

LOCAL INITIATIVES SUPPORT CORPORATION

SAFE STREETS, SOUND COMMUNITIES



MetLife Foundation

LISC
*Helping neighbors
build communities*

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The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is dedicated to helping nonprofit community-based development organizations transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy communities of choice and opportunity – good places to work, do business, and raise children. LISC mobilizes corporate, government, and philanthropic support to provide local community development organizations with:

- loans, grants, and equity investments
- technical and management assistance
- local, statewide, and national policy support.

LISC is a national organization with a community focus. Our program staff are based in every city and many of the rural areas where LISC-supported community development takes shape. In collaboration with local stakeholders, LISC staff help identify priorities and challenges, delivering the most appropriate support to meet local needs.

Since 1980, LISC has marshaled more than \$7.5 billion from 3,100 investors, lenders, and donors. In over 300 urban and rural communities nationwide, LISC has helped to finance the construction or rehabilitation of more than 207,500 affordable homes and almost 27 million square feet of retail, community, and educational space – totaling \$21.3 billion in development.

Visit www.lisc.org for more information.

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*On the cover: NeighborWalks
community police event, Boston, Mass.*

*Above: Drug Education for Youth
mentoring program, Phoenix, Ariz.*

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A REVITALIZED NEIGHBORHOOD is almost always a safer neighborhood. The two achievements reinforce one another in increasingly well-documented ways: Renewed buildings and streets deter crime, and an atmosphere of security encourages investment and development.¹ But from those clear facts, does it necessarily follow that safety is part of a revitalizer's job? Or that police and other public safety officials should cast themselves among the revitalizers?

Answering Yes to those questions — at least in theory — is nowhere near as controversial as it was, say, a decade ago. Both among community developers and law enforcers, a sense of common purpose, even (sometimes) of interlocking missions, is becoming a more frequent theme of articles, speeches, and legislative testimony. In 2006, in an opinion column jointly authored by one of the country's leading police reformers, Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton, and LISC's former CEO, Paul Grogan, summed up the emerging consensus this way:

"One of the greatest threats to community revitalization is crime. And the big generator of crime is community disintegration. Police and grassroots community builders can and must become greater stakeholders in and defenders of the investments made by one another. They can do this if they jointly target crime and blight problems — and then build on those successes to achieve more."²



William Bratton, Chief, Los Angeles Police Department addresses the LISC National Leadership Conference in Los Angeles, Calif.

Yet the two disciplines have stood for many years on opposite sides of some deep historical and tactical fault lines. Tensions over race and police-community relations, disagreements about priorities, the anti-establishment origins of many community groups, and a simple failure to communicate openly and frankly have left the two sides frequently at odds — or even in the best cases, working separately and with little prospect for mutual reinforcement.

Recent years have changed much of that. As the relationship between government and community developers has become more an alliance than a confrontation, and as many police departments have embraced the methods of community policing, development groups and law enforcers increasingly see neighborhood problems in a similar light and disagree much less often about how to respond. Still, even after so much progress, agreement on principles hasn't always led to direct collaboration. In most places, community organizations and police have remained separate cultures, friendlier but still apart.

That is the challenge that LISC set out to confront in 1995 with the formation of its Community Safety Initiative. The idea was to broker working partnerships between police



El Cajon Community Development Corporation partners with police and merchants in a commercial district in San Diego, California.

and community organizations to help both sides derive greater benefit from one another's work. These partnerships often started by organizing grassroots activity that would contribute to public safety, or planning police measures that would contribute to local vitality and order, or in many cases both. But in the best cases, the relationship has moved beyond a one-by-one collaboration on projects. It has become instead a regular means of exchanging observations and concerns, thinking through problems, and treating a community's quality of life — including its attractiveness, economic growth, convenience, health, and security — as an organic, unfragmented whole.

For LISC, as much as for police and community developers, this emphasis on safety is not a departure from traditional priorities, but a natural expression of them. Local leaders seem to agree: *Close to 40 percent of the organizations that receive substantial support from LISC report carrying on some kind of regular community-safety activity.* The reason is that community development succeeds only if the improvements it makes, taken as a whole, contribute to neighborhoods where people want to live, raise families, and prosper. To make that a reality, people must feel safe in their homes and on the streets, must trust that their children can play and use neighborhood amenities, and must believe that public agencies — including law enforcement — are among their allies in creating and preserving a desirable place to live. Those are all part of the original vision with which LISC was created, and which it has pursued for more than a quarter century.

With special intensity in the past decade, LISC has invested directly in community development organizations' efforts to promote safety and collaborate with law enforcement.

In the intervening years, and with special intensity in the past decade, LISC has invested directly in community development organizations' efforts to promote safety and collaborate with law enforcement. With many of these organizations, LISC has made sizable, multi-year grants to defray the cost of adding staff specifically for this purpose. It has offered training, networking, hands-on expertise, and national resources to build skills and disseminate successful experiences among frontline personnel. And it has built on its own good relations with both community developers and police to broker alliances between the two sides.

Over the years, LISC has contributed to those kinds of alliances in enough places — with measurable results accumulating in more and more of them — that it is now possible to draw some general lessons about their potential as a national model. First, though, it may help to examine a few typical cases, both to understand how the police-community partnerships work in practice and to see how, and why, they have begun to make important changes in both law enforcement and community life.

Seattle

Erasing the line between security and development

In the mid-1990s, a comparatively new community organization called HomeSight began building and selling houses in the Columbia City section of Seattle's distressed Southeast side, a 12-square-mile area physically separated from most of the city's wealthier neighborhoods.

At the time, youth gangs controlled several of the neighborhood streets, and vacant property provided a haven for crime and health risks. HomeSight's new houses reclaimed some of the vacant land, improved the area's appearance, and started to stem the neighborhood's long, dispiriting depopulation. The houses were a success, in other words — until the gang members decided they were a threat and began

menacing the owners. Meanwhile, robberies, assaults, and car thefts in Columbia City remained well above city averages. A rundown retail plaza close to the new houses had become such a fertile environment for crime that the local school periodically had to lock down its premises when bullets were flying. Determined to reclaim the neighborhood for its residents, HomeSight turned for help to the Seattle Police Department and LISC.

In 1999, HomeSight, LISC, and the Seattle P.D. formed a tentative but promising partnership that soon included not only the nonprofit group and the area's residents, but its beleaguered small-business owners as well. The residents and merchants represented a broad mix of ethnic groups and nationalities, including recent waves of immigrants from East Africa and Southeast Asia, who often had little experience with American-style community organizing. In the Southeast Seattle mix, 38 percent of the

population was Asian American, 23 percent African American, 6 percent Hispanic, and the remainder white. The median household income was nearly 10 percent below the citywide average. Forming a partnership with police therefore meant bridging multiple differences in income, race, and social customs — and varying attitudes toward law enforcement, not all of which were trustful.

Nonetheless, with funding and hands-on encouragement from LISC, and with the determination of HomeSight and the Seattle police, the partnership grew. HomeSight increasingly designed its developments and other activities in ways that would impede crime and enhance safety. With LISC support, it hired a community safety coordinator who steadily built relationships between the police and the HomeSight staff, incorporating security measures into development plans and development considerations into police efforts. The Police Department, meanwhile, organized a series of projects to bear down on hot spots of criminal activity.

By the end of 2001, the most serious crimes (murder, rape, assault, burglary, larceny, car theft, and arson) had fallen by 18 percent in the targeted Columbia City neighborhood, compared with a citywide decline of 8 percent. A year later, the neighborhood's overall crime rate had fallen further and was now below the city average for the first time, even as the incidence of the most serious crimes was actually rising citywide. Meanwhile, the neighborhood's retail store fronts are now fully occupied, a new theater and restaurant attract weekend visitors and residents alike, and HomeSight has been able

By the end of 2001, the most serious crimes had fallen by 18 percent in the targeted neighborhood, compared with a citywide decline of 8 percent.

Members of the Eritrean community cut the ribbon to a new community center in Seattle, Wash.



to expand its community safety efforts beyond the original target area. In the process, the relationship between HomeSight and the Police Department — in fact, the relationship between community and law enforcement generally — has grown steadily deeper and broader, including joint funding of development-plus-safety projects by the development group and the police.

HomeSight, which once saw security as one of several distinct programs in its portfolio,

eventually made it integral to the whole development effort, under the supervision of a development director who later became the group's next CEO. Besides building and selling some 350 homes, the group has pursued its partnership with local merchants to dramatically stimulate pedestrian traffic on the neighborhood's commercial streets — a proven deterrent to crime. It brought a thriving farmer's market to the shopping plaza that had once been the area's epicenter of violence, prostitution, and drugs.

HomeSight and community members celebrate the opening of Noji Gardens residential development, Seattle, Wash.



Providence

From the human to the physical dimensions of safety

In 1999 Olneyville, the lowest-income neighborhood in Providence, Rhode Island, won a designation from the U.S. Justice Department as the centerpiece of the city's federally funded Weed-and-Seed program.

By that time, a close working relationship had already begun to form between the neighborhood's oldest human service organization, the Nickerson Community Center, and the precinct's designated community officers. Yet up to that point, the cooperation had not extended to

underused resources into the community's development and security efforts. It encouraged a police representative on the Nuisance Abatement Task Force, for example, to bring that body's enforcement powers to bear on neglected properties and abandoned vehicles in Olneyville, forcing clean-ups and maintenance. Meanwhile, the Olneyville Housing Corporation carefully selects, buys, and renovates properties that incubate crime. A comprehensive development-and-safety plan, a targeted Block Watch program, an anti-prostitution project, and a resurrected police bicycle patrol have all been outgrowths of the program's expansion.

To further the incorporation of physical development into the Weed-and-Seed effort, LISC hired a full-time community safety coordinator, who supported the Housing Corporation's efforts and similar projects under way in other Rhode Island neighborhoods. The coordinator in turn helped widen channels of communication and trust between police and residents and brought the group's development plans into closer alignment with the neighborhood's safety concerns. LISC technical support helped not only in the launching of individual projects, but in the enlistment of support from police brass and skeptical elements of the community. Support for the program has risen steadily through the police ranks and among the neighborhood's mostly Latino and African-American residents, overcoming years of mistrust on both sides.

Between 2001 and 2002, homicides fell in Olneyville by one-third, compared with a

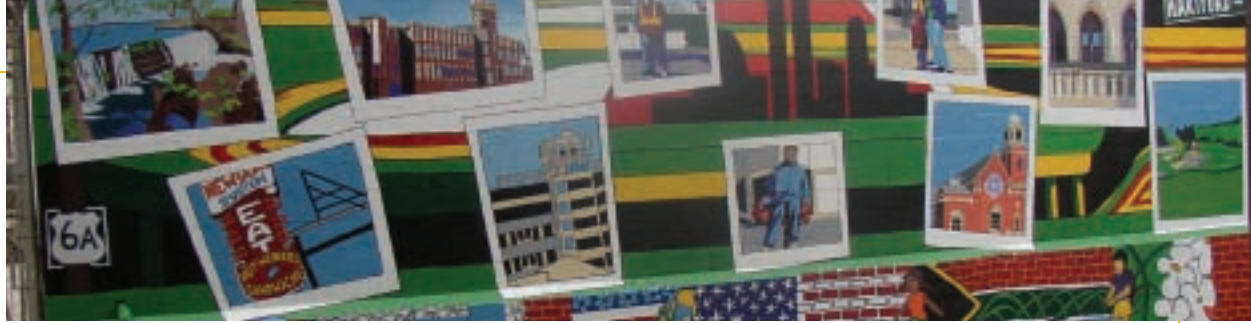


Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Mayor David Cicilline, Executive Director of Rhode Island Housing Richard Godfrey and Senior Program Director Barbara Fields help cut the ribbon on Olneyville's new affordable housing, Providence, R.I.

physical or economic redevelopment — a crucial factor in a neighborhood where derelict buildings and a rundown physical environment tended to attract and encourage crime.

With support from LISC's Rhode Island program, the Olneyville Housing Corporation, the neighborhood's community development organization, joined the Weed-and-Seed partnership with hopes of expanding on its work. As part of the wider coalition of organizations, the Housing Corporation helped to bring previously

In Providence and around the country, colorful murals at graffiti-prone locations help stop property defacement and promote community pride



drop of just 4 percent citywide. Robberies in the neighborhood fell by more than half, nearly five times the citywide decline. Total crime in Olneyville declined by roughly

Between 2001 and 2002, homicides fell in Olneyville by one-third, compared with a drop of just 4 percent citywide. Total crime in Olneyville declined by roughly three times the rate in Providence overall.

for the neighborhood as a whole. The nuisance properties, meanwhile, were replaced by 70 units of affordable housing, whose tenants now provide frontline surveillance over the park across the street. Lower crime rates are making other development possible nearby — bringing a further increase in residents, street traffic, and vigilance.

“Walking around this neighborhood,” resident Abelardo Hernandez said in 2006, “you used to see empty, dirty, vacant lots and vandalized, abandoned homes. Now you walk around and see so many new homes with families, kids, old people — the diverse people of our neighborhood living in them. The work that Olneyville Housing Corporation has done with the police has made a big difference. It doesn’t just make this neighborhood safer. It makes the community come alive.”

three times the rate in Providence overall. In the two years since the Olneyville Housing Corporation started fixing up crime-ridden properties, reported crime within 300 feet of these buildings fell by 58 percent — more than four times the decline

Neighborhood block party in Pawtucket, R.I.



Minneapolis

Falling crime breeds economic development

In 1999, on the troubled 1000 block of Franklin Avenue in southeast Minneapolis, a single rundown gas station had been the source of more than 500 police calls in 12 months, a rate well over once a day.

Overall, the block hardly seemed a prime economic development asset for the surrounding Phillips neighborhood — the largest, poorest, and most diverse section of Minneapolis. But it had become a prime source of alarm, both locally and citywide. By the following year, the mayor of Minneapolis was reaching out to a local development organization, the American Indian Neighborhood Development Corporation (AINDC), to forge a plan to restore order to the Franklin commercial strip.

Kostroski told the business journal *Finance and Commerce*, “I had the same reaction most people who haven’t been to the neighborhood lately will have.” That reaction, put simply, was that Franklin Avenue would not be the first place a safety-conscious investor would place a \$3 million bet.

But two factors tipped the scales. The first was AINDC’s steady battle against crime, which had been the first priority of the group’s executive director, Teresa Carr, when she came to the neighborhood in 1997. By the time Franklin Street Bakery was looking for a new home, the group’s partnership with the Minneapolis Police Department had led to a path-setting new community safety center on Franklin — a storefront headquarters for police and other city personnel to work hand-in-hand with residents to target safety risks as they emerged. On a parallel track, all of AINDC’s commercial construction and renovation was now based on the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, known among architects and police as CPTED. The concept emphasizes expansive windows (giving occupants a constant eye on street life), strategic placement of entrances and exits, and boundary-making features that expand a building’s security zone.

But the other factor that convinced Kostroski to stay on Franklin was the nature of his company. The great majority of his employees lived in the neighborhood and cared about its future. The company’s planned expansion, adding more than 50 jobs to its payroll, would have a profound effect on local employment. Staying on

Between 2001 and 2004, the most serious crimes fell by nearly one-third on East Franklin. Although crime ticked upward in 2005 and early 2006, the once-troubled Third Precinct had the lowest increase anywhere in the city.

Less than four years later the 1000 block, along with much of the rest of the commercial area, had become unrecognizable — its economics, appearance, and street life brought stunningly back to life. On the site of the crime-prone gas station and two adjoining buildings now stands the Franklin Street Bakery, a neighborhood company that only two years earlier had been shopping among safer suburban locations for a place to expand. At that point, investing and growing on Franklin still seemed a dicey proposition. “At first blush,” bakery owner Wayne

Officers on bicycle patrol (left) and Franklin Avenue Community Safety Center (right), Minneapolis, Minn.



Franklin Avenue, Kostroski said, would give employees “an incredible sense of pride in their work and in the company to know that we are an integral part of the impetus of change in this community.”

That change isn’t limited to an attractive new building (including a new retail outlet, the company’s first), or even to the helpful influence of 50 new jobs and a near-tripling of gross revenues since the new facility opened. The building’s design has become a safety-boosting force in its own right. Sidewalks are under the constant view of employees; the retail shop draws steady pedestrian traffic; and lighting, signs, awnings, and outdoor seating make it a nearly impossible venue for illegal activity. Thanks partly to the safer environment, the

area now includes a coffee shop, health clinic, florist, drug store, and grocery store. All told, AINDC’s partnership with police, innovative design, and ongoing stream of new development have contributed to a marked drop in crime, which in turn has made it easier to attract new businesses. Between 2001 and 2004, the most serious crimes (homicide, rape, robbery, assault, theft, arson) fell by nearly one-third on East Franklin Avenue. Narcotics offenses plunged by 90 percent, and loitering offenses by 98 percent. Although crime ticked upward throughout Minneapolis in 2005 and early 2006, the once-troubled Third Precinct, which includes the Phillips neighborhood, had the lowest increase anywhere in the city.



Franklin Street Bakery, Minneapolis, Minn.

Seizing the Possibilities: Lessons and Challenges

There is almost nothing in these three examples that could not be replicated in hundreds of other places around the country. The requisite starting points are, first, a well-organized community with effective leadership and, second, at least some portion of the local Police Department open to a closer working relationship with residents and their organizations.

It helps if both sides recognize, at least in theory, that they might gain from greater cooperation with one another. But they need not start out with any great optimism about the prospects for success. In most cases, that kind of confidence has been the result, not the starting-point, of these partnerships.

It's worth noting that increasing the safety of a single community has spillover benefits for the whole city. Making one community safer is not a matter of moving crime away from the neighborhood, but of discouraging criminality at its source. Restoring order to chaotic physical and social environments not only makes those environments less hospitable to crime, it sends a signal to the residents — especially the young people who live in and near the revitalized area: *Lawfulness*

“socially disorganized neighborhoods” and “low levels of community participation” are prime risk factors in breeding youth violence.

—from a 2001 report of the Surgeon General

and constructive behavior are important. People care when norms are violated. A 2001 report of the Surgeon General confirmed what is by now a firm tenet of police reformers and juvenile justice officials nationwide: “socially disorganized neighborhoods” and “low levels of community participation” are prime risk factors in breeding youth violence.³ *Build cohesion in the community and reverse its physical blight, and you go a long way to curbing delinquency, petty crime, and eventually more serious adult crime as well.*

Drawing from the full range of LISC’s community-safety experience over the past decade or more, the following are some of the main challenges that confront communities and police in their efforts to work together more effectively, and the lessons that emerge from their accomplishments:

Building mutual trust and confidence that success is possible, among both residents and police, is slow work, usually accomplished in small steps. Even in an atmosphere of unfamiliarity and distrust, it is often possible for both sides to focus on a single problem and join forces on that one issue. In the process, police may gain a better understanding of residents’ needs, background, and expectations, and residents learn more about how police departments function and the factors that influence their work. The mutual understanding becomes even more likely if the collaboration is supported and kept on track by an experienced negotiator or “broker” such as LISC.



Egleston Square, Boston, Mass.

Effective collaboration requires strong leadership and determined staff work in order to move beyond a single project or two. The need for leadership does not mean that the chief of police or the mayor have to be deeply committed or personally involved. In many cases, in fact, the strong leadership on the police side has come from a precinct commander or a dedicated senior officer, who in turn built support up and down the hierarchy. Similarly, among community organizations, leadership usually starts with the executive director, but success depends on equally committed participation by other staff members.

‘Collective efficacy’ — residents’ sense of common ownership and control — is a mainstay of all community organizing and development, but it is particularly important in building a long-term safety effort. The reason is that security is not only a matter of crime data and measurable risk, it is also a matter of perception and atmosphere. A community will seem threatening, and people will be reluctant to invest in it, if residents refrain from walking the streets and the “buzz” about the neighborhood is largely negative. Reductions in actual crime need to be accompanied by increases in residents’ belief in their neighborhood, their confidence that it is safe and will remain so.

The prospect of a “tipping point” should lead communities and police to a shared determination that a sense of danger or dwindling safety will eventually be overtaken by a well-grounded feeling of security and order. The efforts of both sides, and their joint dedication of resources, should be contributing to this single goal. Alliances tend to grow much stronger when both sides can envision and work toward the tipping point in similar ways.

Advocacy alliances are an additional benefit — often unexpected — from effective partnerships between community organizations and police. In the most successful experiences, the two sides have become not only effective crime-fighters but effective advocates for one another’s goals, resources, and public support. Police and community developers may both find their position in the political arena greatly reinforced by support from the other side — all the more so when such support has been uncommon in the past.

Setbacks, even severe ones, are a common part of the process and need to be expected and planned for. Crime won’t be eradicated; it may ebb, but it can also flow

In Chicago, police and community members are working together to improve neighborhoods and engage youth. (Left) A community and police gathering convened by Greater Auburn-Gresbam Community Development Corporation. (Right) Local police attend Little Village CDC's Friday night summer series for youth in South Lawndale.



back, re-emerge suddenly, or erupt in entirely new forms. At the time this is written, more than a decade of steep drops in crime nationwide has been followed by a small but disturbing reversal. Experts have begun to debate whether this is a natural side effect of years of success, or whether it is the start of a disturbing new trend that will require a sustained response. Whichever answer is right, it illustrates the need for continued vigilance, cooperation, and inventiveness by both law enforcers and community leaders. That is precisely the reason for ongoing community-police partnerships, rather than one-off efforts against individual instances of crime. The existence of the partnership means that the community is better prepared to respond, faster and more effectively, to any new problems or shifts in current patterns.

The fundamental lesson of LISC's experience in community safety is the one with which this discussion began: Community development is intimately bound up with community security, and vice-versa. It does, then, necessarily follow that the best community developers will be participants in the process of preventing crime and incubating a secure environment. And it equally follows that the most effective law enforcers will seek a supportive, ongoing role in improving the physical, social, and economic conditions of the communities they serve. Just as the repair of broken

windows reduces a community's hospitality to crime and decay, the effective, responsive application of law enforcement makes it far more likely that investors, builders, residents, and merchants will want to improve the community, repair its broken windows, and continually build its assets. The more each part of that equation progresses, the greater the odds of success will be for all the other parts.



Rally for community safety, Chicago, Ill.

¹ See, for example, "As a Blade of Grass Cuts Through Stone: Helping Rebuild Urban Neighborhoods Through Unconventional Police-Community Partnerships," William A. Geller, *Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 44, issue 1, January 1998, pp. 154-177. Also note that the seminal essay on law-enforcement reform — "Broken Windows: Police and Neighborhood Safety," James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1982 — does not employ the image of broken windows merely as metaphor; it gives considerable weight to physical deterioration as a stimulus to crime.

² "New Synergy of Community, Developer, Police," William J. Bratton and Paul S. Grogan, *The Providence Journal*, March 27, 2006. Before becoming Los Angeles Police Chief, Bratton spearheaded the transformation of police departments in Boston and New York; Grogan is the president of the Boston Foundation and former president of LISC.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General," 2001. Available online at: www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/toc.html.

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