Policing in CBCR
A Primer for Local Law Enforcement Leaders

“Our nation’s violent-crime rate is rising,” Attorney General Jeff Sessions noted at the 2017 National Summit on Crime Reduction and Public Safety. “In many of our urban areas, this increase is staggering.”i For young African American men, homicide is the leading cause of death.ii

“We know that violence is a social determinant of health,” according to Thomas La Veist of George Washington University. “It is a factor—along with racism; toxic stress; lack of access to healthy food; poor quality or no housing; lack of adequate education, jobs, and incomes; and lack of safe places to walk, play, and socialize—that shape the health of individuals and communities and contribute to shorter lives, particularly for people of color.”iii

The Innovations in Community Based Crime Reduction (CBCR) program recognizes that “communities must build their own capacity to fight crime, by making use of data-driven and evidence-based strategies tailored to specific local concerns.”iv In 74 communities across the nation, CBCR has played a critical role in reducing crime in neighborhood hot spots. Working with partners such as the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), CBCR sites have created opportunities to deploy resources more effectively through multi-agency and multi-discipline collaboration.

CBCR fosters greater social cohesion in socially and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and leads to stronger community-police relationships. CBCR has created a model that recognizes and draws on neighborhood-level collaboration and coordination to “co-produce” safety and security by drawing on the strengths of the police, residents, and businesses. These accomplishments and opportunities created by the CBCR program in reducing crime and building neighborhood safety and stability are the focus of this paper as a tool for law enforcement.

The CBCR Approach
These powerful themes run through all CBCR projects.

DATA-DRIVEN
CBCR targets crime hot spots – often streets, properties or public spaces in communities that have struggled with crime for years. Researchers are engaged in the day-to-day work, helping partners examine problems, assess evidence-based solutions, and monitor progress.

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED
CBCR champions active roles for residents in identifying problems, selecting strategies and creating safe and healthy environments.

SPURS REVITALIZATION
CBCR tackles problem properties, unsafe streets and parks, unemployment, transit barriers and service gaps related to crime.

BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS
CBCR taps the resources of public, nonprofit and community leaders to bring more resources and different approaches to bear on longstanding crime challenges for lasting change.
Conceptualizing Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are where people grow up, where they go to school, make friends, attend religious services, shop, and work. In many ways, neighborhoods define who we are and who we become. Even today, it is not unusual that generations of families are born, raised, and move into adulthood in the same neighborhood, whether in the South Bronx or Battle Creek, Michigan.

Because neighborhoods possess relatively enduring features that transcend the idiosyncratic characteristics of the particular persons who live in them, and because of their stability over time, they provide an opportunity for government, nonprofits, public health organizations, and the police to intervene and mediate between individuals, social groups, organizations, and broader political structures.

Effective place-based policies can influence how neighborhoods develop, as well as how well they function as places to live, operate a business, and preserve history and culture. Properly designed public policies that focus on integrating community safety and economic development can contribute to the prosperity, equity, sustainability, and livability of neighborhoods. “Place-based policies leverage investments by focusing resources in targeted places and drawing on the compounding effect of well-coordinated action.”

The Role of the Police in Community Well-Being

Many of the social problems that give rise to disorder and crime lie far outside police expertise and capabilities. Effective neighborhood-centric policing practices generate social capital and collective efficacy by bringing together diverse, sometimes antagonistic, elements of a community by asking them to take a collaborative role in addressing issues and challenges. Within this context, police leaders and their departments can act as a catalyst for increasing collective efficacy by encouraging residents, businesses, and others to take a significant role.

While identifying and arresting offenders must remain a central strategy of the police and a necessary component of the police response to neighborhood crime and violence, collaboration and cooperation between the police and neighborhood residents, businesses, and organizations improves relationships and generates mutual feelings of trust, ultimately building police legitimacy, which supports law enforcement activities.

Although it has proven difficult to foster trust between the police and residents in high crime, high poverty neighborhoods, difficult does not mean impossible. When residents believe they have been treated fairly and respectfully, they tend to grant more legitimacy to the police and are more likely to engage with them in solving issues that threaten neighborhood safety and stability.

A 2016 Police Foundation study, “Engaging Communities One Step at a Time: Policing’s Tradition of Foot Patrol as an Innovative Community Engagement Strategy,” found that neighborhood-based foot patrols in five cities helped build relationships between residents and officers, increased problem-solving capabilities, improved the community’s perspective of police officers, increased police legitimacy, and was psychologically beneficial and rewarding for police officers. In each of the study sites, foot patrol officers engaged in a variety of community policing, problem-solving, and enforcement activities.

In 2015, the NYPD introduced its neighborhood policing plan. Under the plan, neighborhood coordination and sector officers engage with community members in problem-solving activities, criminal intelligence gathering, and focused enforcement. Inspector Joseph Gulotta, the commanding officer of NYPD’s 67th Precinct, said that the problem-solving activities have received overwhelming support among community members and officers. Neighborhood coordination and sector officers have voiced strong support for the opportunity to remain within their assigned areas to address quality-of-life and crime issues. Additionally, the assignments have been linked to the process for determining promotions and assignments, providing officers with an incentive for high performance.

“Precision policing” identifies the persons and/or groups driving violent crime and targets them for investigation and prosecution. According to the

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How Police Executives are Finding CBCR Valuable

The CBCR program recognizes the multi-dimensional and complex reality of crime and violence in socially and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods across the nation. These case studies provide insights into how police departments have approached this work.

Flint, Michigan

A collaborative effort developed through CBCR has allowed the Flint community to address crime and quality of life issues in the University Avenue Corridor as well as the city’s “core.” The anchor is the University Avenue Corridor Coalition, which formed a cross-sector partnership comprised of the Mayor’s office, the Flint and University of Michigan police departments, two universities (Kettering and the University of Michigan-Flint), local foundations, three neighborhood associations, and the regional hospital.

Monthly “Core Community CompStat” meetings bring together partners from more than 40 federal, state, county, local, and campus law enforcement agencies; juvenile probation, adult probation, parole and corrections agencies; engagement officers in public housing communities to foster relationships with residents to start and support community and youth programs, address quality of life issues, and develop programs to address violent crimes. The initiative and has received praise from civic leaders for reducing crime and improving community-police relationships.

Successful neighborhood policing programs, whether in New York, Los Angeles or Flint, Michigan, require the police and their partners to routinely capture rich data that informs partners as much as possible about the persons, places, and activities that disrupt their community’s safety and stability. This allows the partnership to focus resources on the most problematic areas, typically referred to as neighborhood “hot spots,” where the greatest potential for change exists. Neighborhood-level data must transcend simply recording increases and decreases in crime. The police and their community partners must also gather and analyze an array of data sets related to the social, physical, and economic environment to fully achieve a holistic understanding of neighborhood challenges.
security services; the faith community; and university crime analysts, researchers, and project managers. The team analyzes crime data, identifies hotspots, and selects strategies to address social, economic, crime, and other issues in the catchment area. According to Chief Ray Hall, University of Michigan Department of Public Safety, Core Community CompStat "is truly a collaborative approach to problem-solving and addressing quality of life issues in the core area of Flint."xii

The Flint team learned from information exchanges at two site visits to Detroit around best practices, according to Chief Hall. For example, the Flint team recruited a member of Detroit’s Urban Safety Corp program to establish and lead a program in Flint, which has become a critical partner in addressing disorder and crime. He spoke of the tremendous support provided by the Michigan State Police and Michigan State University in gathering and analyzing monthly crime data to inform problem-solving strategies and activities in the core and the University Avenue Corridor.

“It is important for communities implementing CBCR projects to recognize that the success of the efforts cannot be tied to individual leaders but to the team, if they are going to be sustained over time,” Hall said.

Seattle, Washington

In Seattle, CBCR strategies focused on the root causes of youth victimization and crime in five Rainier Beach neighborhood hot spots. Recognizing that traditional policing tactics may not be appropriate for high-risk youth, the strategies emphasized non-arrest solutions, specifically programs and environmental changes identified by residents, to bolster informal social controls.

The Safe Passage pilot project, launched in March 2015, responded to a risk identified by the Community Task Force—a large youth presence on and around four school campuses located within a block of each other. After school, groups of youth, sometimes as many as 50, gathered and engaged in disruptive and even violent activities (fight clubs) on and around the campuses.

In response, the Safe Passage program posted trained volunteers called “Corner Greeters” at key locations during after-school hours, to ensure that capable adults could diffuse and intervene in threatening situations, as well as to provide positive role models for youth. According to Michael Washburn, the former South Precinct Commander with the Seattle Police Department and now the Chief of Police in Indio, Calif., although bike and foot patrol officers were in the area, the Corner Greeters generally took the lead in “breaking up” interactions between youth, negating the need for police intervention.
Other strategies to reduce opportunities for negative youth interactions included changing the release times of the four schools—two high schools, middle school, and South Shore K-8 school—to reduce the number of youth on the street at the same time. Signage and landscaping strategies also helped discourage youth from congregating in areas on or around school campuses where there are no guardians to help prevent negative activity.

Chief Washburn said that in addition to reducing aggravated assaults and strong-arm robberies among the youth, the ultimate goal of the project was to “build community cohesion” as well as “teach citizenship and respect for each other to the youth.” He believed that “community cohesion was strengthened by focusing residents, businesses, school officials and community groups on a challenge, providing them the tools and opportunities to develop a plan of action, supporting the implementation of the plan and seeing the success of their efforts.”

### Providence, Rhode Island

In 2014, the Olneyville Housing Corporation partnered with the Providence Police Department, Rhode Island LISC, and Roger Williams University to analyze data sources to identify crime trends, the dynamics of criminal events, hot spot locations, and crime drivers. The analysis highlighted the influence of nuisance properties, as well as resident concerns about prostitution and drug activity.

With this information in hand, the partners developed and implemented collaborative programs, including CBCR strategies focused on the implementation of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles, targeted foot patrols, and gang and gun violence interventions. Local service organizations implemented street intervention strategies focused on connecting sex workers and youth to services and programs in lieu of arrest. Real estate development focused on rehabilitating blighted properties and public spaces to encourage affordable rentals and homeownership by neighborhood residents.

Captain Dean Isabella, a sergeant at the time, described how then Chief Dean Esserman, prioritized implementing partnerships with non-law enforcement groups such as LISC, developers, and community-based organizations and service providers. The police leadership team embraced the partnerships, specifically lieutenants and sergeants, and began the complicated process of building collaboration to address disorder, crime, and social and economic disadvantages.

Those partnerships resulted in approximately 120 new affordable housing units being built and a brownfield site developed into a neighborhood park. These efforts helped Olneyville “build its way out of crime” by improving the physical environment and creating new opportunities for neighborhood residents.

Within the Providence Police Department, new officers were assigned to the Olneyville neighborhood and “given the opportunity to engage in problem-solving” in collaboration with residents and community organizations. Officers delivered toys to homes during the holidays, knocked on doors to introduce themselves to residents and business owners, made and delivered food to residents, and engaged in youth sports programs. According to Captain Isabella, those experiences have and continue to influence their careers.

Senior officers also were assigned to neighborhood “action teams” that focused on problem-solving activities in Olneyville. Two officers told Captain Isabella that the assignment changed their perspective on policing, and they...
developed, on their own, a department-wide training program on problem-solving methods. “The emphasis on community engagement, partnerships and problem-solving became infectious and continues to inform policing strategies today despite significant reductions in staffing and department resources,” Captain Isabella said.

**Battle Creek, Michigan**

The Be Safe Battle Creek CBCR Partnership created a collaborative cross-sector team with significant resident engagement to address crime and the underlying drivers of crime in the catchment neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown business district. The Battle Creek CBCR project focuses on youth, housing, and increasing collective efficacy within identified neighborhoods. According to Chief Jim Blocker, “There is a legitimate disconnect between youth and law enforcement.”

Recognizing that Battle Creek’s youth represent the city’s future as well as the opportunity to recruit future police officers, and build lasting relationships, Chief Blocker and his team are creating a youth police academy to “engage youth, to explain their important role in community safety and law enforcement, and to give them insight into what the police do and why they do it.” Chief Blocker hopes that through the youth and adult police academies he can build “neighborhood react teams” that will respond to critical incidents to facilitate communication between the police department and neighborhood residents.

To build collective efficacy in Battle Creek’s economically and socially disadvantaged neighborhoods, the police department is partnering with residents, community organizations, and other city agencies to create neighborhood gardens under a broader urban agriculture program. According to Chief Blocker, these programs help build relationships among residents and investment in their neighborhoods.

Battle Creek has also initiated a good landlord incentive program to educate them regarding their responsibilities to tenants and to gain their commitment to follow anti-crime strategies and adhere to applicable housing codes.

**Conclusion**

The collaborative, coordinated, and focused efforts developed, implemented, and funded by CBCR in cities such as Battle Creek, Flint, Providence, and Seattle demonstrate that environmental changes and improvements increase investments and participation by residents and businesses to maintain their neighborhoods. The cross-sector partnerships—supported by researchers and developed under the CBCR model—link revitalization efforts with law enforcement interventions at the neighborhood level. The model gives voice to the community, ensuring that residents and businesses drive the identification of local challenges, the development and implementation of strategies to affect change, and are included in the analysis of success and failure.

When the police lead and/or support the collaborative and coordinated efforts of community and faith-based organizations, service providers, developers, and public health and other government agencies, this team can develop, implement, and sustain impactful data-driven policies and strategies that address crime and violence. Police collaboration with neighborhood residents and businesses to co-produce safety builds legitimacy and trust, creating increased opportunities to improve the quality of life in high-crime, high-poverty neighborhoods through law enforcement strategies and non-traditional community-engaged programs.
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Endnotes


ix Mueller and Baker.

x Interview conducted of Inspector Joseph Gulotta, Commanding Officer, New York City Police Department’s 67th Precinct on January 25, 2017.


xii The “core” area represents Flint’s central business, university and entertainment district.