

**Assessing The Success of Community-Policing
(Neighborhood Watch Program)**

Steven Godfrey

Detroit Police Department

Abstract

More and more communities are turning to community-policing neighborhood watch programs to deter crime in their neighborhoods. This includes the location and elimination of drug houses so that citizens can enjoy peace in their neighborhoods. What exactly does community-policing entail and how do we, as citizens, pay for it? Originally programs were paid for by local government but today, because of the extensive manpower commitment to these programs, funds are obtained either from federal or private grant sources. To have a successful community-policing program takes commitment from local police and citizens alike. Police officers who are dedicated to the concept are essential to get a program off the ground. Without individual dedication the project may be doomed to fail. There is no one program that fits every community's needs. Each program should be designed for the individual needs of that particular community. The downside of the program is that some inner-city neighborhoods, because of past experiences with police, do not trust their local law enforcement agencies to assist them with their problems.

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What is Community Policing?

Sociologists and police researchers have studied the role of law enforcement in United States society at great length. The police role involves enforcing laws, the maintenance of order, and community service. The police are given a great deal of authority to enforce the law. They can arrest, search, detain, and use force--all actions that disrupt personal freedom--and yet democracy requires police to maintain order to make a free society possible. Thus, the police must follow democratic norms, while enforcing the laws and satisfying a public that expects protection.

The public often misunderstands the role of the police in society. Citizens think of the function of the police primarily as crime fighting and evaluate police effectiveness in those terms. In most communities, however, regulating traffic, assisting the public, and maintaining order through regular patrolling claim the major share of police time and resources.

In Philadelphia, a pulsating tavern jukebox that had caused irate neighbors to make 500 police calls in six months was moved away from a common wall with the adjoining building. The calls stopped. Though it seems simple, such a move is at the heart of what is known as community policing, which has become a mantra for police chiefs and mayors in cities big and small across the country. Indeed, we find that community policing is and will be the new orthodoxy of law enforcement throughout the nineties and into the new millennium. Rather than just reacting after crimes by racing to a ceaseless string of 911 calls, research indicates that police seem to be trying more and more to create partnerships with communities in advance to solve problems that otherwise lead to crime (Amer. City, 1991). This is a proactive rather than a reactive approach to crime fighting.

We heard about community policing as a new way to deal with crime when the Clinton administration pushed through congress the Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act of 1994 as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. At \$8.8 billion to be used from fiscal years 1995 to 2000, this may be the largest grant program ever administered by the Department of Justice. One of the most widely publicized goals of the program is to add 100,000 police officer positions, funded by grants, to the streets of communities nationwide and of promoting community policing (Rabkin, 1997).

Just exactly what is "community policing?" The practice developed in the 1970s, a product of the experimentation of rank and file police officers at the street level. Local police discovered a variety of strategies to address the causes of and reduce the fear of crime through problem-solving tactics and community-police partnerships. There is no one approach, but three major principles distinguish community policing from conventional law enforcement programs: (1) crime prevention, (2) problem-solving, and (3) partnerships. In community policing, the emphasis is on police-citizen cooperation to control crime, maintain order, stimulate community cooperation and problem-solving and improve the quality of life in communities (Glensor, R. W. & Peak, K., 1996; Rabkin, 1997). In 1991, Time Magazine highlighted these efforts in 300 cities and towns nationwide, including Boston, Houston, and San Francisco (Lacayo, R., Shannon, E., & Woodbury, R., 1991). Community policing has been considered the antidote to the kind of incident that resulted in the beating of Rodney King, since the neighborhood support gives police a greater sense of confidence and authority, which may reduce their need for using force (Lacayo, R., Shannon, E., & Woodbury, R., 1991).

Long before the enactment of the current grant program with the administrating office, dubbed COPS (for Community Oriented Policing Services), community policing programs were financed locally (Brown, 1997; Glensor, R. W. & Peak, K., 1996) The Justice Department supported community policing and predecessor programs for more than 15 years (Rabkin, 1997).

After two years of the COPS grant program, Dr. Norman Rabkin, Director of the Administration of Justice Issues, was requested by several congressional committees (the Budget, Crime, and the Judiciary) to review the program's design, operation, and management (Rabkin, 1997). Rabkin's group was asked to look at how the grants awarded by COPS were distributed, nationwide, how these grants were monitored, how they were actually used, and what process was used by COPS to calculate the number of law enforcement officers that were added to the street, and how various communities implemented their grants (Rabkin, 1997).

In 1996 a federal grant was obtained for a pilot community-policing "Neighborhood Watch" program in Detroit, Michigan. Two precincts, the Seventh and the Tenth, were selected for this one-year test project. Commander Ronald Vasiloff, the author of the grant, pushed both the police department hierarchy and the community groups in both of the target precincts to give the concept a chance. Vasiloff was the Tenth Precinct Commander at the inception of the program, so it stands to reason more effort was put into the program at his precinct. Commander Chester Logan, of the Seventh Precinct in 1996, was known to be less than enthusiastic to the program. He maintained that he did not have the manpower to commit to the program. He needed his officers out there handling the backlog of 911 emergency calls.

The program concept called for one target scout car area in each of the two precincts to be designated as the community police sector. There would be three officers on each shift assigned as the community police officers. This scout car would operate everyday on all three shifts. Laptop computers and pagers were purchased for the officers so that citizens in the target sector could contact the officers directly in non-emergency situations. The block leaders and the citizens of the target sector who attended the monthly community meetings for the target precincts were advised and urged to participate but to continue to use the 911 system for true emergencies. They were also given the officers' pager numbers so that they could contact them directly for non-emergency problems. Seminars were held to instruct interested citizens on how to properly utilize the system (Vasiloff 2001).

How to Obtain a Federal Grant

Any law enforcement agency that could demonstrate a public safety need that it could not address without the aid of a grant, and which could match 25% of the federal grant amount, was eligible. Grants must ultimately be allocated 50% to agencies serving populations of 150,000 or less, while the other 50% was to go to populations over 150,000. There was no requirement that the grants be given to those agencies most needing assistance (Rabkin, 1997).

Because the ultimate goal of the Act was the permanent increase of community policing officers, grantees were required to use the money to supplement, but not to supplant, state and local funds. They were also required to come up with a plan for how they would assume progressively more of the cost of these officers (Rabkin, 1997).

How Grants Were Given and How the Funds Were Spent

During fiscal years 1995 and 1996 there were 13,196 COPS grants awarded, for about \$2.6 billion, the majority of which went to agencies in communities with small populations. Almost 50% of the grants were awarded to agencies serving populations of less than 10,000, and 83% were to agencies from populations of less than 50,000. Only 1% of the grants went to communities with populations over one million, but they received over 23% of the total grant dollars (Rabkin, 1997). Overall, however, this worked out to meet the requirements that half the total funds be spent on small and half on large communities (Rabkin, 1997). The Director of COPS noted that the majority of grants to small jurisdictions and for only one or two officers was appropriate and in line with the purpose of the act, since "the vast majority of police departs nationwide are also relatively small", and, "that the amounts were correspondingly small (Brann, 1997). The Rabkin report, however, recommended that it might be better to target those states and cities where there was a greater need and fewer fiscal resources (Rabkin, 1997).

Part of the grant program involved a subdivision called COPS MORE (Making Officer Redeployment Effective). Here, the idea was to provide supplementary services to the agency so that more officers might be freed up to serve as community police officers (Rabkin, 1997). According to the report, about 11% of the total grant dollars went to this part of the program (Rabkin, 1997). A random stratified survey of a representative sample of these grantees found that by the end of fiscal year 1996 they had spent a third of what they'd received. Of this amount, 61% was spent on hiring non-police (mainly clerical personnel), 31% was spent on technology and equipment (such as computers and technological record-keeping systems), and only 8% on overtime payments for law enforcement officers (Rabkin, 1997). These

results were heavily weighted by how the New York City Police Department chose to spend funds, since it spent more than half the MORE program funds expended nationally, and its purchasing of technology and equipment accounted for 48% of what was spent in that category overall. The New York City Police Department used about 86% of their grant, or \$38.7 million, for hiring civilian personnel (Rabkin, 1997).

Since the purpose of the MORE grants was to free up more police for the streets, the report attempted to discover how many of an agency's existing police were redeployed to community policing as a result of the grants. Survey respondents were therefore asked to calculate how many FTE (full-time-equivalent) positions their agency was able to redeploy as a result of the MORE funds. Nine percent of the respondents were unable to make these calculations, either because the equipment had not yet been installed or it was too early in the implementation process. The calculations from the rest of the grantees, however, only amounted to about 4,800 FTEs redeployed (or around 9% of the sample). Technology and equipment accounted for 40% of these redeployments, hiring of civilian personnel for about 48% and paying officers overtime about 12%. About 2400 civilians were hired, or half the number of police officers redeployed (Rabkin, 1997).

Although redeployment of police seemed to be going slowly, police officers were also hired to do community policing. After two years of operation, 8,803 communities had been awarded grants, and 86% of these funds were to be used to hire additional law enforcement officers (Rabkin, 1997). The COPS office reported that by June 1997 a telephone survey resulted in an estimate of 30,155 law enforcement officer positions were on the street. In this count, however, were also 2000 positions funded by another Justice Department program established before the COPS grant program was begun (Rabkin, 1997). The Director of

COPS, Joseph E. Brann, noted that since the time the Rabkin survey was conducted, the Office had found the number of officers hired to work on the street to have risen to 62,000, and of these 30,000 were already hired, trained, and providing community policing services (Brann July, 1997).

The Rabkin report also noted that during the first two-and-a-half years of the program, monitoring of the use of the grant funds by the COPS office was very limited. "Information on activities and accomplishments for cops-funded programs was not consistently collected or reviewed" nor did site visits regularly take place (Rabkin, 1997). This is now being remedied by additional staff positions, since most of the COPS staff was occupied in responding to requests for and administering the grants. A major question is whether the funds are really supplementary, or whether they have been used to supplant state and local funding. By December 1996, the Department of Justice's Legal Division received 506 referrals for follow-up from COPS 3-person legal staff, 70% of which involved potential supplanting problems. The COPS Director has replied that with growth and additional resources, a new monitoring plan has already had site visits to 138 jurisdictions, with a total of \$1.5 billion in grants, and they are reviewing over 6000 progress reports from grantees. A new division for monitoring will be hiring 30 staff members to conduct reviews and site visits in 1998.

Another "Neighborhood Watch" program being used by the Detroit Police Department is the "224-DOPE" hotline. This number is operational twenty-four hours a day and is to be used for narcotic activity only. An operator will enter all information into a computer database and a "Narcotic Activity" form is created. This form is then forwarded to the narcotics unit for that particular location and they will, in turn, conduct a thorough investigation. The ultimate goal is to move the drug house out of the neighborhood by

whatever legal means necessary up to and including the execution of search warrants. In cases where the location continues, the upcoming trend will be forfeiture proceedings begun on the location.

The key to the success of this program is anonymity. If a caller wishes to remain anonymous it will not affect the way the call is processed. If, however, a person wishes to give their name and number so that they can be contacted, a narcotics supervisor will return the call and advise them of the outcome of the investigation. A representative from the Narcotics Division attends the community meeting held monthly in each of the thirteen precincts serving Detroit. Further, the representative attends any other community group meeting upon request (Jones 2001).

Common sense dictates that any police department can only do so much on their own. The police cannot operate in a vacuum. To be truly successful any law enforcement agency needs the cooperation of the citizenry and other government agencies to make community policing a success. Citizen involvement also allows people to feel they have some control over quality of life issues in their neighborhood. Wayne County Michigan Prosecutor Mike Duggan deflected some criticism of Detroit Police Chief Benny Napoleon and the department's narcotics raid strategy. He stated, "His office and Wayne County judges share the blame for not properly supporting the police efforts. In the prosecutor's office we think we have done a terrible job of following up the police raids and shutting down drug houses for good. We did not use the forfeiture law to seize those (drug) houses and padlock them." Duggan said his office is now moving to have the city of Detroit tear down documented drug houses. Judges, he added, are ignoring state sentencing guidelines and giving lighter

sentences, which cripples the police department's ability to use the threat of long prison terms to get witnesses to cooperate in cases against the bigger dealers (Sinclair, Det. News, 2001).

Evidently, if there are urban towns where community policing does not largely exist yet- that will probably change soon. In a 1992 address, President Clinton reportedly said "We're determined to put more police officers on the street and to expand community policing," (Lazear, 1994). In a fairly recent survey by the FBI and the National Center for Community Policing at Michigan State University, 50 percent of police officials serving cities with populations of more than 50,000 people said they were following this approach to policing, and an additional 20 percent planned to inaugurate it within a year (Lazear, 1994).

But community policing is certainly not without its problems. Despite its allure on paper, turning the theory into practice on the unforgiving streets of urban America is proving complicated. If community policing cannot deliver quantifiable results quickly, it could end up on the scrap heap of innovation. In Brooklyn, New York's Sunset Park neighborhood, where immigrants and tidy row houses uneasily coexist with prostitutes and graffiti-covered small businesses, patrol officers reportedly provide an example of how to make community-policing work. Strolling along the streets, they banter with shop owners, who see them as "their" cops. Sometimes, that neighborhood's police have little to do with fighting crime directly, like when one named Officer Amato prodded local officials to remove abandoned cars from underneath the expressway in the early nineties (The Atlantic, 1992).

Examples of Community Crime Busters

From what has been written, New York's Officer Amato is proudest of the role he played in clearing rampant crack dealing from the corner of 45th Street and Third Avenue.

Local residents and merchants reportedly came to trust him enough to tell him that a man working out of a nearby apartment was behind it all; Amato called in narcotics detectives and worked with the building's landlord to arrange to monitor the situation from adjacent units. That led to arrests and contacts with informants who helped the police bring down the main pusher in late June of 1992. As a direct result, the crack dealing dried up.

Community policing made that possible. A patrol car would not have had the time to spend on it. Officers “on the beat” like Amato has helped get the neighborhood cleaned up nicely. Where elderly women were once afraid to walk, they now roam the streets with the utmost confidence in their local law enforcement. But in other cities like Houston, it appears that neither elderly women nor many others were very happy with community policing—called Neighborhood Oriented Policing in their city. "The words 'neighborhood-oriented policing' are cuss words around here now," said Sam Nuchia, Houston's police chief, in a 1993 article (Insight, 1993). It was drug czar Lee Brown, then Houston's chief (and later New York's commissioner), who instituted NOP (Neighborhood Oriented Policing) as a pilot program in 1983 and citywide in 1987. The idea improved relations between cops and residents in inner-city neighborhoods. But for community policing to work, several goals need to be met, and, Houston is a cautionary tale for the idea's boosters across the country.

Although the “beat cop” allows the most direct contact for citizens and police officers, it may not be practical for all cities or neighborhoods outside of New York. In Detroit for example; once a police officer is outside the relatively small downtown area beat cops become impractical in residential, single family dwelling, neighborhoods. It becomes a geographical problem. How many citizens can one beat cop assist within a certain geographic area? Is it worth the expense?

Other Community Policing Programs

The Rabkin Report to Congress also included six case studies in locations receiving COPS grants: Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, and Oxnard in California; Prince George's County in Maryland; St. Petersburg, Florida, and Window Rock, Arizona (a grant to the Navajo Nation). These were selected to include four city or county police departments and two "special law enforcement agencies" This last category of agency included those serving colleges, universities, mass transit and public housing, schools and Native American police departments, and the latter accounted for 80% of the grants in this category. However, special law enforcement agencies were awarded less than 3% of all hiring grants, so their representation as one-third of the case studies is an inflated sample (Rabkin, 1997).

Case studies consisted of structured interviews with the police chief or community policing coordinator and representatives from local government agencies and community groups. The investigators found that a variety of projects implementing the three principles (prevention, problem solving, and partnerships) were underway, and that those interviewed were generally supportive of what was happening. Successes included improved relationships between police and community members, opportunities to use more of community facilities, and an improvement of quality of life, including a sense of community pride growing among residents. Limitations mentioned insufficient funding and that some individual community policing officers were not performing as well as expected. Some police authorities noted that citizens were unrealistically expecting officers to handle social problems such as mediating domestic or neighborhood disputes or addressing unemployment problems (Rabkin, 1997).

Others also report positive results from the community policing programs in a number of cities and towns. Crime statistics have been decreasing in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City (D'Antonio, M., 1996) and much of this improvement is attributed to community policing. In May 1996, President Clinton held a teleconference with mayors from many cities to discuss their reactions to the program. Mayor Richard Riordan of Los Angeles, CA, described how the increase in police officers and community policing programs have helped to prevent and fight crime in his city, and Mayor Mike White from Cleveland, where funds from the program have been used to permit police officers to live within the neighborhoods they patrol, explained that community policing programs have helped to lower crime in Cleveland by sixteen percent in the last 5 years (Clinton, 1996). This program was tried in Detroit. Single officers were offered free rent in any of the City's housing projects. Not one officer volunteered to live in the "projects".

A program in East Austin, Texas built a community network through the use of the Internet, helping residents to stay in touch with one another using computers at local churches and in community police centers, recreation centers, public housing projects, and other community centers. The Austin Police Department uses the community network to strengthen links between police officers and neighborhood associations, nonprofit groups, and public housing managers. This has facilitated giving answers to the 400-600 calls per month that the community policing center receives (Chapman, G.& Rhodes, L., 1997).

Another result of community policing is increased confidence among minority business owners in poor neighborhoods. Some of these efforts are entrepreneurial rather than resulting from government grants. In Cincinnati, a District Security Investigation business founded to provide corporate security, added community policing to their business and their

earnings quadrupled (Brown, A., 1997). By holding community policing seminars with community organizations, they assessed community needs and designed seminars to address the issues (Brown, A., 1997).

Hundreds of American law enforcement agencies have voluntarily adopted a twin program combining community policing with problem-oriented policing, termed COPPS (Glensor, R. W. & Peak, K., 1996). Despite the similarity in name, most of these programs were implemented without the federal grant program. Four components have been discovered to be keys to moving the agency from the old reactive, incident-driven mode to the new approach: leadership and management changes, a new organizational culture, different field operations, and rebuilt external relationships. The last element involves establishing new partnerships for sharing resources and information necessary to solving neighborhood problems, including cooperative relationships with city agencies, businesses, service providers, and community members (Glensor, R. W. & Peak, K., 1996). In Reno, Nevada, this process was begun in 1987. Neighborhood police stations, funded through private community donations were set up, and civilian report takers staff the stations. Citizens also can meet there with offices to discuss neighborhood problems and learn about community-based programs offered by the police department. Many consortiums and local programs have arisen out of these cooperative efforts (Glensor, R. W. & Peak, K., 1996).

In the late 1970s the Detroit Police Department initiated this neighborhood program under the guise of the "Mini-station". This concept called for converting empty storefronts into neighborhood mini-stations. A police officer and a volunteer civilian would man the location and assist citizens with whatever neighborhood problems needed to be addressed. As manpower shortages took affect citizens lost faith in the concept because the mini-station was

rarely manned. Citizens weren't donating their time to sit in the station. Police officers were pulled for more serious duty and the concept seemed to die off. There was a brief resurgence in the mid 1980s but that also died off because of a lack of manpower.

Given these extensive local efforts, it may be that anxiety over proper monitoring of the COPS grant funds may be exaggerated. Where the community and their law enforcement agency seriously desire community policing, ways are discovered to get it implemented, even in the absence of federal funds. Their absolute numbers count success of these programs in the lives and spirit of the local neighborhoods, and the closeness of relations with officers and citizens.

The 'Downside' of Community Policing & Pertinent Recommendations

First off, crime rates statistically soared from 1985 through 1991. Meanwhile, Brown and his successor, Elizabeth Watson, had to scale back their plans because Houston cost 655 of its 4,500 officers to budget cutbacks from 1986 to 1991; NOP was ridiculed as "nobody on patrol" (The Atlantic, 1992). And middle managers gave line officers little flexibility in decision-making, diminishing enthusiasm for the approach down the line. Management consultants hired by the city said that some officers were so preoccupied with NOP that they lost sight of the need to catch crooks, and the consultants concluded that NOP had not produced any comprehensive improvement.

Even proponents recognize the pitfalls. False advertising is one recurring problem. Police experts say departments in cities like Richmond, Virginia; Portland, Oregon., and San Diego, California, have made major commitments to community policing, but many other cities have borrowed the name while making only cosmetic changes. In fact, the variety of

programs that are described as 'community policing' is truly bewildering. In 1992, for example, a panel studying the Boston Police Department singled out that city's program as "incomplete and superficial, and lacking the problem-solving component."

In Detroit it seemed as though the hierarchy gave Vasiloff's plan lip service while placing various roadblocks in his path. First off most line officers were less than enthusiastic and it took a hard sell on his part to get volunteer officers for the program. The police department's communications section continually dispatched his community car out of their sector to answer emergency runs. The communications section claimed that because of a glitch in the radio "CAD" (computer aided dispatch) system they could not keep the community policing scout car out of service to handle the non-emergency problems in their sector.

Although the officers had pagers on many occasions they were not able to respond to pages in a timely manner because they were tied up on other emergency calls. Eventually the citizens in the target sector began not to trust in their community officers. The laptop computers pent a year gathering dust on the shelf of their supervisor's office. His reasoning was that he was responsible for the expensive equipment and if he allowed the officers to take it out they would only break it causing him more paperwork to get it repaired. This is just one example of the "head-in-the-sand" mentality of some police supervisors.

As for the 224-DOPE system, because of the dedication of the supervisors at the Narcotics Division, it appears to be successful. A comprehensive database tracks all complaints called in and the enforcement supervisors can call up any location to determine if there is any history of narcotic activity. Ideally, with the assistance of the county prosecutor's office, after a set number of repeated contacts, forfeiture proceedings would be initiated. This

would be the property owner's final wake-up call whether he/she actually lives there or is an absentee owner.

The difference between the genuine article and the fakes often comes down to whether the police department appreciates the depth of change needed to make an honest go of community policing. In New York, Lee Brown and his staff identified 57 major changes that had to be made within that department in everything from reward and evaluation systems to criminal investigative techniques. (Insight, 1993).

Indeed, the changes that seem most recommended typically cut to the core of a stubborn, paramilitary police culture. For one thing, departments must recruit differently, attracting people interested in service, not just adventure. Police academy training needs to expand beyond arrest procedures to include building skills like community organizing. Bean-counting performance measures--like counting summonses--have little meaning in such a system.

Departments must also find ways to free officers from what I have heard to be called the "tyranny of 911" nonstop calls that send cops bouncing around like pinballs. In some departments, dispatchers query callers aggressively to screen out nonemergency calls. But the problem persists. When people call 911, they want a cop and it is often quite a long time before they get one. Community-policing advocates say solving problems at their core will eventually reduce 911 calls, and argue that residents will accept a different response time for non-emergencies if the payback from community policing is clear; studies in Greensboro, North Carolina and Toledo, Ohio, back them up. But in Houston, where community-policing efforts faltered, the public is still reportedly enraged by slower emergency-response times (Insight, 1993).

The problems seem to lie in the fact that after these programs are implemented police officers are transferred and there are no replacements. Vasiloff was recently quoted in the Detroit News. "Former Commander Ronald Vasiloff, a 29-year veteran who retired last summer, has seen a much-admired community policing program he developed in the 10th (Livernois) Precinct gutted with the constant transfer of officers to the Narcotics Bureau and other high-priority assignments

'No sooner did we train the officers than they were transferred, leaving the precincts with younger, inexperienced officers,' Vasiloff said. Community policing, he said, is effective in battling drugs in neighborhoods because officers spend time on the streets, developing contacts and getting a hands-on feel for the problems (Sinclair, 2001).

Conclusion

Ideally, experts say, all officers should participate in community policing, but the crush of 911 forces some departments to split their troops, with a few officers working full time on community problems while others answer radio calls. In New York, this has caused animosity between the two groups. The reality, contend some experts, is that community policing requires more cops, a tough sell for budget-strapped cities. For example, the Detroit Police Department is operating today with about one thousand officers less than they had in 1980.

When practiced well, community policing assumes each neighborhood has unique problems, so precinct commanders and line-level cops are encouraged to customize service, not just follow general edicts from headquarters. Yet many cops feel the philosophy is soft on crime or isn't "real" police work, said Randolph Grinc of New York's Vera Institute of Justice

(Tonry, 1993). Today, we are a society that depends on the television set for our information and entertainment. We have grown up watching cop shows from *Dragnet* to *New York Undercover* and everything in between. Generally speaking, the type of personalities that gravitate towards police work are looking for adventure or excitement. At the very least they expect to receive some gratification from the job they are doing. Unfortunately community policing may be rewarding in the long term with helping others but there is little excitement. And, many sergeants and lieutenants have resisted allowing street cops to devise their own solutions, fearing a loss of control. The challenges do not stop with the police. Bringing other government agencies and the community at large into the process as partners is crucial. But overworked city agencies have at times had trouble responding when police have asked for their help. New York's housing agency, for instance, told one Sunset Park cop seeking help in sealing an abandoned building filled with squatters that it would take months of legal hassling before they could do it. (The Atlantic, 1992). And many neighborhoods are not taking up the new role demanded of them, especially if they are plagued by crime or have a history of bad relations with the police.

There is no clear verdict on whether community policing makes a difference. Research in Newark, N.J.; Madison, Wisconsin; Baltimore, Maryland and Flint, Michigan, and personal experience as a member of the Detroit Police Department for over twenty-four years, indicates it can reduce fear and increase citizen satisfaction. But hard evidence of actual reductions in crime is hazy, and the most rigorous evaluations are only now being conducted (Tonry, 1993). Generally, community policing is advancing because it seems to make sense, not because it has yet been shown to be demonstrably superior. But for crime-

weary cops, citizens and politicians, the reality I have found no one knows for sure if it is working.

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