

ROXBURY

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Quiet safety effort gets noticed

\$10,000 grant to help fight crime

By Andreae Downs, Globe Correspondent | October 26, 2008

A little-noticed Roxbury crime-fighting initiative this month was honored with a \$10,000 grant for its community-building partnership.

Roxbury Community Safety Partners won out over 500 other applicants to become one of six recipients across the country of the MetLife Foundation's Neighborhood Revitalization award.

The award means that the partnership, which includes residents on the Orchard Gardens Public Safety Committee, the Boston Police Department, and Madison Park Development Corporation, will be demonstrating their "best practices" in community law enforcement to other communities in similar situations, according to Jean Pinado of Madison Park Development Corporation, a Roxbury-based community development organization.

The Boston Housing Authority's 745-unit high-rise development at Orchard Gardens was emptying out in the early 1990s, recalled Edna Bynoe, a resident since the 1940s. Drugs and other crime was high, and a New York gang was operating out of some of the empty buildings.

But some residents organized, and, with the help of Madison Park and the Boston Housing Authority, secured a federal grant to renovate and rehabilitate the project - making the development a 331-unit mixed-income low-rise with front and back gardens by 1999. But crime was rising again by 2003.

Madison Park and residents teamed with the Boston Police Department and formed Roxbury Community Safety Partners to combat the situation. Madison Park community organizer Luz Colon worked with residents to connect them to available resources: anything from food stamps to family social nights. At regular Orchard Gardens Public Safety Committee meetings, the 20 to 30 residents were reminded to report incidents and suggest mitigation.

As a result, the surrounding neighborhood has also been transformed, according to Pinado. New homes and new businesses are going in to surrounding streets.

"This is a reassertion that community development goes well beyond bricks and mortar," said Bob van Meter of Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the nation's leading community development support organization. LISC has funded "Community Safety Initiatives" like Orchard Gardens' across the country for 13 years.

"The turnaround in Orchard Park has had a ripple effect of economic development," said Julia Ryan of LISC's national safety initiative. "It's no accident that the crime statistics are down for the whole neighborhood." ■

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