NNAU has created similar linkages with other governmental agencies at the federal, county and municipal levels through formal communications and discussions with their respective administrators. Other agencies include the Chicago Health and Housing Departments, the Corporate Counsel of the City of Chicago, the Chicago Housing Court, the Cook County Recorder of Deeds, the Cook County Tax Assessor's Office, the Cook County Treasurer's Office, the Chicago Housing Authority, and similar departments in other municipalities. The nature of the NNAU's relationships with other agencies is determined by the needs and responsibilities of each.

The role of community organizations in advancing the unit's goals was designed to be twofold: the NNAU would enlist citizen support to mobilize the community regarding its concerns about drug houses and to encourage citizens to report suspected drug houses in their neighborhoods; and the NNAU would develop collaborative and supportive relationships with community groups to obtain useful investigative,

prosecutorial and monitoring information in abatement cases. In addition, the NNAU would establish an Advisory Council consisting of ten local community organizations that would attend regular meetings with program staff.

## **Case Processing**

To examine the processing of typical NNAU cases, we selected a random sample of 300 cases and documented the actions and dispositions noted in each of their files.

### *Types of Cases Targeted*

The majority of NNAU cases originated from CCSAO drug prosecutions. A total of 58%, (n=165) of the cases we sampled out of NNAU files were from the CCSAO, 33% (n=95) resulted from referrals from the police and only 7% (n=20) from community groups or private citizens. The overwhelming majority of targeted properties were located in Chicago: 95% (n=284) of the cases involved properties within the city limits, compared with just 5% (n=15) from suburban communities. Within the city, the NNAU targeted properties over a wide range of police districts. The highest concentration of targeted properties occurred in the 11th district (11%, n=30), the 7th district (9%, n=24), and the 15th district (8%, n=23). Most of the NNAU targeted properties were apartments in multi-family buildings. Seven in 10 (n=195) cases sampled from NNAU files involved multiple family buildings, 20% (n=56), single-family homes, 7% (n=18), commercial properties, and 4%, (n=10) abandoned buildings.

### *Actions Taken by the NNAU and Property Owners*

The most common action taken by the NNAU was to send a letter to the property owners advising them that a nuisance existed and warning them of the consequences if the situation was not corrected. Letters were sent in all but 14% (n=259) of the sampled cases. In 22% (n=63), multiple letters were sent. Telephone calls were made to the owners of targeted properties in 59% (n=176) of the cases. Slightly more than one-fifth (21%, n=64) of the owners received more than one call from program attorneys. Face-to-face meetings between program attorneys and owners was an infrequent NNAU action (4% of the sampled cases, n=12).

In 29% (n=87) of the cases, the owner responded to the NNAU's actions by evicting the problem tenants. In 20% (n=61) of the cases, the

problem had been resolved prior to any action by the unit. In a small percentage of cases (n=5) the owner refused to cooperate with the NNAU. However, in more than one-third of cases (39%, n=116), no indication in the paper case file was given regarding the owner's action.

### *Case Outcomes*

The first action the NNAU takes when a case is opened involves a visit to the property by an investigator. During the visit, the investigator gathers information on the owner's name and address, and attempts to verify that a current nuisance does, in fact, exist at the location. The initial investigation frequently finds that no current problem is apparent at the property. In one in five cases, the investigator's report stated that the problem had resolved itself. Most often, this happened because the individual causing the problem moved or was evicted prior to the investigator's arrival: Of the 61 sampled cases already resolved at the investigator's arrival, 58 were resolved because the tenant had moved, 2 because the building was vacant and boarded, and 1 because the building had burned. Cessation of the nuisance prior to the NNAU investigator's arrival was least likely in cases arising from citizen complaints. Just 8% (n=8) of cases stemming from citizen complaints had already been resolved, compared to 19% (n=18) of cases from the police and 22% (n=37) of cases from CCSAO drug prosecutions. Instances in which problems already had been resolved prior to the NNAU's involvement still resulted in the opening of a case file; these cases were maintained as active, allowing the NNAU to monitor the situation for future drug-related developments.

According to the NNAU's computer database, 32% (n=95) of the 300 cases in our sample resulted in abatements, with no new drug activity being reported at the location. More than 60% (64%, n=192) were listed as pending or continuing under investigation, and 3% (n=9) were catalogued as experiencing continuing or renewed drug sales. These case outcome statistics are questionable for two reasons. First, they include, as abated, the 61 cases in which NNAU investigators reported the drug problem was already resolved prior to the program's involvement. If these cases are removed from the "abatement" category, the percentage of abated cases in our sample is reduced by more than half, from 32 to 14% (n=34 out of 239 cases). Second, the NNAU's standard operating procedure is to request from the police a list of any new arrests at targeted locations 60 days after a case is opened. However, no indication was given in the file that a follow-up check was requested in 56% (n=165) of the cases. Further, in another 13% (n=39) of cases no follow-

up police information could be located in the file, although it apparently had been requested. Thus, it appears from the paper files that the NNAU could not have known of any continuing or renewed drug activity in nearly 7 out of 10 sampled cases.<sup>1</sup>

## **PROGRAM IMPACT ON RESIDENTS AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

### **Resident Survey**

The NNAU targets properties throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. Therefore, we could not assess program impact by simply comparing data from neighborhoods served by the program with data from neighborhoods not served by the program. Instead, we examined the perceptions of residents living near properties that were the targets of abatement efforts. We asked residents on blocks where abatements had occurred to report changes in levels of crime, drugs and other signs of social and physical disorder since an abatement action had taken place on their blocks. In addition, we selected a comparison sample of residents from blocks where no abatements had occurred. The comparison blocks were located nearby and were similar to targeted blocks in appearance and demographics.

### *Methodology*

From the original 300-case sample drawn from NNAU files, we randomly sampled 10% (n=30) of the cases to examine the impact of the program on neighborhood residents' perceptions of crime, drugs and disorder. These 30 target locations were matched with 30 nearby blocks where the NNAU had not targeted properties. The comparison blocks were chosen through visual inspection by research staff, who used selection criteria such as proximity to the targeted block, housing stock and demographics. The comparison blocks were used to determine whether residents' perceptions improved as a result of the NNAU's actions. Using this design, we hoped to eliminate plausible rival explanations of program effects, including the possibility that residents' perceptions of drugs, crime and disorder were generally improving in Cook County during the time of these abatement efforts.

For each of the 30 targeted and 30 comparison blocks chosen, we defined the sample area as both sides of the street on each block. Within each of the 60 sample areas, we attempted telephone interviews with an average of ten residents. Northwestern University's Survey Laboratory

(NUSL) conducted the interviews. The NUSL used a Coles directory (i.e., reverse telephone directory) to identify residents within the 60 predefined areas. Different sample areas yielded varying numbers of residential units ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 31. In all, 1,061 potential households were identified. NUSL staff attempted to interview, by phone, one member of each household 18 years of age or older who had been living in their present neighborhood for a minimum of one year.

Interviews were successfully completed with 614 respondents for an overall completion rate of 79% and a response rate of 95% (see Table 2). The number of interviews completed in each sampling area ranged from 0 to 22. However, the majority of sampling areas (80%) had between 5 and 15 completions. Interviews were evenly divided between targeted areas (n=307) and comparison areas (n=308).

**Table 2: Resident Household Sampling Pool Disposition**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Completed interview	614	58
Ineligible	124	11
No contact/respondent never available	139	12
Non-working/unlisted number	123	12
Refusal	34	3
Non-English, non-Spanish speaking respondent	15	1
Physical/mental disability	12	1
Non-residential number	6	<1
Miscellaneous	4	<1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,061</b>	<b>100</b>

The interview schedule was adapted from the one used by Smith et al. (1992). Residents in targeted and comparison areas were asked about their knowledge of the NNAU, their use of the NNAU hotline and their participation in community meetings. The interview also queried respondents about current and past levels of drug activity, other signs of social and physical disorder (e.g., crime, kids hanging out, public drinking, graffiti, litter, etc.), and their perceptions of safety on their blocks.

**Table 3: Description of Respondents**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Years Living in Neighborhood</b>		
3 or less years	154	25
4-10	159	26
11-20	162	27
21 or more	135	22
	N=610	
<b>Respondent Age</b>		
18-30	83	14
31-40	115	20
41-60	236	41
61 and over	148	25
	N=582	
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
African American	430	71
White	113	19
Hispanic	37	6
Other	24	4
	N=604	
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	157	26
High school graduate	186	31
Some college	138	23
College graduate or more	122	20
	N=603	
<b>Income</b>		
Under \$10,000	159	30
\$10,000-19,999	137	26
\$20,000-40,000	143	27
Over \$40,000	86	17
	N=525	

Note: Does not include "don't know" responses or refusals.

### *Description of Respondents*

The neighborhoods sampled for this study were relatively stable. The average respondent had lived in his or her neighborhood for about ten years (see Table 3); less than one in four ( $n=154$ ) had resided in their home for three years or less.<sup>2</sup> The average age of the respondents was 43. Only 14% ( $n=83$ ) of the sample was 30 years of age or under, while 25% ( $n=148$ ) was over age 60. A large majority of the sample (71%,  $n=430$ ) was African American, 19% ( $n=113$ ) were white (not of Hispanic origin) and just 6% ( $n=37$ ) were Hispanic. Nearly three in four respon-



dents (n=446) were high school graduates, and 43% (n=260) had completed some college. However, three in ten respondents (30%, n=159) reported earning less than \$10,000 per year, and just 17% (n=86) had earned in excess of \$40,000 per year.

### *Resident Knowledge of and Participation in the NNAU*

We asked residents a series of questions to explore the depth of NNAU program efforts. Respondents were asked whether they knew of the nuisance abatement program, and whether they had participated in the unit's efforts by calling the state's attorney's hotline or by attending NNAU-sponsored meetings. More than one-quarter of respondents (28%) had heard of the program. By far, the most common source of their knowledge about the NNAU was the media (49%, n=85), followed by community and church organizations (16%, n=27) and neighbors (15%, n=25). Only 4% (n=7) of those who knew of the NNAU had heard about the program through the police.

Although a relatively large number of respondents (n=173) knew about the NNAU, many were very confused about what it actually did. Less than 7% (n=8) of interviewees aware of the program knew that it dealt with the abatement of drug activity, the eviction of drug dealers and the closure of problem buildings due to drug-related activities. Nearly three out of four (n=113) respondents who had heard of the NNAU knew nothing at all about its purpose or believed that it had to do with getting more police on the street.

A surprisingly high proportion of respondents overall (42%, n=258) were aware that the state's attorney's office had a drug hotline; the hotline seemed to be more successfully publicized than the unit itself. However, very few residents (about 3%, n=20) reported that they had called the hotline. A more common form of anti-drug activism involved attending anti-drug meetings: one in four subjects in our sample had done so at least once.

We expected some differences between targeted and comparison blocks with respect to their participation in anti-drug activities. However, our expectation was not confirmed. Targeted and comparison blocks were statistically indistinguishable in terms of having heard of the NNAU (30%, n=91 vs. 27%, n=86); knowing of the state's attorney's drug hotline (42%, n=129 vs. 42%, n=129); calling the hotline (4%, n=12 vs. 3%, n=8); and attending anti-drug meetings (27%, n=83 vs. 23%, n=72).

### *Perceptions of Drugs and Disorder*

We asked respondents a series of questions about levels of drug dealing and other signs of disorder in their neighborhoods. Data showed that 37% (n=224) were not sure if any drug sellers were operating on their block, while 39% (n=237) were sure that no sales were occurring on their block. One-fourth (n=153) of those queried knew for sure that drug dealers were active on their block. Because all of the targeted blocks had at least some drug dealing during the past year, and most likely some portion of the comparison blocks also did, these findings suggest that residents were often not aware of drug activity in their neighborhood. Nearly nine in ten residents (87%, n=138) who were aware of drug sales said that they had found out through personal observation. The fact that only a quarter of the sample was definitely aware of drug dealing on their block indicates that it is unlikely that the NNAU's activity would affect residents' perceptions of drugs on blocks where houses had been targeted. However, it is still possible that the program would have an effect on residents' perceptions of signs of disorder (e.g., graffiti, kids hanging out, etc.) associated with drugs without their being aware of the drug activity *per se*.

Table 4 compares changes in residents' perceptions of conditions on their blocks during the past year — the time period during which the NNAU had taken action against properties in our sample. A slight difference was found between targeted and comparison blocks in the proportion of respondents who believed that drug activity had decreased over time: 27% (n=81) of residents on targeted blocks reported a decrease, compared with 22% (n=69) on comparison blocks. However, an even larger proportion of residents reported *increases* in drug activity on both targeted (35%, n=108) and comparison blocks (37%, n=113). Perceptions of gang activity were also similar on targeted and comparison blocks. On targeted blocks, 24% (n=74) of respondents perceived a decrease over time, compared with 22% (n=68) on comparison blocks. Again, a larger number of people perceived *increases* — about 30% each on targeted (n=90) and comparison blocks (n=91). A similar pattern emerged for perceptions of kids hanging out on the block. On targeted blocks, 35% (n=106) of respondents perceived decreases whereas 34% (n=104) perceived increases. On comparison blocks, the results were 27% (n=84) and 32% (n=98), respectively.

**Table 4: Residents' Perceptions of Drugs and Disorder — Comparisons Between Blocks With and Without Properties Targeted by the NNAU**

	More		No Change		Less		Tau's C
<b>Drug Dealing and Using</b>							
Targeted	35%	(n=108)	38%	(n=117)	27%	(n=81)	-.04
Non-targeted	37%	(n=113)	41%	(n=126)	22%	(n=69)	
<b>Gang Activity</b>							
Targeted	30%	(n=90)	47%	(n=143)	24%	(n=74)	-.02
Non-targeted	30%	(n=91)	48%	(n=149)	22%	(n=68)	
<b>Kids Hanging Out</b>							
Targeted	34%	(n=104)	32%	(n=97)	35%	(n=106)	-.03
Non-targeted	32%	(n=98)	41%	(n=126)	27%	(n=84)	
<b>Street Robberies</b>							
Targeted	16%	(n=50)	63%	(n=192)	21%	(n=65)	.00
Non-targeted	16%	(n=50)	63%	(n=194)	21%	(n=64)	
<b>Home Burglaries</b>							
Targeted	13%	(n=40)	62%	(n=191)	25%	(n=76)	-.04
Non-targeted	16%	(n=50)	60%	(n=186)	23%	(n=72)	
<b>Vandalism or Graffiti</b>							
Targeted	19%	(n=59)	50%	(n=153)	31%	(n=95)	-.05
Non-targeted	21%	(n=65)	52%	(n=161)	27%	(n=82)	
<b>Public Drinking</b>							
Targeted	20%	(n=62)	54%	(n=166)	26%	(n=79)	-.01
Non-targeted	20%	(n=62)	56%	(n=172)	24%	(n=74)	
<b>Victimization Odds</b>							
Targeted	36%	(n=111)	37%	(n=114)	27%	(n=81)	.01
Non-targeted	37%	(n=114)	34%	(n=104)	29%	(n=90)	
<b>Safety on Block</b>							
Targeted	28%	(n=86)	32%	(n=98)	40%	(n=123)	.05
Non-targeted	19%	(n=59)	42%	(n=128)	39%	(n=121)	

Note: Tau's C is a measure of association used for categorical variables. Its values range from 0 to ±1 with larger values indicating stronger relationships.

Perceptions of crime — both robbery and burglary — did show reductions over time but the reductions were virtually identical on targeted and comparison blocks. On targeted blocks, 21% (n=65) of the

respondents noted a decline in robberies and 25% (n=76) noted a decline in burglaries; 16% (n=50) perceived an increase in robberies and 13% (n=40) in burglaries. On comparison blocks, 21% (n=64) believed that robberies had decreased and 23% (n=72) believed that burglaries had decreased; 16% (n=50) thought that robberies had increased and the same proportion thought that burglaries had gone up.

The same pattern of data appeared with regard to other forms of disorder. On targeted blocks, we found a net decline (calculated by the percentage of respondents who thought the problem had decreased minus those who thought it had increased) of 12% (n=16) in perceptions of graffiti and 6% (n=17) in public drinking. On comparison blocks, the net declines were 6% for graffiti (n=17) and 4% for public drinking (n=12).

We asked respondents about changes in feelings of safety over time. No significant differences emerged between targeted and comparison blocks; and on both types of blocks, beliefs in the likelihood of victimization increased over time. Among persons who lived on blocks with a targeted property, 36% (n=111) reported that the chances of becoming a victim were greater now than one year ago, while 27% (n=81) reported that their chances now were less. Among respondents on comparison blocks, 37% (n=114) believed victimization to be more likely currently, while 29% (n=90) believed their chances now were less. The same pattern was evident in response to an additional question about safety — 28% (n=86) of residents on targeted blocks reported feeling more safe than in the past, while 40% (n=123) reported feeling less safe. On comparison blocks, 19% (n=59) reported feeling safer and 39% (n=121) less safe.

A significant difference did appear between targeted and comparison blocks on a question asking whether the respondent knew if anyone on the block had been evicted: 18% (n=56) of respondents on targeted blocks knew of an eviction, compared with only 9% (n=26) of those on comparison blocks. Finally, we were interested in knowing whether the NNAU's abatement actions resulted in buildings being boarded-up and remaining vacant. Responses were virtually identical on targeted and comparison blocks: 16% (n=50) of residents who lived on targeted blocks reported boarded-up buildings on their block compared with 14% (n=44) of those on comparison blocks.

## **Qualitative Neighborhood Study**

A specific objective of the NNAU is to reduce the likelihood that drug dealing will resume in abated properties, and to identify properties for further abatement action if drug selling continues. The NNAU attempts to achieve this objective through the monitoring of abated properties. A

larger objective of the program is to improve the quality of life for citizens by eliminating residential drug selling, which may reduce other signs of incivility and crime that are often associated with drug dealing. Although we obtained information on NNAU's impact from surveys of neighborhood residents and property owners, we believed that it was important to study neighborhood effects directly by visiting and observing a small sample of abated properties. Hence, to evaluate the NNAU's impact on illicit drug activity and other indicators of physical and social disorder within targeted neighborhoods, we examined ten abated properties and their corresponding neighborhoods over a period of four months. Two experienced ethnographers conducted and coordinated this component of our evaluation. Observations at these sites generated data on the post-abatement quality of life on residential blocks.

### *Methodology*

We randomly selected a sample of ten abated properties from the 30 properties originally selected for the resident survey. Table 5 summarizes the abated properties and their neighborhood characteristics. Four to six visits were made to each property at different times of the day and on different days of the week between February 1993 and May 1993. Observations were made with regard to the physical appearance and maintenance of the sites, signs of drug dealing, presence of gangs and the character of social life at each of the abated properties and its block. The population and income status characteristics of each site block were also noted.

### *Physical Description of Targeted Structures and Blocks*

Five of the abated properties were two or three flat buildings, two were multiple-unit apartment buildings and three were single-family residential structures. All were located on residential blocks. Although the Washington property — a large multiple unit apartment building — was located in a residential block, this street was a busy thoroughfare with a bus route and heavy traffic. Many of the other target blocks were crossed at one end by moderate to very busy commercial streets. Five of the blocks were in African-American neighborhoods (Ada, Lockwood, Ohio, Washington and Winchester), three were in Puerto Rican neighborhoods (Campbell, Rockwell and Sawyer), and two were in predomi-

**Table 5: Target Blocks in Qualitative Study of Nuisance Abatement**

<b>Block Location</b>	<b>Police District</b>	<b>Chicago Location</b>	<b>Quality of Life, Race and SES</b>	<b>Case Opened</b>	<b>Factors</b>
Ada	7	Southside	Black/Poverty & Low Income	3/24/92	Drug Dealing Graffiti
Winchester	7	Southside	Black/Poverty & Low Income	3/11/92	Drug Dealing Graffiti
Rockwell	13	Near NW Side	Puerto Rican/Poverty & Low Income	11/18/92	Gangs & Graffiti
Sawyer	14	Northwest Side	Working Class/ Puerto Rican	3/16/92	Gang Graffiti
Campbell	14	Near NW Side	Puerto Rican/Poverty & Low Income	4/14/92	Gangs & Graffiti
Ohio	15	Far West Side	Black/Low Income	3/12/92	Gangs
Washington	15	Far West Side	Black/Low Income & Working Class	11/1/91	Gang Graffiti
Lockwood	15	Far West Side	Black/Working & Middle Class	4/16/91	Gang Graffiti
Knox	17	Northwest Side	White/Middle Class	4/18/91	Quiet, But Some Graffiti
Springfield	17	Northwest Side	White/Middle Class	3/5/92	Quiet, But Some Graffiti

nantly white neighborhoods (Springfield and Knox). The Ada, Campbell, Rockwell and Winchester blocks were in low-income, declining neighborhoods. Physical structures were in poor-to-fair condition, and population density was high. The Sawyer location was primarily low-income but had undergone some physical improvements through gentrification. Signs of efforts to reverse decline in the neighborhood were apparent, such as external rehabilitation of several buildings in the Washington block. Still, this location had the potential for rapid decline because of the high concentration of large multiple-unit apartment buildings, the high density of very low-income and working-class residents, and the extensive decline in surrounding blocks. The Knox, Lockwood, Ohio and

Springfield locations appeared to be economically stable, working or middle class neighborhoods.

### *Drug Activity*

Drug dealing was obvious during the first two visits at the two southside locations (Ada and Winchester). The drug dealing was organized and included lookouts and curbside, drive-up service. On the third visit, drug dealing was no longer apparent at the Ada location but remained at Winchester. Winchester had several residences that appeared to be hangouts for "gangbangers" and locations for drug dealing. Furthermore, in relation to neighboring blocks, this one was perhaps the most blighted, having the greatest number of physical and social incivilities. On the final visits, signs of drug dealing were still absent at the Ada location though it was not clear whether they were apparent at the Winchester location.

No visible signs of drug dealing were observed at any of the other sites observed on the first or subsequent visits. At several sites (Campbell, Lockwood, Ohio, Rockwell and Washington), youths and young adults were congregating at various locations on the blocks but their activities did not obviously involve the selling or exchange of drugs. The Knox, Springfield and Sawyer blocks were usually quiet with few people on the street.

### *Overall Climate of Targeted Neighborhoods*

Five of the abated structures and surrounding blocks were quiet and orderly in terms of social activities during most or all of our observations. The Knox, Lockwood, Springfield and Sawyer blocks were very quiet, with little street activity beyond the ordinary comings and goings of residents. Although signs of drug dealing were apparent during the first visit to Ada, it was quiet and peaceful on subsequent visits. A sign in the Ada neighborhood was posted that warned against public drinking, drug dealing and rowdiness, which suggests that the neighborhood was at least somewhat organized in fighting for control of the block. How successful this neighborhood will be is unclear, as the Ada block was embedded in a community with high levels of drug dealing and gang activity; drug dealing was also apparent on neighboring blocks.

On the Campbell, Rockwell, Ohio and Winchester blocks a number of social incivilities were noted during some of the observations. On the Campbell, Rockwell and Ohio blocks, groups of youths and young adults were congregating or otherwise occupying the streets and were involved in verbal banter, jousting and drinking (Ohio). On Winchester,

in addition to drug dealing, the youths were particularly rowdy and threatening. Some adults appeared to go out of their way to avoid these young people. In addition, adults on Rockwell and Campbell seemed to be wary of youths.

Signs of moderate-to-high levels of gang activity in most neighborhoods were evidenced by graffiti and/or youths wearing gang colors (i.e., Kings on Campbell and Rockwell, Vice Lords on Ohio, and Black P Stone nation on Winchester). Graffiti evidence of gangs was also visible in most of the other communities — Knox, Springfield, Sawyer and Ada.

### **Comparison of Observations to Residents' Perceptions**

We compared our observations about the impact of drug house abatement on these blocks with the perceptions of residents, which were recorded in our resident survey. Table 6 shows the percentages of surveyed residents living on each of the observed blocks who felt that, since the targeted property on the block had been abated, a reduction had occurred in each of the following: people hanging out; gang activity; drug use and drug dealing; number of drug dealers; and burglary and robbery. Also shown are the percentages of surveyed residents on each block who felt more safe and who felt that the likelihood of being a crime victim had decreased over time or did not exist. Resident opinions are reported for only nine of the ten blocks in which observations were conducted, because no surveys were obtained from residents of the Lockwood block.

Table 6 also shows the rankings assigned to each of these blocks based on our observations about drugs and other problems. The Ada and Winchester blocks are ranked "1," indicating that they exhibited the most problems in terms of drug trafficking, gang activity and signs of other social problems. The Knox, Lockwood and Springfield blocks are ranked "5," indicating they exhibited the fewest visible problems overall. Rankings of 2, 3 and 4 are reported for the other blocks.

Among blocks we rated as having the greatest number of problems (blocks ranked 1 and 2), compared with blocks we judged as having fewer overall problems, surveyed residents were slightly more likely to report reductions in people hanging out but less likely to report reductions in gang activity, drug use and dealing, and the presence of drug dealers. On the other hand, for blocks we judged as having the most problems, larger percentages of residents reported reductions in burglaries and robberies and feeling safer with respect to criminal victimization.



**Table 6: Percentage of Residents Reporting Improvements and Ethnographic Ranking for 10 Abatement Blocks<sup>a</sup>**

Street	HNG OUT Less & None	GNG ACT Less & None	DRG SAFE More	DRG VCTM Less	DRG/DL/USE Less & None	DRG DLERS None	CRME Less & None	Rank
Rockwell (n=5)	100%	80%	60%	20%	60%	40%	80%	2
Sawyer (n=7)	43	61	29	43	57	57	57	4
Knox (n=6)	33	17	33	0	67	83	17	5
Campbell (n=8)	63	38	38	38	63	75	63	2
Springfield (n=14)	21	21	36	14	21	36	50	5
Ohio (n=10)	60	40	50	50	60	60	40	3
Winchester (n=6)	33	17	50	17	33	33	67	1
Washington (n=8)	50	50	25	38	50	50	63	4
Ada (n=7)	0	14	14	43	0	14	43	1
Lockwood (n=0)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4
TOTAL (N=71)	42	37	37	30	44	49	52	

<sup>a</sup>Resident survey responses in ethnographic study neighborhoods. No respondents in Lockwood block.

HNGOUT--percentage reporting no hanging out on block or less than before abatement.

GNGACT--percentage reporting no gang activity on block or less than before abatement.

SAFE--percentage reporting feeling safer than before abatement.

VCTM--percentage reporting less likely to be crime victim on block than before abatement.

DRG DL/USE--percentage reporting no drug use and dealing on block or less than before abatement.

DRG DLERS--percentage reporting no drug dealer on block after abatement.

CRME--percentage reporting no crime on block or less than before abatement.

RANK--estimate problem rank on block based on ethnographic observation.

“1” blocks with greatest problems; “5” blocks with fewest problems.

Caution must be used when interpreting these results because our rankings were based on impressionistic observations; furthermore, the number of surveyed residents, when broken down by block, is very small (5 to 14). Notwithstanding these caveats, slight (people hanging out) to modest (drug use and dealing) agreement emerged between our ranking of drug and gang problems and residents' opinions about the impact of drug house abatement on these blocks. The fact that residents of blocks with the most problems were more likely to report reductions in crime and to feel safer seems inconsistent with the serious extent of the apparent signs of drug, gang and crime problems in their neighborhoods. However, in these neighborhoods, the smaller impact of drug house intervention on overall neighborhood problems may have a larger perceived effect on safety and crime reduction than occurs on blocks that initially experienced fewer overall problems with drugs and gangs. The difference is not that drug house abatement matters less in socially better-off communities; it may be that perceptions of the impact of drug house abatement differ in degree because of differences in the pre-existing scope of drugs and other social problems in these neighborhoods.

### **Displacement of Drug Sales**

The Smith et al. (1992) study of abatement programs strongly indicates that these efforts are effective, at a very modest cost, in getting rid of drug nuisances from particular locations. But are the drug dealers' activities stopped or slowed as a result of the abatement? Or, do they just set up shop in a nearby location and continue doing business as usual? One Milwaukee, WI criminal attorney likened abatement programs to "scattering rats in a woodpile." He argued that it was better for authorities to keep drug dealers stable and concentrated in particular blocks where they could readily be monitored. Abatement programs ultimately made the job of the police harder because the evicted dealers were dispersed over broad areas of a city.

The question of what evicted drug sellers do when they relocate is the single most important question about abatement programs. Is the Milwaukee attorney's theory correct (i.e., do evicted dealers continue selling as before but from a new place)? Or does the abatement reduce their sales by making them more circumspect or by separating them temporarily or permanently from their customer base?

We attempted to address this question in our evaluation. Using the sample of 300 cases drawn from NNAU files, we selected a subsample of cases in which an eviction had occurred. We tracked evicted dealers through the Cook County Adult Probation Department because proba-

tion records contained current addresses on offenders. Hence, our subsample was further limited to those individuals currently or formerly on probation whose criminal identification number was available in the NNAU's files (so that we could access their criminal histories through the city and state bureaus of identification).

The size of the subsample of cases meeting these multiple criteria was small, and it was made smaller still by the fact that some of the "evictees" were presently living at the same addresses according to the probation department records. (We did not know if the evictions simply never took place or if the probation department's addresses were out-of-date.) Of the 300 cases in the overall sample, 13 met all of our criteria.

We asked the police to run a check of arrests at the 13 addresses where the sellers had moved. According to the RAMIS computer database, no arrests had been made at any of the 13 addresses since the time that the sellers had moved there. We also went to four of the locations, accompanied by a NNAU investigator. At two, neighbors' reports clearly indicated that drug sales were taking place at the locations in question. At one address, neighbors' reports clearly indicated that no selling was taking place. At the fourth location, we were uncertain from our conversations with neighbors whether selling was occurring.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

More residents were aware of evictions on blocks where the NNAU had targeted a property for abatement than on comparison blocks. But no evidence was found suggesting that the evictions had any impact on perceptions of drug activity, other signs of disorder or feelings of safety on the block. Although at first glance these findings are not very positive, they need to be understood in a larger context. The Smith et al. (1992) study found that abatement programs similar to the NNAU, which work by sending letters to landlords and launching quiet evictions, had less impact on residents' perceptions than more visible programs. Specifically, programs that closed problem buildings immediately with a large and public display of force, often accompanied by the press, had the greatest effect on perceptions of drugs and disorder. However, these highly visible programs were able to target only a handful of properties per year, not the hundreds that the NNAU targeted. Also, it is probable that NNAU-targeted properties were on blocks that had the most serious drug problems. On blocks with multiple sellers, the closing of one sales location is more likely to go relatively unnoticed by neighbors. Nonetheless, recognition of the state's attorney's drug hotline was quite high among the residents surveyed. This

recognition gives the program a solid base to work from in soliciting community support.

No signs of drug dealing were visible at eight of the ten abated buildings or on the blocks on which they were located. Indications of drug dealing were apparent at the Ada location during the initial observation, but these were not obvious by the end of the observation period. Drug dealing was consistently observed during all but the last observations on Winchester. Although drug dealing was not observed at eight locations, three had significant numbers of gang youths, and a general atmosphere of neighborhood uneasiness and anxiousness surrounded these youths. In addition, these same three blocks were in a state of physical decline and disrepair, which added to the climate of apprehension.

The elimination of drug houses in five locations did appear to contribute to the preservation of quiet and orderly environments. In three other locations, abatement had eliminated, displaced or driven drug dealing underground. Because we had no pre-abatement data, we do not know precisely if the nuisance abatements have had any effects on the gang activity and other social disorders prominent in these neighborhoods. However, residents of these blocks also reported reductions of varying degrees in such problems after the abatements.

Drug house abatement on Ada had not completely eliminated the problem, as drug dealing continued sporadically. Nonetheless, observations suggested that this block may have been able to sustain some control over the problem through citizen action. Abatement had not reduced drug dealing at the Winchester location, a multiple-apartment-unit block where drug dealing, gang activity and possibly other unconventional activities were prevalent. Other interventions, in addition to nuisance abatement, were apparently needed at this location. Although drug activity was not visibly obvious, highly visible gang activity and the general climates of these blocks left the impression that drug dealing and use were probably in close proximity to each other.

Based on these limited observations, drug house abatement appears to be most effective in otherwise stable or slowly declining communities, and to facilitate a degree of order in these communities when citizens actively participate in problem control. In the most drug-plagued neighborhoods, drug house abatement has the capability of improving residents' perceptions of change. However, without community mobilization and sustained, official drug intervention, residents' perceptions of positive change may be short-lived.

Our findings indicated that continued drug activity by evicted sellers is not universal, although clearly some individuals continue to sell.

Abatement, in some cases at least, may slow drug sales by targeted individuals or even stop it altogether. Because of the small sample, our conclusions are tentative. More research with larger numbers of cases is needed to quantify the deterrent effects of abatement programs.



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## NOTES

1. Our interpretation of case outcomes was based primarily on an analysis of information contained in paper files. Hence, the discrepancy between computer-based and case file statistics, and the absence of follow-up statistics in the case files, may not necessarily demonstrate a problem in program operations or practices. Instead, it may indicate a failure to cross-reference between computer and case files.

2. A total of 124 respondents (12% of the initial sample) were determined to be ineligible for this study because they had not lived in their present neighborhood for a minimum of one year. If we included these respondents in our analysis, the character of the neighborhoods may have appeared to be less stable.