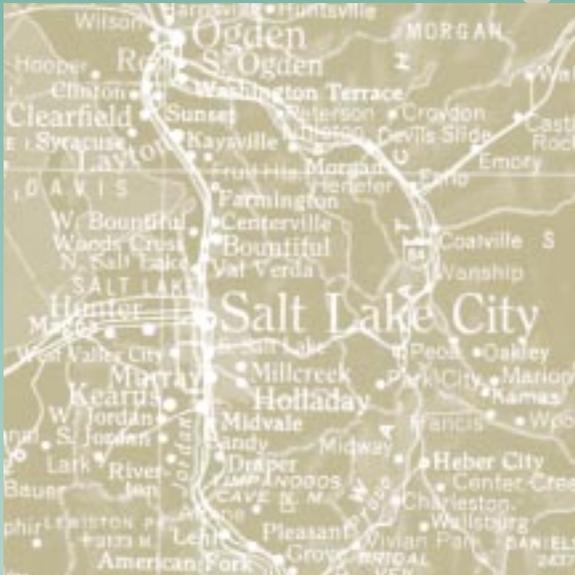




National Evaluation of Weed & Seed

Case Study



Salt Lake City,
Utah
Research
Report



Executive Office for Weed & Seed



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20531

Janet Reno
Attorney General

Raymond C. Fisher
Associate Attorney General

Laurie Robinson
Assistant Attorney General

Noël Brennan
Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Jeremy Travis
Director, National Institute of Justice

Office of Justice Programs
World Wide Web Site
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

National Institute of Justice
World Wide Web Site
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

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RESEARCH REPORT

Terence Dunworth, Ph.D.
Project Director

Gregory Mills
Deputy Project Director

Prepared by

Jack Greene
Salt Lake City Site Leader
Jennifer H. Frank
Kristen Jacoby

August 1999

NCJ 175700

National Institute of Justice

Jeremy Travis
Director

Steve Edwards
Program Monitor

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1.0 Introduction

Unveiled in 1991, Operation Weed and Seed represents an ambitious attempt to improve the quality of life in America's cities. The ultimate goals of Weed and Seed are to control violent crime, drug trafficking, and drug-related crime in targeted high-crime neighborhoods and to provide a safe environment, free of crime and drug use, in which law-abiding citizens can live, work, and raise their families. Weed and Seed, administered by the Executive Office for Weed and Seed (EOWS), is grounded in the philosophy that targeted areas can best be improved by a two-pronged strategy of "weeding" out violent offenders, drug traffickers, and other criminals by removing them from the targeted area, and "seeding" the area with human services and neighborhood revitalization efforts. Community policing is intended to serve as the "bridge" between weeding and seeding.

Three key objectives emphasize the government-community partnership at the heart of Weed and Seed:

1. To **develop a comprehensive, multiagency strategy** to control and prevent violent crime, drug trafficking, and drug-related crime in targeted high-crime neighborhoods;
2. To **coordinate and integrate existing as well as new Federal, State, local, and private sector initiatives, criminal justice efforts, and human services**, concentrating those resources in the project sites to maximize their impact on reducing and preventing violent crime, drug trafficking, and drug-related crime; and
3. To **mobilize community residents** in the targeted sites to help law enforcement identify and remove violent offenders and drug traffickers from their neighborhoods and to assist other human service agencies to identify and respond to the service needs of the target area.

Weed and Seed sites thus draw on the resources of a variety of agencies at all levels of government, private and other public organizations, and individual community residents.

Specific strategies and program components designed to achieve these three objectives fall into one of four Weed and Seed program elements:

1. **Law enforcement.** Weed and Seed's law enforcement goals are the identification, arrest, prosecution, conviction, and incarceration of narcotics traffickers and violent criminals operating in the target area.
2. **Community policing.** An objective of community policing is to establish mutual trust between law enforcement and the public. This is the bridge between weeding and seeding: law enforcement officials enlist the community to identify patterns of criminal activity and locate perpetrators; simultaneously, police help the community solve problems.

3. **Prevention, intervention, and treatment.** This element of the program is intended to reduce risk factors and to enhance protective factors associated with drug abuse, violence, and crime in the target area. Safe havens in the target areas typically coordinate the prevention, intervention, and treatment activities.
4. **Neighborhood restoration.** The goal of this element is to enable residents in the target area to improve their community morale, their neighborhood’s physical appearance (buildings, parks, streets, lighting, and so forth), and local economic and business conditions.

An important structural feature of Weed and Seed is the local steering committee. EOWS requires each site to have a steering committee, formally chaired by the U.S. Attorney for the district in which the site is located, that is responsible for “establishing Weed and Seed’s goals and objectives, designing and developing programs, providing guidance on implementation, and assessing program achievement.”¹

Steering committee members include representatives from key local, State, and Federal agencies, as well as other stakeholders in the Weed and Seed target area, such as business leaders, tenant association leaders, and community activists. The requirement to convene a steering committee reflects EOWS’s belief that, for neighborhood revitalization to work, all key stakeholders must participate in decisions that affect the target area.

Funded sites were divided into officially recognized sites and demonstration sites. Officially recognized sites had implemented Weed and Seed strategies in their jurisdiction, had submitted documentation summarizing their strategy to EOWS, but had not yet received full funding. After EOWS officially recognized the site, it was eligible for demonstration status and full Weed and Seed funding.

2.0 Case Study Objective and Methodology

This case study is one of eight completed for the National Evaluation of Weed and Seed, under the direction of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). In 1994, NIJ selected the following eight sites for the national evaluation:

- Hartford, Connecticut; Las Vegas, Nevada; Sarasota and Manatee Counties, Florida; and Shreveport, Louisiana, demonstration sites first received funding in FY 1994.
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Seattle, Washington, demonstration sites were awarded continuation funding in FY 1994.
- Akron, Ohio, and Salt Lake City, Utah, were officially recognized sites.

1 Executive Office for Weed and Seed, “Operation Weed and Seed Implementation Manual,” p. 2–1.

Pittsburgh, Salt Lake City, Sarasota/Manatee, and Shreveport also received funds from the National Performance Review Laboratory (NPRL).²

This case study documents the activities implemented under the Weed and Seed program in Salt Lake City and assesses the program's impact at this site. The final evaluation report compares the eight sites and presents overall conclusions on the Weed and Seed program.

The evaluation activities undertaken for this case study include: (1) onsite observation of program activities; (2) inperson interviews with program staff, key law enforcement personnel, community leaders, service providers, and participants; (3) review of program documents; (4) a survey of target area residents; and (5) analysis of computerized crime and arrest records provided by the local police department.

3.0 Site History and Description

3.1 City Characteristics

The capital of Utah, Salt Lake City is not only the largest city in the state, but it is also an important urban resource for southern Idaho, eastern Nevada, and southwestern Wyoming. Located in Salt Lake Valley, the city covers 109 square miles in northern Utah at the southernmost point of the Great Salt Lake and has a population of 165,835. One-fourth of its residents are less than 18 years of age, which, along with an increasing gang presence, contributes to a high juvenile crime rate. The rate of serious crimes in Salt Lake City is also high, at 12,680 per 100,000 residents (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 1991). An influx of criminal groups from California and illegal immigrants from Mexico are reportedly responsible for an increase in drug trafficking within the city.

Salt Lake City has a larger crime problem than its external image might initially suggest. The city is known for its strong Mormon heritage, will host the Winter Olympic Games in 2002, and generally enjoys a reputation as a rather wholesome and family-oriented community. However, it has also experienced increasing crime and violence problems, most often associated with gang activity and illegal narcotics trafficking. Rates of nearly every Part 1 crime (except for burglary) increased dramatically between 1985 and 1995. According to figures reported by the FBI to the Salt Lake City Police Department, the city's average number of Part 1 crimes during the 2 years prior to its official recognition as a Weed and Seed site was nearly double the national average, at approximately 110 crimes per 1,000 people. According to local law enforcement personnel, much of this increase in violence is due to a dramatic increase in gang activity in the city. As reported by the Salt Lake Area Gang Project, gang membership increased by 116 percent between 1992 and 1995, with an estimated 3,104 gang members or affiliates in the greater Salt Lake City area. It was also estimated about half of these gang members actually reside within the city limits.

2 The National Performance Review Task Force (now renamed the National Partnership for Reinventing Government) designated a number of governmental organizations or activities as National Performance Review Laboratories (now Reinvention Laboratories) to test "reinventing government" initiatives. These labs develop more efficient ways to deliver government services by creating new partnerships between entities, streamlining bureaucratic processes, and empowering organizations to make substantial changes. The Weed and Seed Reinvention Laboratory is designed to develop more effective mechanisms for combining and delivering Federal, State, and local resources in Weed and Seed sites.

In addition to gang-related problems, the city has also witnessed a decline in community quality of life as evidenced by increases in disorderly behavior, specifically prostitution and graffiti. The city's typical responses to these problems was to initiate some type of crackdown, deploying a large number of police officers to a particular area for a limited period of time. Issues of community quality of life were part of the 1995 mayoral campaign, in which both candidates promised vigorous crackdowns to address street-level disruptive behavior.

While the physical structure of neighborhoods in Salt Lake City can be characterized as low-density residential living, there are considerable pockets of poverty which suffer low rates of home ownership and the attendant problems of transience. These neighborhoods have traditionally been located on the western side of the city, often buffered from the larger city by industrial complexes. It is within these neighborhoods, local police argue, that crime has taken root, primarily in the form of drug sales and distribution.

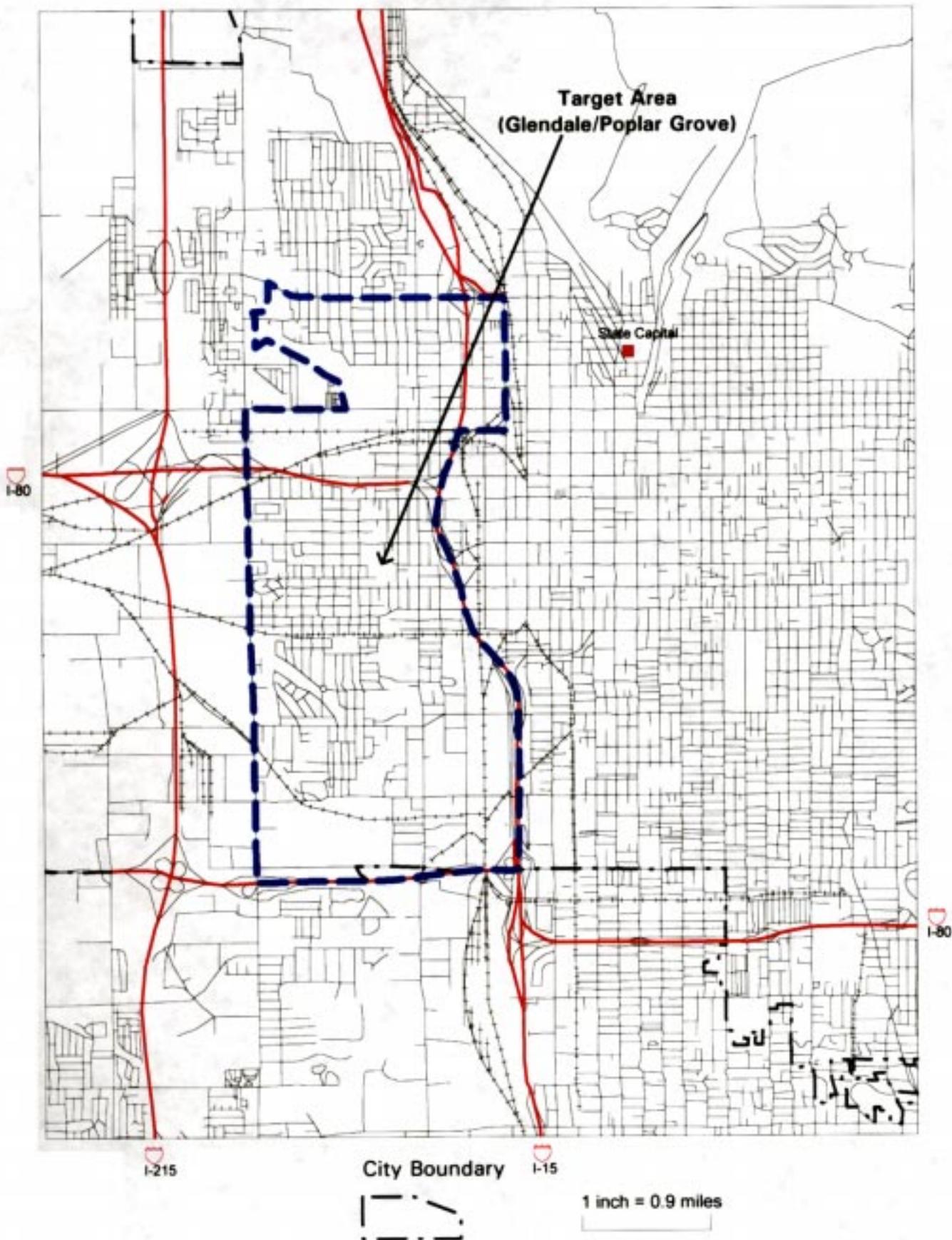
3.2 Target Area Characteristics and Nature of the Crime Problem

Salt Lake City's target area is comprised of three neighborhoods: Glendale, Poplar Grove, and a large part of Fairpark. (See exhibit 3.1 for a map of the target area.) Glendale and Poplar Grove were the initial areas of focus for the Weed and Seed efforts, with the Fairpark neighborhood being added later. The entire area is approximately 6.4 square miles and has a population of almost 22,000 residents, 13.3 percent of the city's total population. The target area contains 8,711 housing units, but 11 percent of these are vacant or boarded. Approximately 62.4 percent of the homes in the area are owner-occupied. Although unemployment in the target area is 6.4 percent, more than 25 percent of residents live below the poverty level. More than 10 percent of the residents receive public assistance, and more than 29 percent receive Social Security income. Approximately 20 percent fewer students graduated from high school in the target area in 1990 than was the statewide average for Utah.

The Glendale community has considerable home ownership and a large upper working class and lower middle class population and is seen as having more political power than Poplar Grove or Fairpark. Families in the Glendale area were reported as generally "intact," and the area has also seen a rise in single family home construction. In contrast to Glendale, residents of Poplar Grove and Fairpark were described as more transient, poorer, less well organized, with higher levels of gang- and drug-related violence. However, it is interesting to note each of the three areas appear quiet and residential to an outsider driving around the neighborhoods. While there are individual houses in visible need of repair, much of the area looks like a rather quiet residential area. Often the behaviors and problems the areas report belie the environmental cues about safety and order.

The primary crime problems in the area are complex drug processing, storage, and distributing operations, as well as gang-related crime. A significant number of structures in the neighborhood are used for the illegal narcotics industry. A high percentage of the drug traffickers seem to be illegal Mexican immigrants who are repeat offenders returning after deportation. Police found illegal Mexican immigrants were involved in 80 percent of the cases in which search warrants yielded drug arrests. The main drugs in this market are cocaine and heroin.

Exhibit 3.1
Salt Lake City Weed and Seed Target Area



Salt Lake City's target area also has a disproportionately high percentage of gang members and dangerous fugitives. The Salt Lake Area Gang Project estimated in 1993 that 20 percent of the city's 2,143 gang members live in the target area. Further, the Violent Crimes Task Force reported one-third of the total number of listed dangerous fugitives were arrested in the target area in less than a 1-year period. In one 6-month period, 62 drive-by shootings occurred, 84 percent of the city's total for the same period.

3.3 Other Funding Sources

Salt Lake City's original Weed and Seed application in 1994 was not funded. However, the city was selected as a National Performance Review Lab site in that same year. The NPRL program provided \$50,000 to five communities across the United States (Salt Lake City being one of them) to enhance neighborhood planning and grantsmanship and to increase support for community-based interventions. The National Performance Review Lab project had as its central goals:

- Identification of obstacles to local acquisition and use of Federal funding.
- Refinement of a Weed and Seed strategy for Salt Lake City.
- Measurement of local impacts.

Essentially, the NPRL effort was aimed at refining local planning to improve the city's future chances for being selected as a Weed and Seed site, as well as to help its communities clearly identify local resources that might be drawn into crime reduction planning and community improvement efforts.

Following its selection as an NPRL site, Salt Lake City was subsequently funded under the Comprehensive Communities Program, which has several of the community-building elements of the Weed and Seed program. Salt Lake's Comprehensive Communities Program (CCP) began in 1995. (For complete details on CCP see BOTEK 94.) The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) provided the city with \$2.2 million for neighborhood crime prevention activities and to suppress and intervene in crime situations within its neighborhoods. A central feature of the CCP program in Salt Lake City was the creation of Community Action Teams (CAT), which were charged with neighborhood mobilization and problem solving.

CAT membership included governmental and nonprofit agencies working in targeted neighborhoods to address crime and public order problems. These teams have become a central feature of Salt Lake's community policing intervention. In addition to the CAT interventions, Salt Lake's CCP program also included a range of programs focused on at-risk youths. These programs typically were housed in existing youth-serving agencies such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, local community centers, and the schools. As will become apparent below, much of the Weed and Seed effort has followed the model outlined in CCP.