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# Weed & Seed

# Best Practices:

## Evaluation-based Series



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Weed and Seed Partners:

As the Weed and Seed strategy spreads throughout America, the experiences of earlier sites can help light the way for newer ones.

These Best Practices articles are intended not only to showcase successful operations but also to illustrate different approaches to similar problems. These articles focus less on single successful events in a Weed and Seed site and more on the importance of basic planning and implementation methods. Keeping in mind that Weed and Seed is not a program but a comprehensive strategy, there is a particular emphasis on a variety of processes and procedures that have resulted in outstanding performance.

The lessons to be drawn from these articles can help other Weed and Seed sites as they address similar situations whether they are in large urban areas, small cities, or rural areas. The issues transcend size and population characteristics.

One unifying factor in these articles is the evaluation process. An outside evaluation has been conducted in each of these sites and a report has been published and shared with the Steering Committee and other stakeholders. The evaluations have shown not only the strengths and weaknesses but also have examined the structure and organization of each site.

From these articles, other sites can gain a better understanding of how an outside evaluation will provide an objective review of operations which in turn will help the Steering Committee make adjustments, supply more effective oversight, and improve overall site operations. Thus, these articles will help to illustrate how sites have used the evaluation process to improve operations and meet their goals.

Thanks for all your good work!

Bob Samuels  
Acting Director  
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# Crime Prevention Through Community Prosecution and Community Policing

## Boston's Grove Hall Safe Neighborhood Initiative

*Report on an evaluation of the Community Prosecution Initiative in Boston's Weed and Seed site, the Grove Hall Neighborhood, conducted by Catherine Coles, Brian Carney, and Bobbie Johnson*

**W**eed and Seed sites that have embraced community policing have experienced a range of benefits greater than expected. It is a simple and logical concept for approaching crime problems in a holistic framework. It involves community residents as part of the solution to crime problems and strengthens positive relationships between them and law enforcement. In Boston's Grove Hall neighborhood, when community policing was taken one step farther to include community prosecution, the results were especially rewarding.

To understand community prosecution, it may be helpful to trace its development. Community prosecution has developed from a number of programs throughout the country over several decades, some beginning as early as the 1950s. While community prosecution is closely bound up with community policing, it developed on a somewhat different path. Because police operate in a public arena,

citizens are aware of what they do on a regular basis. Prosecutors perform their duties in a less visible way; therefore, the public has not always understood their role in the justice system. However, with the rise of the crack-cocaine epidemic, drug cases began to overwhelm the system and residents began demanding more—both policing and prosecution—from law enforcement.

### Core Features of Community Prosecution

- Developing an enlarged mission that includes prevention and crime reduction while recognizing the importance of quality-of-life issues and taking notice of the priorities of citizens.
- Adopting a problem-oriented prosecution strategy that goes beyond depending only on the traditional criminal law approach, and the expansion of the prosecutor's staff to include nonlawyer specialists.
- Developing a collaboration among justice agencies, citizens, and the private sector to assist with setting priorities and defining local problem solving.

Prosecutors across the country began reaching out to local communities and, as they did, they were able to form partnerships with nonlegal professionals and with community residents. They also began to recognize the importance of quality-of-life issues as well as the use of traditional prosecution techniques, and they developed a problem-solving model that could be used by prosecutors and community residents.

## Community Prosecution in Boston— The Safe Neighborhood Initiative

This article will explore how community prosecution has operated in Boston under the name of the Safe Neighborhood Initiative (SNI). It includes both community policing and community prosecution. Although they share the basic concepts of community orientation and a problem-solving approach, they often take different paths. The Safe Neighborhood Initiative presented the opportunity to combine the efforts. SNI is guided by three principles that closely reflect the Weed and Seed philosophy:

1. coordinated law enforcement,
2. neighborhood revitalization, and
3. prevention and treatment.

In each SNI, there is a citizens advisory or coordinating council to ensure citizen involvement. A coordinator runs the office and is responsible for day-to-day operations, facilitating communications, arranging meetings, serving as a liaison, and implementing decisions of the council for non-law enforcement activities.

### Grove Hall SNI (GHSNI)

In 1995, the Grove Hall SNI (GHSNI) began with the goals of reducing crime and improving the quality of life in the area. The serious problems in Grove Hall are reflected in selected neighborhood statistics.

- This area with 19,000 residents accounted for 25 percent of violent crime in Boston.
- Two-thirds of the children lived with a single parent.
- Per capita income was \$10,137 compared to \$15,581 for Boston.
- Five violent street gangs operated there.

A lack of trust between law enforcement and the community had escalated over a period of many years, making it difficult to work together to address the problems.

The GHSNI council represented a collaboration of the Boston Police Department, the Mayor's Office, the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, the Massachusetts Attorney General, and later the Massachusetts U.S. Attorney's Office and the Grove Hall community. Project Right, an umbrella organization of service providers and local agencies along with some neighborhood organizations, and the Grove Hall Board of Trade completed the council. The council was co-chaired by the deputy superintendent of the Boston Police Department and the president of the Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association. In spite of the broad representation, things did not go well. From 1995 to 1997, not much was accomplished. The two sides spent most of their energies opposing each other.

The GHSNI council identified its first task as that of building trust. The community felt that government did not have the neighborhood's best interests at heart. Added to that was the fact that community members had believed promises from government officials in the past that had not been kept.

The government representatives also mistrusted the community and doubted its commitment to the process. This lack of trust deepened when an assistant attorney general involved in a gang prosecution case was killed. Still another reason for their distrust was government's discomfort with Project Right's leadership role on the council.

### Weed and Seed Official Recognition

In March 1996, the area received Weed and Seed Official Recognition (OR) followed later by a \$225,000 award. Receiving OR was a welcome event, but it did not greatly improve relationships on the council. There were disputes over administration of the grant and allocation of seeding funds. This stormy relationship continued until the spring of 1997, when suddenly the council had a meeting during which things were accomplished and a good working relationship emerged. Crime statistics for 1995 to 1999 testify to the changes in the neighborhood.

In addition to the drops in crime, other tangible signs of positive change were evident in Grove Hall.

**Reported Crime and Search Warrants Executed in Grove Hall, 1995–1999\***

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Homicides	12	12	5	4	5
Aggravated Assaults					
With Firearms	73	62	34	38	25
Armed Robberies	87	82	83	43	31
Search Warrants					
Executed for					
Drugs/Guns	5	5	4	31	35

\*Boston Police Department Office of Research and Evaluation

A new middle school, Mother Caroline Academy, was opened; a new mall was built; businesses were returning; and the neighborhood was freed from gang control.

Also important to the residents was the new level of trust and cooperation that had been developed with law enforcement. There were open community meetings held every other month and attended by 80 to 100 people where community issues were discussed and plans developed to address them. The police and prosecution team assigned to Grove Hall held law enforcement meetings to consider issues and develop their plans. The results of these activities were reported at subsequent meetings, which helped to establish accountability and build trust.

**Weed and Seed Involvement**

In addition to the GHSNI council, two Weed and Seed coordinators became actively involved in the day-to-day operation. The seed coordinator was charged with oversight of the non-law enforcement activities and other services. A community court liaison was funded to function as the weed coordinator. The community began focusing on correcting small problems as a way of demonstrating the importance of keeping a check on quality-of-life issues.

**Beat-team Policing**

During this time, the Boston Police Department changed from community policing to beat-team policing. Beat-team policing continued along the basic lines of community policing with an added component each sector of the city had a law enforcement team that worked in a specific area, developing an in-

depth understanding of the community issues and applying the SARA model (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) to the identified problems.

**New Posture for Prosecutors**

The role of community prosecution also evolved along the newly defined structure. The new approach meant getting to know the community’s issues and developing an improved way to respond. The neighborhood asked that, instead of only big cases being selected for prosecution, smaller offenses also be included, knowing that the bigger cases would be handled as they had been in the past. Even though community prosecution required a change in approach and operations, there were rewarding aspects that compensated for the time required for the change. Community members were appreciative of the prosecutors’ work and experienced a feeling of accomplishment by being part of the process. Prosecutors were pleased to have willing partners who supplied information.

**Evaluation of the Community Prosecution Program**

An evaluation of the Grove Hall Community Prosecution Program was conducted by Catherine Coles, Brian Carney, and Bobby Johnson under a grant supported in part by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. They attended meetings, followed the program developments, and interviewed participants in the effort. Their evaluation noted several outstanding issues:

- Involving judges in SNI might become a problem in the future.
- Funding to support future SNI programs might become an issue.
- Commitment from the Attorney General’s Office and the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office is sensitive to changes from elections.
- Increasing the number of community members to work directly with SNI leadership is essential for success of the initiative.

**Judges’ Involvement**

District courts in Boston are decentralized, which means that each judge must be persuaded to cooperate



Grove Hall “Weed and Seed” community residents, with Mayor Thomas Menino, at groundbreaking ceremony for “first time” homebuyers Project RIGHT, Inc.

with SNI efforts. Some of the judges expressed concern that judicial fairness and neutrality would be compromised if they participated with SNI. The Massachusetts Supreme Court agreed with this position, handing down an advisory opinion directing judges not to participate in SNI activities. In spite of this setback, some judges have been willing to find ways to collaborate with SNI.

### Continued Financing

The program has received federal and state funds throughout its operation. It also receives a variety of services and personnel from its partners. This type of support, while important, is subject to institutional changes and requires constant efforts to secure stability.

### Maintaining Institutional Support

The 1998 election brought a change in the Attorney General’s Office, raising concerns about GHSNI’s relationship with that office, which had become a key partner in the program. Fortunately, GHSNI was able to maintain support from the newly elected attorney general; however, the election provided a warning that changes could occur in the future even if the program continued to be successful.

### Community Involvement

An essential element in the success of programs such as SNI is strong community representation. The program has enjoyed support from a small number of active residents; however, the number needs to be greater if the program is to continue as well as expand.

The liaison staff person from the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Boston made resident participation a high priority. She recruited assistance from the neighborhood and sent a mailing to residents explaining the importance of having their representation at the community meetings. Before that, many residents had no idea

why they should be attending a community council meeting because no one had taken the time to explain its purpose to them. More than 100 people attended the meeting that followed the mass mailing. With a better understanding of the importance of their role in the program, residents have continued to be involved at this level.

Currently the GHSNI continues to function successfully. Even though there is no longer a liaison from the U.S. Attorney’s Office working in the community, the office continues to be involved and supportive of the activities in Grove Hall.

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# Comprehensive Approach to Community Problems

## Milwaukee's Safe and Sound Initiative Combines Each Component of Weed and Seed

*Report on an evaluation conducted by Department of Social and Cultural Sciences, Marquette University*

**M**ilwaukee first received official recognition of its Weed and Seed strategy in 1995. By 1997, Weed and Seed was operating successfully in three Milwaukee neighborhoods. The Safe and Sound initiative was begun in 1998 as an extension of the sites' law enforcement and seeding activities. Weed and Seed principles provided the theoretical base on which Safe and Sound was developed.

The link between the initiatives is clear when reading the Safe and Sound mission statement: Safe and Sound develops, supports, and facilitates collaborative approaches to measurably reduce violent crime by blending law enforcement, neighborhood organizing, and youth development.

### Safe and Sound Strategy

A task force under the leadership of U.S. Senator Herb Kohl, Milwaukee Mayor John O. Norquist, and then U.S. Attorney Thomas Schneider was convened in 1997. The task force represented a broad coalition of neighborhood leaders, law enforcement professionals, government officials, businesses, and community leaders. This group came together to study the serious issue of youth crime and violence in Milwaukee and to develop collaborative options for addressing the problems. The task force developed a strategic plan for an expanded problem-solving approach in the highest crime areas of the city. A new public-private venture was recommended as the result



Announcement of the Safe and Sound Initiative.

of their planning. This initiative was named Safe and Sound.

The task force developed a strategic plan for the Safe and Sound initiative that included

- reducing crime, targeting increased tough law enforcement in the highest crime areas.
- providing additional needed social services especially for youth, developing Safe Places.
- encouraging neighborhood revitalization in 20 designated areas in the city, building partnerships with neighborhood residents.

The task force acknowledged that concentrating resources in a single or isolated targeted area can result in dislocation of criminal activity. To mitigate this outcome, it decided that selecting 20 neighborhoods would lessen the likelihood of dislocation to adjacent areas.

## Law Enforcement— Crime Reduction

Enhanced law enforcement directed toward the reduction of violent crime was the number one principle underlying the entire Safe and Sound initiative. Multi-jurisdictional task forces had already been used and were seen as the best approach for continuing to attack the crime problem.

The law enforcement goal of reducing violent crime by 20 percent in the 20 targeted neighborhoods received an important boost in 1998 when Milwaukee was designated as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). This designation provided substantial resources, including \$3 million annually from the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The HIDTA's additional resources included strategic intelligence support, technical support, and support for investigative and prosecutorial initiatives. HIDTA also provided funding for the Safe and Sound program.

Representatives from the 12 participating law enforcement agencies serve on the HIDTA executive board, which is responsible for setting policy, directing activities, and overseeing the pro-

gram. The law enforcement agencies participating in Milwaukee HIDTA include these representatives from local, state, and federal jurisdictions:

- Milwaukee Police Department
- Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department
- West Allis Police Department
- Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office
- Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Narcotic Enforcement
- Wisconsin National Guard
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- U.S. Attorney's Office
- U.S. Customs Service
- U.S. Marshal's Service

The violent crime rate decreased over 40 percent in the Safe and Sound area from 1997 to 2001 with some variation among the 20 neighborhoods. This success greatly exceeds their original goal of a 20 percent reduction, and the rate is still higher in the Safe and Sound area than in the rest of Milwaukee.

## Safe Places— Improved Youth Services

A second step toward meeting the goals of the Mayor's Youth and Violence task force was the establishment of a network of youth centers, called Safe Places. By the



Neighborhood children clean up Metcalfe Park.

end of the first year, there were 98 Safe Places operating throughout the city's neighborhoods under the direction of a board of directors and a professional management staff.

The Safe Places operate in school buildings, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, churches, and other youth-serving centers. They are not all equipped with the same equipment; however, included among the facilities are computers, gyms, classrooms, and playgrounds. Offerings at the Safe Places include tutoring, homework assistance, computer training, job-skills training, and substance-abuse counseling.

These important neighborhood resources are supported with both private and public funding. Private funds come from foundations, private citizens, and corporations. Public funding comes from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Development Block Grants, HIDTA, Weed and Seed, the U.S. Department of Education, and the state of Wisconsin. This wide support reflects broad endorsement of the Safe Places initiative.

### **Community Partners Program— Outreach and Organization in the Neighborhoods**

The third essential element of the Safe and Sound initiative is the Community Partners Program. It was designed to have a liaison, called a community partner, assigned in each of the 20 neighborhoods. Outreach to the residents is a major function of the community partners. They literally go door-to-door in the neighborhoods, getting to know the residents, distributing information, encouraging the formation of block watch clubs, planning events, and gathering information about problems.

Each community partner is required to make 40 face-to-face contacts each week. (A total of 25,285 contacts were made in 2001.) A written report on each contact is reviewed by a supervisor and filed for follow-up. The contact information is also shared with responsible persons for action. The partners perform an important connecting role between the police and the residents. They have gained the confidence of the residents who will share information with them that they often would not tell the police. In turn, this information is referred to police for follow-up action. The partners also refer resident problems to the appropriate municipal department for action and resolution.

The community partners reflect the ethnic/racial diversity of the neighborhoods where they work.



Six of the 20 Community Partners.

There is almost an equal number of men and women members. They receive training for three months when they begin the job. During the training period, the new members accompany experienced members as they visit houses in the neighborhood. They are not always welcome when they make their first visit to a house, but over time these attitudes gradually change and they are viewed as friends and supporters. Their commitment to help reduce crime and to improve the neighborhood helps them to develop a rapport and establish a high level of trust with residents.

The Community Partners Program is under the fiscal umbrella of the Social Development Commission of Milwaukee. Sue Kenealy, program manager, was formerly the executive director of Milwaukee Weed and Seed. She directs the overall program, manages the fiscal aspects, and maintains linkages with the Mayor's Office, the U.S. Attorney, police, Safe and Sound, and city and federal agencies including HIDTA.

Community partners represent a team approach, with each member willing to help out when and where needed. The program grew from three Weed and Seed liaisons to a community partners staff of 22 in a short time and with few problems. There are three team leaders who supervise and support five to seven partners. The partners are paid reasonably well and receive generous benefits. All these factors have combined to produce a committed staff with very low turnover in the program.

## Milwaukee Safe and Sound Evaluation

A three-year evaluation of the Milwaukee Safe and Sound initiative and HIDTA was completed in 2001 by the Department of Social and Cultural Sciences, Marquette University. This evaluation was conducted as a comprehensive, performance-based assessment utilizing a qualitative-research design.

The evaluation report included an extensive interview process that covered community partners, police captains, police officers, community liaison officers, and community residents. Gathering information in this way provided a different perspective to the evaluation beyond the objective review of the data.

In addition to interviewing 22 community partners, six district police captains, seven community liaison officers, and 17 other law enforcement/ HIDTA personnel, the investigators also attended the Mayor's Neighborhood Crime Commission meetings and participated in walk-a-longs. They also analyzed the weekly and monthly community partner reports filed for the three years.

### Law Enforcement

The evaluators praised the significant decline in the crime rate in the project area, which went from 19.9 per 1,000 residents in 1997 to 11.2 per 1,000 in 2001. This is still an unacceptably high rate; therefore, the project will continue to operate.

### Safe Places

The evaluators were positive in their assessment of the Safe Places program. They also included some recommendations:

- Retaining members and improving participation of youth is essential to having a constructive impact on Milwaukee's young people.
- Attracting more teens is important in attaining the goal of reducing crime and violence.
- Improving coordination and collaboration between Safe Places and members of the Safe and Sound initiative should be given special attention.

### Community Partners

The evaluators had praise for the Community Partners Program. The following findings were included in the evaluation:

- Police and the partners generally work well together. The police appreciate the role the partners play in providing them with linkages to the residents.
- The door-to-door organizing activities of the partners received approval from the residents in making the neighborhoods safer.
- Although many people are involved in the Safe and Sound initiative, more residents and business people are needed to continue the fight against crime in the community.

### Overall Recommendations

The evaluators recommended that the community partners develop a database to track follow-up action by law enforcement agencies to the reports of criminal activity. The weekly and monthly reports basically account for the partner's time and activities. A database should be used to develop objective outcomes for evaluating the program.

Another recommendation from the evaluators addressed the size of the neighborhoods in the project. The size of some of the 20 neighborhoods is too large to be manageable. A smaller area could be more effectively managed.

The evaluators recommended greater collaboration between the community partners and law enforcement. While both sides acknowledge the need for better communication, they have been addressing the issue and will continue to work to improve in this area.

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# Seattle, Washington, Weed and Seed Operation 1993–2002

Summary of an evaluation by  
Jack O'Connell and Jim Zepp (2002)

*“A Closer Look at Seattle’s  
Weed and Seed Strategy:  
Making Neighborhoods  
Safe for Community  
Involvement”*

**B**est practices are often thought of as successes that occurred in the past; however, the truth is that they usually represent only part of an ongoing process. They might more accurately be called works-in-progress. The encouraging part of such a scenario is that positive results have occurred from initiatives that have been implemented. The other part of the equation is the fact that much work may still need to be done. The latter is the position that will be reviewed here on the Weed and Seed efforts in Seattle.

## **Operation Weed and Seed in Seattle**

In 1993 when the first Weed and Seed site was funded in the East Precinct’s Central District of Seattle, the crime rate was at an all time high and open-air drug markets operated freely. A fifth of all crime in Seattle occurred in this neighborhood. Relations between community residents and law enforcement were very negative. Although the residents wanted to see improvement in the area, they did not trust the police nor did they welcome the idea of Weed and Seed coming in. Rather they perceived the police as using Weed and Seed to harass residents and establish repressive measures to control the neighborhood. The police officers had to work hard to establish trusting relationships with the residents. They did this by getting to know residents better and by listening to their concerns, their fears, and their goals.

## **Reverse Sting Operation**

One strategy that was especially effective in winning resident support was the initiation of a reverse drug-sting operation. Instead of only targeting drug dealers, the police began targeting drug buyers as well. People from more affluent areas outside the Weed and Seed neighborhood were arrested and prosecuted. This strategic change produced significant positive results both in the decrease in the crime rate and in building greater trust and cooperation between residents and

police. This demonstration of effective community policing marked the beginning of new and broader coordination of efforts throughout the community. The involvement of community police officers in seeding activities has been an important element in building trust with the residents and in opening communications.

## Community Policing

Community police officers provide many varied functions. They work with youth and their parents in matters involving juvenile court so that they do not miss mandated appearances. They sponsor and participate in a variety of projects including Adopt-a-Cop (an elementary school program), an Explorer Scout Troop, and the Seattle Team for Youth, which focuses on youth who have already been in some kind of trouble. They also play an active role in the new Community Offender Accountability Team (COAT). In this program police officers team with probation officers to stay in touch with offenders returning to the community from prison.

Beyond these special programs, the community police officers are involved with residents at many day-to-day levels of activity. In neighborhoods with a large number of new immigrants, such as Yesler Terrace, the officers make door-to-door, knock-and-talk visits to establish a positive contact with the residents. Activities such as these have been an important element in the success of Operation Weed and Seed in Seattle.

## Coordination

The Weed and Seed site was able to confront the negative attitudes of residents successfully through a combination of seeding activities and focused law enforcement initiatives. Seattle's historic emphasis on neighborhoods provided a strong base on which to develop Weed and Seed. This neighborhood structure is built on urban centers and urban villages within the city. The urban village concept has goals similar to the Weed and Seed set of principles for involving residents in planning, strategy development and implementation, neighborhood restoration, and community policing. This congruence of interests facilitated a good working partnership between Weed and Seed and the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, which proved to be a valuable asset.

Coordination of resources has been the key to success in Operation Weed and Seed in Seattle on both

the weeding and seeding side of the initiative. On the weeding side of the Seattle Weed and Seed operation, the Seattle Police Department (SPD) involves the community in developing the law enforcement strategy. In addition, local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies share information and work well together to make the neighborhoods safer. On the seeding side, the Seattle Police Department, the Seattle Neighborhood Group (SNG), and Weed and Seed—working with the city of Seattle—have been able to draw upon the strengths of each, combining their efforts to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods. SNG as a nonprofit organization with a strong outreach component was an important partner to bring into the collaborative arrangement. As Weed and Seed expanded from its original site in the Central District into other areas, these core groups continued to work together.

Meaningful resident involvement is gained through community-planning groups that, in conjunction with the steering committee, develop the five-year comprehensive strategy for their site. In addition, they meet periodically to develop service priorities, assist in the selection of Seed providers in their neighborhood, and provide ongoing assessments of Seed providers. The Seattle Police Department attends crime prevention council meetings in each site (e.g., South Seattle Crime Prevention Council and East Precinct Crime Prevention Council) to gain additional input from neighborhood stakeholders, local businesses, religious organizations, and government agencies. These council meetings provide SPD, SNG, and Weed and Seed an opportunity to exchange information among themselves and with other participating organizations. They discuss issues, activities, and problems, which is very important in promoting and sustaining collaboration. This coordinated approach also helps with leveraging resources and avoiding duplication of effort.

## Seeding Activities

Weed and Seed has partnerships with many organizations in Seattle that make it possible to offer a range of services for youth and adults, including a safe haven operated by the Urban League that provides the following:

- after-school programs
- homework assistance
- tutoring

- SAT preparation classes
- computer training
- job search assistance
- housing counseling
- employment seminars.

There are also programs that focus exclusively on adults, such as Central Area Resources for Employment (CARE) operated by the Seattle Vocational Institute, that focuses on GED preparation and computer literacy training with the goal of providing skills to help people get and keep a job with a livable wage.

Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE), sponsored by Mothers Against Violence, holds peace leadership camp sessions where the focus is on themes of establishing peace with oneself, others, and the environment. In the Central District Weed and Seed schools, bullying has been a prime topic. Through SAVE chapters in the broader community, lobbying efforts were successful in getting legislation passed at the state level in 2002 that requires schools to establish formal antibullying policies and procedures.

Health as a seeding component is receiving attention. Statistics clearly demonstrate that youth living in the Central Weed and Seed area have a much higher risk of injury, illness, hospitalization, and death at an early age than youth in other parts of Seattle. Attention is now being focused on gathering information and defining a strategy for addressing these issues.

## New Neighborhoods

There have been many changes since the Central Weed and Seed site began in 1993. At that time it covered slightly more than one square mile in an area that included a traditional African-American neighborhood populated by families. As the crime rate decreased in the Central area, crime statistics showed an increase in the surrounding areas leading to an extension of the Weed and Seed boundaries. The adjacent Broadway area was added in the late 1990s. This neighborhood has a population that is composed mostly of young white singles who live alone. Demographically and culturally, the populations in these neighborhoods display wide differences.

By 2001, violent crimes had decreased in the Central Weed and Seed area by almost 50 percent. Serious crime had declined at a higher rate of decrease than for the city as a whole. The number of vacant lots had decreased while new commercial building increased. Having success with some of the innovative programs

was a rewarding experience for both law enforcement personnel and neighborhood residents. Good results are always welcome; however, everyone recognizes that there are still myriad issues facing the area.

## Evaluation

The material for this article was largely taken from a comprehensive evaluation of Seattle's Operation Weed and Seed conducted in 2002 by Jack O'Connell. Mr. O'Connell has extensive evaluation experience with Weed and Seed sites around the country.

The evaluation process included a telephone survey interviewing Seed providers and community police. One of the questions asked was about the involvement of community police officers in the site's seeding activities. The responses indicated a high level of involvement by community police in many of the programs and, where that happened, the results were positive. In some areas, programs have not been able to involve police yet. Overall it is clear that everyone benefits when the community police take an active role in seeding programs.

Another part of the evaluation included an in-depth review of the demographic characteristics of the neighborhoods. The information gained from this process was invaluable not only in helping to better understand the racial and ethnic makeup of the communities but also in projecting the future problems. This information, taken from census data and other sources, forms a baseline of information that can be used to identify language and cultural patterns among the large immigrant population. These data can inform the decisions on program development and community policing for the site.

## Demographics

One important demographic fact uncovered in the evaluation process is a large pre-teenage population in the Southeast site that the evaluators label as a "demographic bubble." If this statistic is ignored, consequences for the neighborhoods can be serious. Having this information prior to the youth entering their teenage and young adult years, the Weed and Seed partners have some time to develop a strategic plan to address the issues of education, employment and training, mentoring, and other needs of this group. If they are not able to develop successful interventions and the youth are recruited into the city's many gangs, the results could be devastating for the community.

## Mobility and Sustainability

The evaluators' thorough review of the demographic information illustrated another point that presents a challenge for the future of the initiative in Seattle. The mobility of the population in the Weed and Seed neighborhoods is much higher than in other parts of Seattle. An example of the transitory nature of the neighborhood is that 70 percent of the current residents in the Weed and Seed area had not lived at their present address five years earlier. This issue could also apply to many other Weed and Seed sites and helps to explain some of the obstacles related to sustainability.

This level of mobility translates into a new neighborhood every few years. Further complicating this problem is the fact that the new residents are often from different ethnic or racial backgrounds. Gentrification, which in a way is a sign of program success, can put financial pressure on an area's original residents and create new issues.

## Continuing Oversight

The SPD, SNG, and Weed and Seed make every effort to follow these issues and adjust to the new demands. These changes also present the steering committee with new issues and challenges. The site's original strategy was developed based on valid information at the time; however, the changes in the neighborhood may require significant policy and programmatic changes.

Seattle Weed and Seed has been successful in reducing crime, increasing participation, and building strong partnerships. It can point with pride to out-

standing achievements over the years of operation; nevertheless, it remains cognizant of the need to be vigilant to the constantly changing patterns in the community.

Evaluating Operation Weed and Seed is an important way to keep current with objective information. The data from an evaluation document and the ongoing program monitoring reports, crime statistics, and communications with residents and other partners together can produce a comprehensive picture of what is happening in the area. With that kind of information, the steering committee can better provide oversight and perform its responsibilities optimally.

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# The Wilmington Crime Index

*Report on the evaluation  
of the Wilmington Crime  
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The information in this article illustrates the unique and critical role that evaluation can perform in analyzing Weed and Seed issues. The evaluation process, as well as the derived results, contribute to better management of resources and more effective operations.

Evaluating the success of crime control activities and managing resources most effectively is a task faced by police departments across the country. Over the years, they have developed a variety of techniques to assist them in gathering a large volume of relevant data. Such indicators as reported crimes and numbers of arrests provide useful information; however, the analysis resulting from these statistics is subject to rather different interpretation, often making it difficult to attain a consensus and to develop a coherent strategy.

Using only reported crime information as an indicator raises a question of whether an increase is desirable or not. The increased reporting may indicate a better relationship between the police and the community residents; however, in many distressed areas, residents—fearing reprisals from the criminal element in the neighborhood—will not report incidents to the police. A similar disconnect can be seen in using the number of arrests in an area. An increase may be interpreted as a successful result of greater police activity or it may be thought simply to indicate increased criminal activity in that part of the community.

Another device used extensively by police departments is crime mapping, which presents place-based crime data in a visual format. The statistical crime information presented alone can be complex and confusing. Crime mapping offers an additional method for displaying information and improving understanding.

In Wilmington, Delaware, in the early 1990s, drug crimes escalated dramatically. Across the country, most cities were experiencing the same problems, sending the police searching for better solutions. They needed to measure their crime fighting results, allocate their resources more effectively, and improve their information gathering. With their data gathering, they could not be sure exactly what were the most efficacious strategies. They were using a variety of methods for

gathering crime data including those described above, but they felt the need for better organization of their information.

## Development of the Wilmington Crime Index

The Wilmington Crime Index developed from their discussions. While the Crime Index is a simple straightforward concept, it is also an effective way to help the police and others in the community understand criminal activity and develop a response to it.

The index combined several methods that were already in place and expanded their scope. Two databases were developed and geocoded by reporting areas, which in Wilmington are census tract subdivisions. One database tracks drug-related calls for police service and the other records drug arrests from police booking reports, each geocoded by reporting area.

In assembling the database, drug-related calls for service were substituted for reported crimes because this provided a timely way to acquire information. To validate the accuracy of these data, the calls for service were cross-checked with the corresponding Uniform Crime Reporting drug complaints. As expected, the two data sources were found to be proportionally consistent.

Obviously there must be at least two years of data included in the database, so the index maps can be used for comparison. First, the difference between the number of calls for service or arrests from one year to the next is calculated by reporting area. Next, the number of calls for each reporting area is compared with the number of arrests. The end result of this process provides a comparison of the one-year difference in the number of reported incidents and the one-year difference in the number of arrests. By adding information over time, a comprehensive data series will be developed containing information especially useful not only in identifying the success of law enforcement activities, but also in the timely allocation of resources.

When the index methodology was applied in Wilmington, several patterns emerged. For example, in some areas an increase in reported incidents also saw an increase in arrests; while in other areas the number of reported incidents decreased as arrests increased. Over time, six discernible patterns of reported crime compared with arrests became clear. Police and other interested parties studied the information to better

interpret the results. One of their conclusions was that a decrease in both reported crime and arrests could be interpreted as a positive indicator.

On examining the data, they found the patterns were closely tied to specific events throughout the year. For example, increased police activity in an area not only produced more arrests in that area but also reflected an increase in reported crime activity in adjacent areas (displacement). Finally, a consensus developed on interpreting the patterns and a color was assigned to reporting areas based on the following categories:

## Wilmington Crime Index Categories

- **Stable Areas:** Areas in this category report 25 or fewer drug-related calls and/or arrests per year during the observation period.
- **Good News:** Areas in this category exhibited a decline or stabilization in both the drug-related calls for service and drug-related arrests.
- **Intensive Policing:** In this category, the number of drug-related arrests are relatively high compared to the number of calls for service. In this category, the police take proactive measures to prevent displacement into nearby areas.
- **Hot Spots:** In this category, there is a rise in both calls for service and arrests. This category is not positive in terms of quality of life issues, but it has positive aspects for the police, demonstrating an appropriate reaction to the increases.
- **In Transition:** This category displays a mix of a rising number of calls and a level number of arrests. This category is a warning to be on the alert, but it does not justify increased police attention.
- **Saturated:** In this category, calls increase while arrests decline or stay level. This category is similar to the “In Transition” category.

Color coding the reporting areas according to these categories presents information on criminal activity in a way that is easy to interpret.

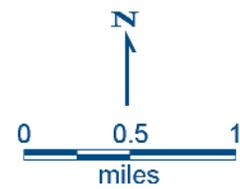
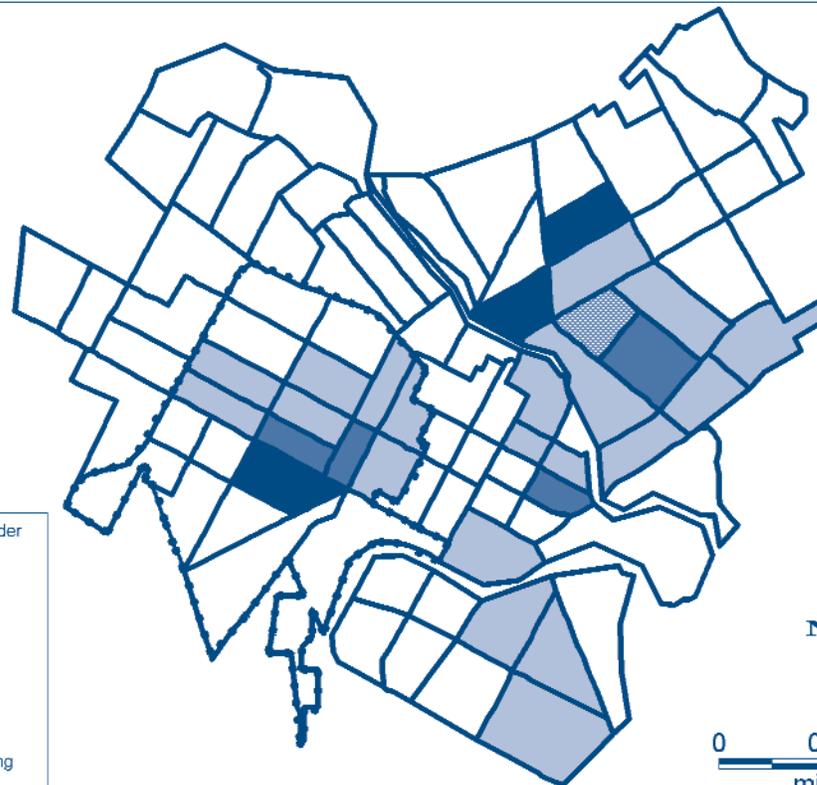
## An Application of the Wilmington Crime Index

In 1992 Wilmington received official recognition as a Weed and Seed site. At this time Wilmington was experiencing an increase in illegal drug activity, and five of the ninety reporting areas of the city were

1991



1992



1996



1997

- Target Area Border
- Good News
- Saturated
- In Transition
- Hot Spots
- Stable Areas
- Intensive Policing



labeled “saturated”—meaning that police were having difficulty controlling the crime problems with available resources. Four of these five areas were located within the Weed and Seed designated area.

Funds from the initial Weed and Seed award were used to pay for overtime for nine officers, six full-time community policing officers, a state probation/parole officer, a state prosecutor, a victim’s counselor, and a part-time substance abuse treatment outreach worker. In addition to supporting personnel, funds were available for safe havens, community centers, and training workshops.

During 1992 and 1993, when all policing elements were in place and fully funded, the Weed and Seed area showed a significant decrease in illegal drug activity. The maps for this period show an increase in police activity and a concurrent decrease in illegal activity. They also indicate that a number of areas moved into the “good news” category. Displaying this information on the maps helped everyone to evaluate the effect of the policing initiatives that were undertaken. In addition to the decrease in illegal activities, there were other tangible benefits demonstrated by improved relationships between residents and police.

Beginning in 1994, there was a decrease in funds available for community policing and vice operations; at the same time there was an increase in illegal drug activity in the Wilmington area. Another alarming statistic that began to emerge was the number of shooting deaths in the city, mostly drug related and restricted to a few areas in the city.

In response to the increased crime activity, federal, state, and local resources were combined including the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Marshal; and the Secret Service. The Delaware State Police and the New Castle County Police Department provided additional patrol officers, and the Wilmington Police Department hired new officers. These additional resources made it possible to intensify crime control initiatives. The intensive polic-

ing areas and the hot spots seen on the 1997 map illustrate the proactive position of law enforcement and the results.

Being able to use the crime maps provided a more efficient method of evaluating the crime control effort in Wilmington. To show this amount of information for Wilmington without the maps would require 90 charts (one for each reporting area), which would be difficult for nonprofessionals to interpret.

In Wilmington, the Crime Index maps helped city officials, community leaders, and the police develop better communication and understanding relative to planning and implementation of crime control strategies. Displaying the maps helped everyone grasp the neighborhood changes and the effect of these changes on quality of life issues.

The model developed in Wilmington can have applications for communities in most places. The problems in Wilmington are not unique to that city; unfortunately, many Weed and Seed neighborhoods face similar issues and need to find better methods of managing resources. Crime Index mapping provides another tool for local communities in their fight to reclaim their neighborhoods.

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# Weed & Seed

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