



Building Our Way Out of Crime

The Providence, Rhode Island, Case Study

Bill Geller & Lisa Belsky
Foreword by Bill Bratton & Paul Grogan

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A Study of Providence's Olneyville neighborhood
from the book

BUILDING OUR WAY OUT OF CRIME

The Transformative Power of
Police-Community Developer Partnerships

Bill Geller & Lisa Belsky

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- *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Transformative Power of Police-Community Developer Partnerships* (including all material in the component publications below)
- *A Policymaker’s Guide to Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Transformative Power of Police-Community Developer Partnerships*
- *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Charlotte, North Carolina, Case Study*
- *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Minneapolis, Minnesota, Case Study*
- *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Providence, Rhode Island, Case Study*

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Preface

The old saying goes, “If the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.” But what if the right tool for the job *is* a hammer, and the only tools you have are a badge and a gun?

Police departments around the nation have been discovering they can “build” their way out of crime problems that they have been unable to arrest their way out of. They have been doing that by working with nonprofit community developers—local builders and organizations whose goal is to transform their own blighted neighborhoods into more livable, healthy communities. As problem-oriented policing designer Herman Goldstein would put it, police in these instances have been wisely shifting to and sharing with other community institutions and organizations the responsibility, cost and work of addressing crime problems and neighborhood conditions that fuel crime. (Scott and Goldstein, 2005)

The material in this case study of community developer-police collaboration in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island is drawn from a new book, *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Transformative Power of Police-Community Developer Partnerships*, by the same authors. The book contains three in-depth case studies, the other two of which address neighborhood turnarounds in Charlotte, North Carolina and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

All three case studies are intended to answer two questions that will be front of mind for policy-makers and implementation leaders, respectively:

- What was accomplished by these integrated public safety-community development partnerships?
- How did they do it?

Public safety and community development practitioners will find in this and the other cases rich detail about how the collaborators worked together to confront and overcome the myriad chal-

lenges of converting high-crime, blighted, disinvested neighborhoods into safe, enjoyable and economically resurgent places.

While there are many similarities in the professional competencies and work methods applied by the developers, police and other vital partners in all three case studies, there are also instructive differences. There is more than one effective and efficient way for public safety practitioners and community revitalization experts to collaborate. But a fundamental common element in all the successful partnerships we have studied and advised over the past two decades is that the collaborators recognize that the scale of neighborhood transformation they seek takes time, tenacity and tangible investments.

Especially in these challenging economic times, public- and private-sector leaders must scrutinize all their core strategies for potential return on investment. Great reassurance that the building-our-way-out-of-crime approach is a cost-effective, durable solution, tailor-made for our hard times, comes from two of the nation’s premiere leaders of public safety and community revitalization, respectively—Los Angeles Police Chief Bill Bratton and community development leader Paul Grogan. Their Foreword to the *Building Our Way Out of Crime* book is included here to provide greater national context for the Providence case study.

Before turning to the Bratton-Grogan Foreword and then the Providence case study, three topics that provide further context for all three cases merit discussion:

- some of the neighborhood descriptors and indicators of progress we use in the cases;
- inferences we draw about what seems to work, including whether community developer-police teams had a major role in shaping the documented neighborhood improvements; and
- what the research on various cities finds about whether police crackdowns on crime hot spots

seem to cause “displacement” of the crimes to other locales.

Neighborhood indicators

The neighborhood profiles (income levels, home ownership rates, etc.) are for the most part based on 2000 census data, which usefully depict circumstances on many fronts *before* most of the developer-police interventions we chronicle were at their most active. But our “after” data on several dimensions are much leaner. Moreover, 2000 may have represented brighter times for many neighborhoods on some fronts, which raises the question whether the progress we celebrate will weather the current and coming economic storms.

As to *crime stats* in the case studies, the good news is they are more current than the nearly decade-old census snapshots. The *bad* news is that reported crime stats are a notoriously inexact depiction of actual endangerment and victimization in neighborhoods. *Victimization* data, a higher-quality reflection of actual crime levels, are expensive to collect and thus rarely are available for single cities, let alone individual neighborhoods or, as in our cases, segments of neighborhoods. We try to compensate for these inexact neighborhood indicators by also reporting expert opinions and observations from cops, developers and neighborhood residents and business operators who are very familiar with local conditions.

Going forward, we commend to the consideration of practitioners and analysts the variety of neighborhood indicators that are starting to become more readily available in some cities through programs such as the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (Kingsley, 1998; Kingsley and Pettit, 2007) and another multi-site project, the Dynamic Neighborhood Taxonomy (DNT) project. (Weissbourd and Bodini, forthcoming; Brookings Institution and RW Ventures, 2003) It will be worthwhile for police and development strategists and planners to understand the DNT’s ambitious aims. Here is a brief summary of the DNT, from the introduction to a forthcoming report on the project:

“Two years ago, Living Cities (a national investor collaborative of major banks, insurance companies, foundations and federal government agencies committed to the reviv-

italization of American urban centers) launched the Dynamic Neighborhood Taxonomy project (DNT), an ambitious, large scale effort to begin developing a new generation of tools for the community development field. The project was designed to improve our understanding of how neighborhoods operate, including how they change over time, what factors determine their success, and how these basic dynamics vary across different types of neighborhoods. More importantly, DNT aimed to fundamentally enhance the field’s on-going capacity to routinely, accurately and more easily analyze the challenges and opportunities for development in particular places. Ultimately, the goal was to lay the foundations for developing a set of tools that would help businesses, investors, funders, governments and community development practitioners much better tailor and target their investments and interventions in neighborhoods.

The project was conducted by RW Ventures, LLC in four cities (Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas and Seattle) in partnership with numerous local and national organizations (ranging from think tanks like the Brookings Institution, to private companies like TransUnion, to local governments), and benefited from the guidance of close to one hundred advisors—researchers, practitioners and civic leaders including many of the top community and economic development experts across the country. This report presents the results of this work.

In particular, the project has generated three kinds of outcomes: new findings on how neighborhoods evolve over time and what factors drive their evolution; new tools for neighborhood analysis and investment; and a new capacity (in the form of an extensive database, set of base models, and new methodologies) to take this work further and apply it to other places and subject areas.” (Weissbourd and Bodini, forthcoming)

Inferences about causes, effects, and what works

In the three case studies, we have made some comments about our capacity to draw causal inferences about the relationship between community developer-police interventions and the documented revitalization-public safety changes in the neighborhoods over multi-year periods. The methodology employed in the cases is a simple before-after comparison. We hope these case studies will provoke interest among practitioners and scholars in both community development and policing to experiment and assess this innovative strategy more extensively and intensively.

We leave it to others to determine the most suitable research methodologies for future studies. The most rigorous quantitative techniques (such as randomized controlled experiments) can sometimes be inordinately difficult to implement, prohibitively expensive and, under some circumstances, unethical because they entail inappropriate human subjects experimentation. That experimentation, in our context, entails providing different groups of people with different kinds of policing services in order to examine whether new approaches are better than older ones. (Moore, 2006, p. 325; Cook and Campbell, 1979) Human subjects experimentation, of course, is done in the criminal justice field (e.g., the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment), in the health field and others, but the risks of the project directors knowingly providing substandard services to segments of a population to see whether they fare less well than other segments requires careful adherence to rules governing such research. When randomized controlled experiments are not acceptable or feasible, there are undoubtedly other powerful research methods that over time can be deployed to illuminate effects, costs and benefits in police-community developer work. The foundation for any evaluation methodology, however, is a clear *description* of the program that was implemented, and our case studies endeavor to provide the most detailed descriptions to date of robust community development-public safety collaborations.

At this juncture we are very encouraged about a strategy that we have observed in action first hand for more than a decade and have looked at in the three case studies. We take a view akin to that of

criminologists David Weisburd and Anthony Braga, who wrote about drawing inferences in a related context—that being whether a variety of crime and police legitimacy problems in the 1960s helped cause rapid adoption nationwide of community policing, problem-oriented policing and other strategic innovations:

“Unfortunately, there is no hard empirical evidence that would allow us to make this link directly, since the study of the adoption of innovation has only recently become a subject of interest for police scholars.... Accordingly, there have been few systematic studies of these processes and scholars were generally not concerned about the emergence of innovation as a research problem when these innovations were being developed.

Nonetheless, *we think it reasonable to make a connection* between the perceived failures of the standard model of American police practices and the experimentation with innovation, and openness to the adoption of innovation that occurred in the last decades of the twentieth century. Certainly, such a link is made by many of those who fostered innovation in policing.” (Weisburd and Braga, 2006, p. 11) (emphasis added)

We also find much that resonates for us in Mark Moore’s defense of practitioners’ commonsense about what works. Their perceptions, when rooted in lengthy and varied experience with problems and solutions in their native habitat, might more accurately be understood as *un*-commonsense—or simply as expert insight. Challenging the field’s fascination with the latest hyphenated policing, “evidence-based policing,” Moore argued:

“[T]he focus on *evidence*-based, rather than *experience*-based knowledge suggests that it is not just any old experience that can be used in developing a more solid base for action. It is not, for example, the kind of experience we recognize as commonsense. Nor is it the kind that accumulates as police lore. It is not even the kind of experience captured in detailed case studies. It is instead the kind of experience that is captured in observational studies that reduce expe-

rience to numbers that can be systematically analyzed to discover the generality and reliability with which a particular intervention produces desired results. It may be even more particularly the kind of experience generated by carefully designed, randomized experiments.

As a social scientist, and as a person who longs to put police work on a more solid empirical basis, it is impossible to be against a movement that supports ‘evidence-based policing.’ I think it is important to find out what works in policing. I think social science methods provide the most powerful methods available to us to determine what works in policing as well as in other fields. My only concern is that by focusing too much on the experience that can be captured in quantitative observational studies and controlled experiments—by assuming that these methods can stand alone, and that they are the only ones that can provide a relatively firm basis for action—we will end up, paradoxically, both reducing the amount of experience that is available to us, and slowing the rate at which the field as a whole can learn about what works in policing.” (Moore, 2006, p. 322)

Displacement

Pushing conditions and perpetrators that inflict criminal harm from one corner or one neighborhood to another—without at least diminishing their capacity to inflict harm after each move—would hardly be responsible public policy. The approach can be and has been a politically expedient one, however. It is the beat cop’s (and residents’) version of NIMBY, but this time “not in my beat.” There is good news, however, for public safety-producers and for communities fearful that the crime burdens of their next door neighbors are going to be shoved their way. Examinations of police (and sometimes, police-community) crime control interventions conducted by respected criminologists over the past 15 years suggest that geographic displacement is not usually the price of local crime reduction that many feared it might be. For instance:

“When police departments focus their ef-

forts on identifiable risks, such as crime hot spots, repeat victims, and serious offenders, they are able to prevent crime and disorder (Braga 2002; Eck, 2003). The strongest evidence comes from evaluations of hot spots policing initiatives (Weisburd and Braga, 2003; Weisburd and Braga [2006b]). Braga (2001) presents evidence from five randomized controlled experiments and four quasi-experimental designs to show that hot spots policing programs generate crime control gains *without significantly displacing crime* to other locations. Instead, in the five evaluations that examined immediate spatial displacement, hot spots policing initiatives were more likely to generate a ‘diffusion of crime control benefits’ to areas immediately surrounding the targeted hot spots (Clarke and Weisburd, 1994).” (Braga and Weisburd, 2006, p. 342) (emphasis added)

David Kennedy notes that cops and communities tend to worry a lot about displacement regardless of social science evidence to the contrary. There is, he says,

“a nearly ideological believe in displacement—that anything short of incarceration will simply move offenders around. The research on this point is by now pretty persuasive; displacement is far less universal than has long been thought, is virtually never complete, and in fact enforcement efforts frequently produce a ‘diffusion of benefits,’ the opposite of displacement.... Police and other enforcement practitioners remain unmoved. This is not what they see, and they do not believe it.” (Kennedy, 2006, p. 162)

Kennedy raises a perception that cannot be ignored in appraisals of building-away-crime partnerships going forward. In conducting our cases studies, we were interested in what police in adjacent districts or precincts (and managers responsible for citywide activity) thought about displacement and diffusion issues. While we did not do formal surveys of practitioners and residents in nearby neighborhoods, as the case studies report, there was widespread belief among the police—and community development officials responsible

for clusters of neighborhoods—whom we interviewed that they were accomplishing far more than just pushing crime around their towns. Thus, we believe there is some basis for self-interested regional cooperation with the kind of local building-away-crime collaborations the Providence, Charlotte and Minneapolis case studies describe.

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Foreword to *Building Our Way Out of Crime*

by Bill Bratton & Paul Grogan

Police can do nothing about crime; and low-income communities are destined to remain poor and powerless. If we as a nation believe that, we might as well admit that the American dream, for a sizable swath of Americans, is in serious jeopardy. To the contrary, what our decades of work in two separate fields—urban policing and grassroots community economic development—tell us is that cops and community developers can contribute mightily to halting and reversing the spiral of “disorder and decline” (Skogan, 1990) in poor neighborhoods throughout America.

In city after city, the police have helped cut crime in some of the most devastated neighborhoods. (Bratton and Knobler, 1998) And nonprofit community development corporations (CDCs) have applied their street savvy, local credibility, knowledge of neighborhood problems and ability to redevelop troubled property to replace block after blighted block with affordable, high-quality housing and viable businesses.

Indeed, in the celebrated crime drops of the 1990s, it is striking that the steepest declines (in New York City and elsewhere) typically occurred precisely where redevelopment was the most concentrated. (Grogan and Proscio, 2000) We believe this is no accident. Plunging crime helps create market conditions and a neighborhood ethos conducive to redevelopment. And redevelopment helps abate crime hot spots and give residents a real stake in the future of their neighborhood. They step up to maintain their properties and help establish and enforce standards for acceptable behavior.

But in most urban centers in the United States, police and grass-roots developers have been doing their good work in isolation from one another. There are historic reasons for this gulf, among them the balkanization of local government services (police departments and departments of neighborhood development infrequently do joint strategic planning, for instance); narrowly focused professional education for police and developers;

and deeply-rooted distrust between many police and the community activists who often run CDCs. Community developers typically see themselves only as *consumers* of law enforcement services (seeking protection of their real estate investments and their fellow residents from crime), not as potential partners in a mutually beneficial strategic alliance. For their part, cops from street level to the chief frequently have scant understanding of



Paul Grogan

Bill Bratton

the distinctive neighborhood rebuilding capabilities of community development corporations. As such, for most police, CDCs are indistinguishable amongst the sea of community groups clamoring for their attention.

So what’s the downside of this disconnect? When police and developers function unaware of one another’s strategies, plans, incremental victories and challenges, they may not accomplish as much, as quickly or as sustainably, as they could if they worked together. Sometimes, they might even unwittingly work at cross-purposes. But even in cases where their efforts are, by happenstance, complementary, a *delayed reaction* of developers to fertile conditions for community renewal may occur. That is, although market forces may propel redevelopment when developers and their financial investors realize that an area in a neighborhood has become safer, there may be a substantial lag time between the reality and perceptions of greater safety.

So if, as the case studies in this valuable book demonstrate, so much can be accomplished to sta-

bilize low-income communities when police (and prosecutors and other public safety practitioners) and locally credible developers work together in the same places at the same time, why leave these collaborations *to chance* as we do in most cities today? Why merely hope that targeted crime fighting and investments in community revitalization will, by luck, align in a manner, sequence, time frame and dosage that produce the greatest good and the best bang for the buck? Just *wishing* for convergence is foolish public safety and community development strategy. While police and developers can't and shouldn't set each other's priorities, they can and should learn when, how and why to make strategic investments that will appropriately leverage each other's considerable capacity.

What's needed is a shift in understanding and practice—at all levels of government and among the variety of private-sector institutions that shape the nature and extent of community revitalization. This new understanding should impel widespread promotion of and investment in the *purposeful, formal, strategic linkage of police and community developers* on problems that will yield to their combined expertise and resources. Simply put, these collaborations *work*—they reduce crime; replace problem properties with quality, affordable housing; attract viable businesses in previously blighted commercial corridors; make more strategic and efficient use of public and private-sector resources; and build public confidence in and cooperation with local government and private organizations. To these ends, police and development organizations, propelled by results-driven, fiscally responsible leaders, should devise and adhere to new standard operating procedures that launch and support police-developer activities that are conducted—and analyzed—in an accountable, business-like way.

Over time, both separately and together, we have advocated a more intentional connection between cops and community developers that affects how both parties do business. But until this book, our fields have lacked detailed chronicles of what this purposeful, officially-sanctioned linkage looks like and accomplishes on the ground. The substantial, multi-year improvements in focus areas in Charlotte, Minneapolis and Providence—which are portrayed in this book's case studies—are re-

markable. Before-after pictures illustrate the rejuvenation of low-income communities as neighborhood assets supplanted blighted homes and harmful commercial properties. And the graphs and tables show that, following police-developer interventions, there were rapid and durable declines in reported crime—mostly ranging from 55% to 84%—and sudden and sustained drops in calls for police service—ranging from 42% to 98%.

These police and development practitioners built a base of understanding and trust that allowed them to *act on* what cops, urban planners and developers widely understand intuitively: that one of the greatest threats to community revitalization is crime and that a big generator of crime is community disintegration. In the language of the “broken windows” theory, physical deterioration leads to crime, and physical revitalization contributes to pushing crime back. By working closely with the authors to describe their methods and rationale and to compile quantitative and qualitative documentation of crime and revitalization accomplishments, the practitioners profiled in these case studies have done a service to their professions and to the nation.

There are many experts on policing and many experts on community development, but nobody knows more about the *intersection* of public safety and community development practice than Bill Geller and Lisa Belsky. Together, 15 years ago, they co-founded a program—housed at the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (the nation's largest community development umbrella organization)—that seeks to promote, guide and learn lessons from police-developer partnerships in many jurisdictions. The resulting Community Safety Initiative continues as an important national LISC program.

Our belief in the value of greater, more routine police-developer interaction is confirmed by the quantitative and qualitative evidence Geller and Belsky have amassed in this book. These pages illustrate how and why police and grassroots community builders become greater stakeholders in and defenders of the investments made by each other to target crime and blight. The case studies show that veteran cops and developers coalesce because they find mutual advantage in the part-

nership. As a lieutenant working for Chief Dean Esserman in Providence put it simply, and best: “Community developers make my job easier.”

At this juncture in the twenty-first century, these collaborations are necessary not only because they are effective, but also because shrinking public resources require them. We can think of no better investment at the neighborhood level than a well-conceived, on-going alliance between dedicated cops and high-capacity grassroots community developers. Some may say that nurturing this new synergy between police, neighborhoods and community developers is a luxury we can ill afford when terrorists and economic woes challenge the nation. Nonsense. We can and must build homeland security and economic recovery on many fronts, not least in our poorest neighborhoods. As policymakers charged with doing more with less, we will achieve greater success if we create partnerships that produce results greater than any one partner could achieve acting alone. Better still, the strategy laid out in this book creates solutions which not only endure but seem to require minimal police attention after problem properties are transformed. With goodwill, a modest investment in relationship building and a limited deployment of resources, the police can influence and help community developers replace the worst of a neighborhood’s liabilities with assets that will serve it for the long term—literally building our way out of crime.

As the case studies make clear, very impressive turnarounds take several years—but they *can* be accomplished within four-year election cycles. With this book in hand, newly elected public officials—from mayors to the President—and their experts on public safety and neighborhood development can hit the ground running and take practical steps that support robust public-private collaborations. We recommend *Building Our Way Out of Crime* to urban leaders everywhere. It offers an effective and practical roadmap we can follow to knock crime down and keep it down in low-income neighborhoods.

“Turnaround” and “Comeback” are not the slogans of pessimists. Our optimism that police departments can be turned into ever-more effective engines of crime reduction and that America’s cities can be brought back as centers of popula-

tion, commerce and culture for people across the economic spectrum is bolstered by the results that these emerging police-community developer partnerships are producing. But too often, successes in policing and community development have tended to be heralded separately, in unrelated news accounts or policy analyses that look narrowly at one set of achievements. (Grogan and Proscio, 2000) Far reaching replication will come only when we do more of what has been done by Geller and Belsky for Charlotte, Minneapolis and Providence: that is, find ways to tell these stories in an integrated, analytic and persuasive way.

The innovative linkage of hard-working, results-oriented police and community developers—organizing them to pull in the same direction at the same time—produces the multiplier effect that Geller and Belsky so appropriately highlight in this book. With a national and city-by-city commitment to replicate and adapt the kind of collaborations described here, we believe long suffering urban neighborhoods—which influence their city’s overall well-being in many ways—will be the beneficiaries for years to come.

Bill Bratton, the Los Angeles police chief, is former New York City police commissioner and the co-author of *Turnaround: How America’s Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic*.

Paul Grogan is president of the Boston Foundation, co-author of *Comeback Cities: A Blueprint for Urban Neighborhood Revival*, and past national president of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation.

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CONTENTS

Preface	iii
Foreword to <i>Building Our Way Out of Crime</i> by Bill Bratton & Paul Grogan.....	ix
Neighborhood, Developer & Police Department Background	2
• The Olneyville Neighborhood	2
• Olneyville Housing Corporation.	6
• Rhode Island LISC	10
• The Providence Police Department	13
What the Partners Did: The Building Blocks of a Comprehensive Revitalization Agenda.....	15
• Early Nuisance Abatement Efforts	15
• Seizing an Opportunity to Plan for More than Abatement: A Coalition of Stakeholders does Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning and Agrees on a Revitalization Focus Area	17
• Innovative Property Acquisition Strategies Involving Law Enforcement	20
• Acquiring and Transforming the Three Hot Spots	22
• Designing for Crime Prevention	24
• In Tandem, Police and Community are Powerful Advocates	27
• Award-Winning Design Assistance for Further Development in the Area	30
• A Donation Spurs Community Involvement in Building the Park	30
• Some Concerns Along the Way Over Neighborhood Gentrification	30
• Building Sustainable Revitalization and Safety Partnerships: Toward a New Way of Doing Business	31
○ <i>Developing a new collaborative approach at the operating level of the Department</i>	32
○ <i>Until collaborative approaches are institutionalized, they will highly vulnerable to changes in organizational leadership</i>	34
○ <i>Steps toward institutionalizing this kind of collaboration: Performance drivers and recruitment of officers with an affinity for team problem-solving</i>	34
○ <i>Building local and national support for continued progress in Providence</i>	36
○ <i>The chief's support for sustaining partnerships shapes command staff practices</i>	37
Building Away Crime	40
• The Data Used to Assess Public Safety Changes—and the Data Sources.....	40
○ <i>The Providence Plan</i>	40
○ <i>The data.</i>	41
• Public Safety Changes	42
• Site Control of Hot Spots Coincides with Public Safety Improvements.	45
Development Impact	49
Lessons Learned	54
• The police and developer partners must be technically capable, ambitious in setting their goals and persistent and creative in pursuing them	54
• <i>Structure</i> and <i>formalize</i> the police-developer engagement and mutual assistance.....	54
• Building trust takes time and many small, repetitive steps	54

- Role flexibility and persistence by participants and frequent leadership reinforcement
of the strategy support unconventional collaborations55
- Bring relevant expertise to bear on key decisions and tasks56
- Sequence and bundle physical development projects and public safety efforts to
maximize mutually-reinforcing safety and economic vitality56
- Build critical mass—major results came from a multi-year chain reaction.....57
- Share credit among collaborators60
- Measurable ROI matters60
- The foreclosure crisis is a genuine threat to sustainability of progress in
neighborhoods like Olneyville62
- The future prospects for successful police-developer collaboration in Olneyville.....62
- The bottom line: Would the partners replicate their collaboration if they had it
to do over again?64

Credits, References & Sources for Additional Information.67

Acknowledgments.....73

About the Authors.74

Summary Table of Contents of the *Building Our Way Out of Crime* book76



Figure 1. *Upper left:* Police and other emergency services were frequently summoned to Aleppo Street prior to revitalization. *Upper right:* 23-25 Hillard Street—a hot spot for narcotics and prostitution. Police Lt. Bob Lepre said: “It looked like a haven for crime. These weren’t high level dealers. This was street stuff—people coming up knocking on the door. They were serving people right from the house. The house was a mess. That backyard was disgusting even to walk in. Guys [police] didn’t even want to go into the back of the house to make arrests, it was so disgusting. They’d go in and grab the guy and get out. That’s how nasty it was.” *Lower left:* After the Riverside Mills complex was destroyed in 1989 in a huge fire, the only building that remained was the old Mills office. *Lower right:* The grounds became an illegal dump, drug shooting gallery and hazardous waste site, stretching between Aleppo Street on the north and the badly polluted Woonasquatucket River to the south. Shown across Aleppo from the garbage is an emblematic business, a casket warehouse.

About a decade ago, “when Jessica Vega was a teenager, growing up on Amherst Street in Olneyville, her mother had a strict rule. Don’t walk on Manton Avenue and don’t cross over to the area south of Manton.” As recounted in a *Providence Journal* story, “Vega recalled that her mother used to say, ‘You can get kidnapped. You can get shot. There’s a lot of bad people there.’” (Smith, 2007s)

The area Jessica’s mother was concerned about ran between the parallel streets of Manton and

Aleppo, and others echoed her perspective, including Olneyville Housing Corporation’s Executive Director, Frank Shea: “For four or five years, ‘you saw a neighborhood that was all but forgotten. If it wasn’t for drugs and prostitution, there really wasn’t any reason to be on Aleppo Street at all.’ What City Councilwoman Josephine DiRuzzo ... recalled as a lively Polish neighborhood with thriving mills ... had collapsed in despair. *** [V]acant lots and derelict or mismanaged multifamily houses made the immediate area a crime zone....” One of the area’s notorious han-

gouts—“a haven for drug dealers and prostitutes”—was known as “the cave.” It was “a hidden spot between the old and new foundations of a casket warehouse.” (Smith, 2007s)

In short, by the late 1990s, a large swath of Olneyville had become one of Providence’s worst areas—crime-ridden and almost wholly abandoned. What was the arc of this community’s decline?

Neighborhood, Developer & Police Department Background

The Olneyville Neighborhood *Rise and fall of an industrial center.*

Like many New England neighborhoods, Ol-

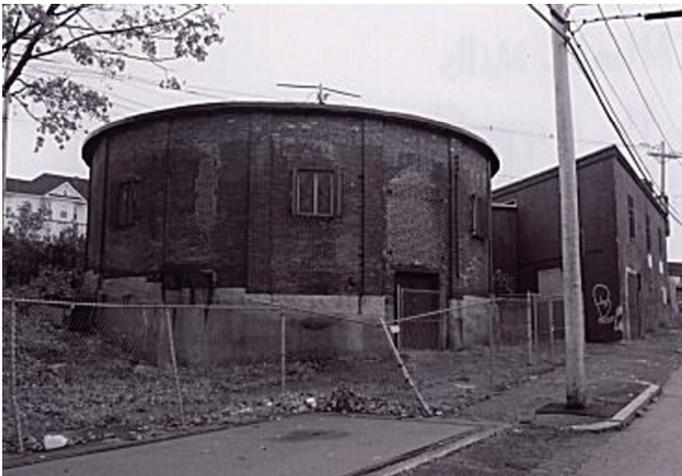
neyville counts its history not in decades but in centuries. Acquired by Roger Williams as part of the Providence Colony in 1636, the area’s main attraction was its location along the Woonasquacket River. The river’s waterpower drove economic development in this region for the next two centuries, spurring construction of textile, paper and grist mills, a forge, foundry, distillery and other factories along the banks of the Woonasquacket. When major railroad lines were constructed adjacent to the river in the 1800s, Olneyville’s textile mills became a major economic engine in the region, generating great wealth for a number of entrepreneurs. Most prominent among the textile factories was Atlantic Mills, which grew steadily in both footprint and profits from the 1850s through the end of that century, at its height employing 2,000 people. The company added khaki to its product line in the early 1900s, a lucrative decision since the Federal Government would soon use the fabric to make uniforms. A number of buildings from the 564,000 square-foot complex on Manton Avenue, Aleppo Street and Hartford Avenue still stand, most prominently a round brick “gasometer,” a natural gas storage building on Manton Avenue, which today is used by artists and community groups. Other former mill buildings now house small businesses, including a furniture store, a carpet warehouse, and a nightclub.

Another dominant influence on Olneyville was Riverside Mills, a huge complex at 50 Aleppo Street opened in 1863. Although Riverside would go up in flames in 1989 and, except for a two-story brick building that was the Mills’ office, would be torn down in 2001 (Barbarisi, 2007l; Rhode Island Dept. of Environmental Management, 2007), its name, as we shall see, would carry on and be affixed to some of the most impressive recent redevelopment projects in Olneyville.

Olneyville remained a vibrant working class neighborhood through the early decades of the twentieth century, increasingly populated by Polish and other Eastern European immigrants who worked in the mills. Providence’s principal annual Polish festival is—to this day—celebrated in Olneyville, on Atwells Avenue. (Providence Plan website, “Olneyville Neighborhood Profile.”) But in the second half of the century, par-



Figure 2. Atlantic Mills factory (above) and its natural gas storage building, still used by neighborhood groups as meeting space.



ticipants in this yearly cultural festival had less to celebrate, as described by The Providence Plan, a public-private data analysis organization:

“After World War II ... the fortunes of Providence’s textile giants declined precipitously. Industries moved out of the city for cities in the southern United States or shut down altogether. The effect of this demise on the Olneyville neighborhood was devastating. Thousands of jobs were lost and were never replaced. Some of these jobs have been recaptured in the costume jewelry industry but not enough to change the plight of the neighborhood.

As jobs declined, Olneyville became severely depopulated as more and more residents left the neighborhood to seek new employment. This flight was exacerbated by the construction of the Route 6 connector

in the early 1950s. Built to alleviate the traffic snarls in Olneyville Square [where eight streets converge in the southeast section of Olneyville], the Route 6 connector had the effect of destroying a great deal of affordable, working-class housing.” (Providence Plan website, “Olneyville Neighborhood Profile”)

Demographics. Olneyville occupies 0.55 square miles out of Providence’s 18.2 square miles. 2000 Census data showed Olneyville’s population at 6,495, up 11% from 1990. (The City’s overall population in 2000 was 173,618.) The ethnic and racial makeup of Olneyville residents shifted from 1990 to 2000, with the white population dropping by half and the nonwhite population growing by nearly 75%; the Hispanic population alone almost doubled. According to the 2000 tally, Olneyville’s residential population was 57.4% Hispanic, 22% Non-Hispanic white,

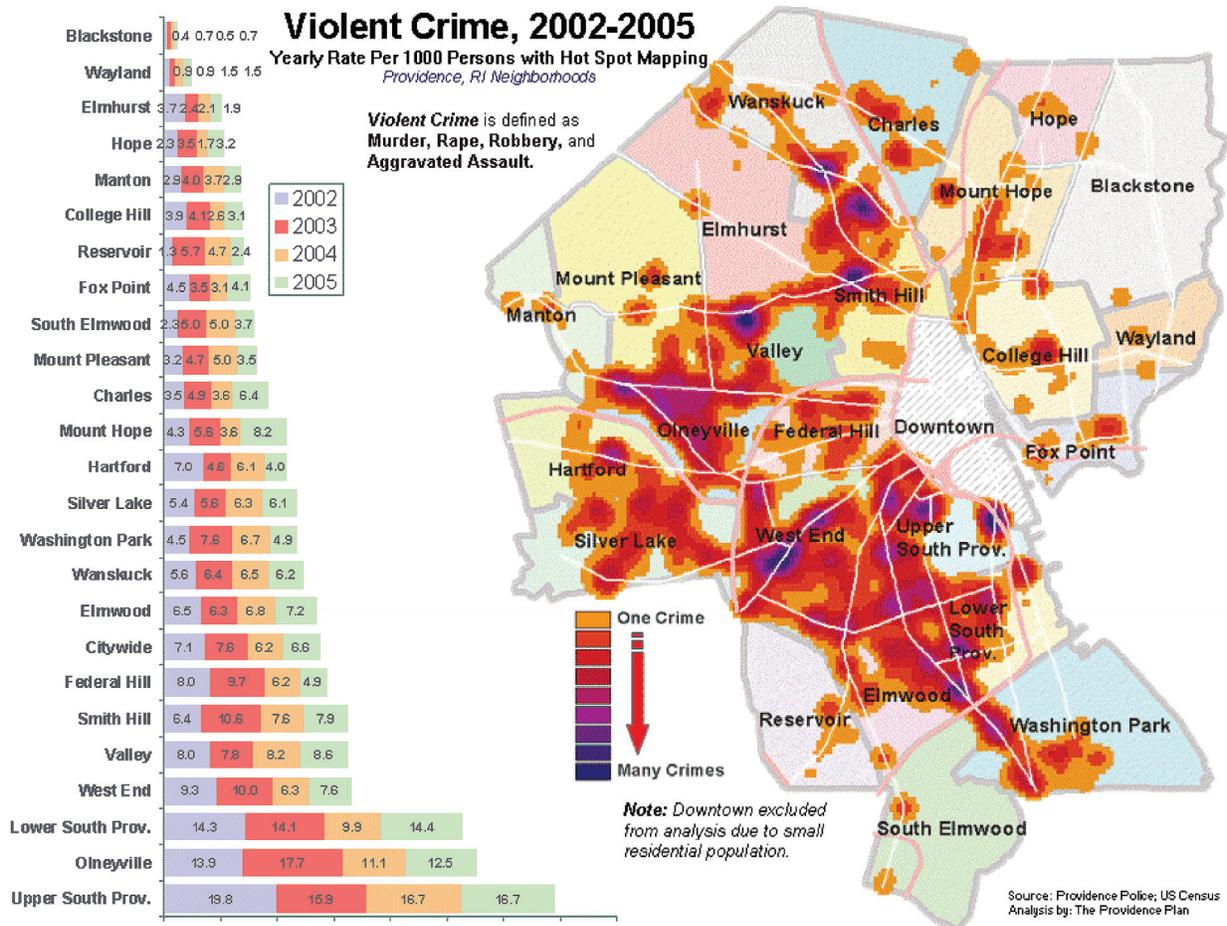


Figure 3. From 2002 through 2005 Olneyville was one of Providence’s most violent neighborhoods, no easy target for the ambitious turnaround plans of the partnership between police, developers and other stakeholders.

13.6% African American, 7.4% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1.6% Native American; and fully 30% were foreign born.

As of 2000, Olneyville had the highest percentage of Hispanic residents among Providence neighborhoods and, in a 1995 sampling, the highest percentage (11.8%) who reported having lived in another country or in Puerto Rico. By 2000, “the number of persons who speak a language other than English at home grew to 65%, a 70% increase from 1990.” More than a quarter of residents (27.4%) were “linguistically isolated, the second highest percentage in the City.”

Of those age 25 or older, only 47.7% had completed high school, the lowest rate in Providence. The unemployment rate was 12%, three points higher than the citywide average. Of those living in Olneyville who had jobs, 31% worked in manufacturing.

Olneyville was the second poorest neighborhood in Providence. In 1999, the community’s median family income of \$19,046 was 40% lower than the citywide median. Poverty afflicted 41% of all neighborhood residents, 41% of families, and 54.4% of children. Compared to the rest of the City, Olneyville in 2000 had the third highest percentage of children (persons under 18) living in poverty. And the neighborhood had the third highest percentage (40.9%) of households without a motor vehicle. One sign of progress was that, since 1990, poverty among Olneyville’s elderly residents had declined 55% to the point where only 21% were poor in 1999.

Over the 1990s, the number of housing units in the neighborhood declined by 5.8%. In 2000, Census tallies listed 18.2% of housing as owner occupied and 81.8% as renter occupied, putting Olneyville third from the bottom among all Providence neighborhoods in home ownership rate. It is important to note, however, that many “rental” structures—particularly “three-flats”—are owner occupied with two additional rental units. As Olneyville residents, police, developers, city planners and consultants discussed at a charette in December 2007, “more owner-occupied properties and more jobs could create the community atmosphere that repels crime.” (Barbarisi, 2007u)

The multi-family units built to house mill employees in the previous century remained prevalent in 2000. Of the neighborhood’s 2,644 housing units, 11.7% were single-family, 18.6% were duplexes, and 69.7% were multi-family housing. Half of Olneyville’s housing was built before 1960. The number of vacant units in Olneyville *decreased* by 38.2% between 1990 and 2000, to 13.2%. The Census classified 16.1% of the neighborhood’s housing units as “overcrowded.” Frank Shea told the *Providence Journal* in September 2007 that “his agency has a waiting list of 724 families for the 65 housing units it has under its control and ‘nothing makes you feel so powerless as to accept an application from a family, knowing that they are going to be number 725 on this list’.” (Dujardin, 2007b)

The cost of housing in Olneyville was below most other areas of Providence. “The median rent in Olneyville in 2000 was 32% lower than the citywide level. According to the 2000 Census, a quarter of all residents in Olneyville moved into their present housing unit within the past five years while another quarter of all residents had lived in their present home for more than 10 years.” (The Providence Plan, “Olneyville Neighborhood Profile”) And although the median sales price of houses in the neighborhood had improved somewhat by 2004 (to \$190,500), it was still 13% lower than the citywide median.

Neighborhood-based social services.

According to a recent survey published by the Olneyville Collaborative, a consortium lead by the Olneyville Housing Corporation, the neighborhood has nine youth-service organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club of Providence, Nickerson House Community Center, YouthBuild Providence, and a branch of the City’s public library. There are two housing groups (Olneyville Housing Corporation and Habitat for Humanity); two adult education programs; four organizations that provide assistance with food and clothing; and one health clinic. (A few of these service providers are counted in more than one category.)

Blight, crime and the 3 worst properties in the neighborhood.

With the mills largely vacant and the 15-mile long river significantly polluted from factories’ lethal chemical

waste and raw sewage discharges, areas near the industrial sites and along the Woonasquatucket were substantially abandoned during the second half of the 20th century. (Barbarisi, 2007t) As noted, a tract north of the river, between the east-west streets of Aleppo and Manton, was filled with vacant lots and abandoned properties and had become a haven for prostitution, drug dealing and drug abuse. In 2002, Olneyville had the third highest rate of violent crime (murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault) among the City's 25 neighborhoods—13.9 such crimes per 1,000 residents. The previous year, three murders occurred within Olneyville's half square-mile boundaries.

Against that backdrop, three properties in this swath between Manton Avenue and Aleppo Street stood out as major attractors/generators of crime, disinvestment, and pessimism about the community's future:

- At **218-220 Manton**—a key corner in the



Figure 4.

neighborhood and entry point from the neighborhood's main arterial street for a hoped-for park—a negligent, absentee landlord and a mentally ill, elderly tenant had allowed the building to be overrun with nuisance activities. The mixed commercial and residential property became a magnet for drug use, prostitution, loud parties that led to fights, vandalism and, in 2001, a murder. Development experts considered the building a true neighborhood menace that would effectively kill any revitalization efforts.

- At **23-25 Hillard** an investor who had not previously owned inner city real estate decided to try his hand at this property. He inhe-

rited three tenants, all of whom used this house as a base for criminal activity (two units for drug dealing, one for prostitution). Police dreaded their frequent



Figure 5.

trips to this address since the conditions inside and in the backyard were “disgusting.” A murder occurred outside this house in 2001.

- The property at **63 Aleppo** was physically isolated from the rest of the neighborhood, and its crime vulnerability was heightened by the layout of this portion of Aleppo. It was the only house within several hundreds yards and had a landlord who was notorious as the



Figure 6.

owner of problem properties throughout the neighborhood. For many years the property was very attractive to tenants who capitalized on the isolation for illicit activity.

In 2002, an area just a few blocks square (3% of Olneyville's area) that encompassed these three hot spots as well as “the cave” on Aleppo a little west of Pelham accounted for 15.8% of the entire

neighborhood's calls for service to the Providence Police Department. That same year, a larger area, including these hot spots, which Olneyville Housing Corporation would target for comprehensive revitalization (7.8% of the neighborhood's geography) accounted for 24.7% of all neighborhood calls to the police.

Olneyville Housing Corporation

In the midst of these several hot spots, Olneyville Housing Corporation (OHC) decided to open its office in 2002 at the northwest corner of Curtis and Pelham Streets. Their choice of site placed the office directly behind (and with a clear view of) the Manton Avenue building, kitty corner across an intersection from (and again with sightlines to) the Hillard address, and within a couple of blocks of the Aleppo house and the cave. OHC Executive Director Frank Shea recalled that a number of people in Olneyville appreciated that his group was willing to move into this troubled area *before* addressing the crime and blight problems. "Most people," one person commented at the time, "fix the neighborhood up and *then* move in."

As its website explains, Olneyville Housing Corporation "was founded as a program of the Nickerson House Community Center in 1988 to promote the revitalization of Olneyville through the development of affordable housing opportunities for residents. Since that time, OHC has worked to stabilize the neighborhood by addressing the problems associated with an aging housing stock, decline in owner occupancy and increasing gap between housing costs and residents' income." The group elaborates on its mission and strategy: "OHC exists to build a safe, healthy and stable community through the empowerment of Olneyville residents. While OHC's primary function is to facilitate the creation and revitalization of affordable housing, the organization takes a holistic approach to community strengthening which includes economic development, individual wealth building, and collaboration with residents and similarly charged organizations to build a strong, viable neighborhood." In keeping with this mission, OHC has from time to time worked on the rehabilitation of commercial properties (such as façade improvements of 11 Olneyville Square stores), in addition to its main agenda of providing high-quality affordable housing. (Davis, 2004)

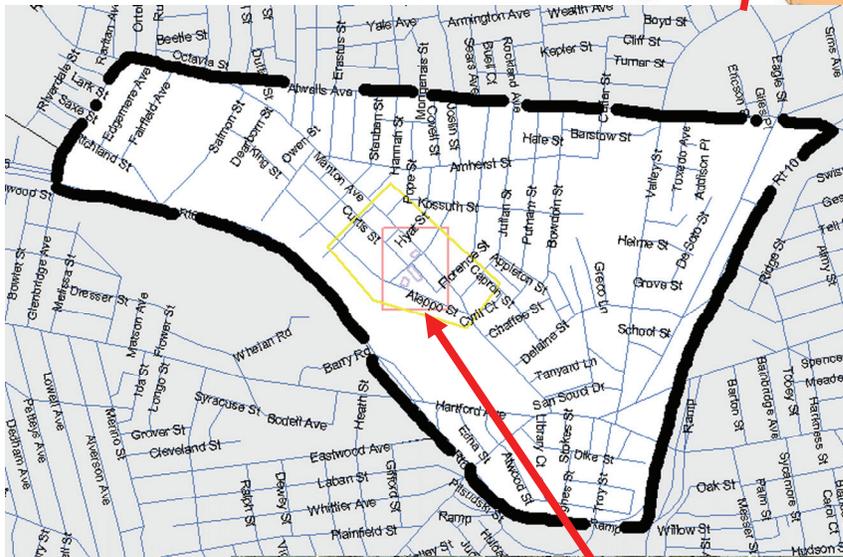
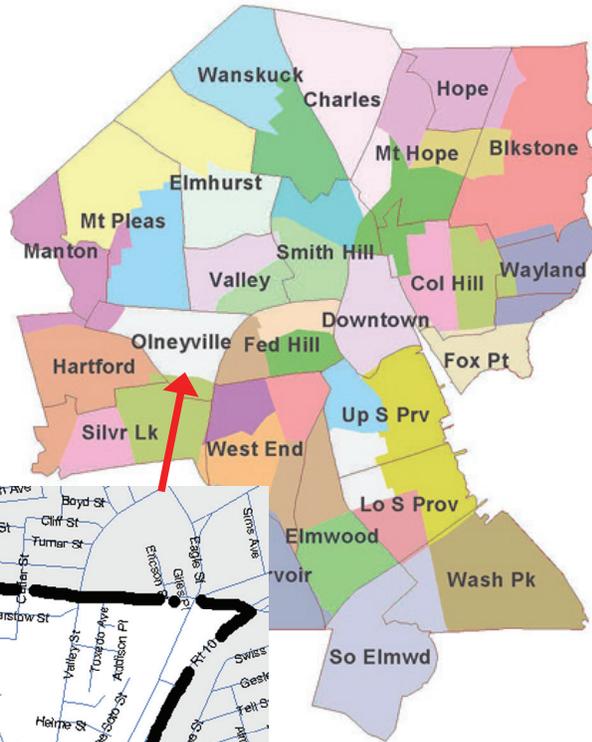
Among its programs, OHC provides financial education to its clients (tenants and homebuyers) in English and Spanish. "Qualifying graduates of the program," OHC's website explains, "will be eligible for low interest rate mortgages and down payment and closing cost assistance." Among the topics covered for prospective homebuyers are budgeting, qualifying for a mortgage, home selection, home maintenance, and managing credit. Post-purchase classes taught by OHC include home repair and maintenance and foreclosure prevention.

One example of OHC's guidance on credit management illustrates the organization's creativity in getting its message through to its clients. When OHC noticed that many of its renters were paying exorbitant prices for furniture, appliances, electronics and furnishings at "rent-to-own stores," the group launched an information campaign recommending that its clients instead patronize specified stores that have "more generous credit terms." Of the six rent-to-own stores in all of Providence, three are in Olneyville. As Frank Shea noted, these merchants "are just sucking money out of neighborhoods." That duping of Olneyville residents prompted OHC to provide some sucker succor. Shea continued: "The number of times we saw the rent-a-center truck come was just heartbreaking.... Low-income people all too often see their purchases repossessed because of a temporary financial setback...and they wind up empty-handed." (Smith, 2007q) A news story explained how OHC showed its clients practical alternatives to the rent-to-own shops: "Olneyville Housing solicited Cardi's [furniture stores] for help and set up a model apartment with Cardi's furnishings to show renters and homebuyers what was available. Because Olneyville Housing gives low-income renters and homebuyers financial education, the tenants become positioned to qualify for mortgages and other kinds of credit." Shea noted that "'people will get the credit they deserve' through the same offers Cardi's has for everyone.... We think this program just gets them what they earned." (Smith, 2007q)

The organization has a full-time staff of nine, including an Executive Director; Housing Counselor; Asset and Community Building Program Manager; Property Manager; two Real Estate Project Managers; a Parks, River, Public and

**Providence neighborhoods,
the Olneyville neighborhood &
focus areas within Olneyville**

Figure 7. The focus area bounded by the yellow box in the aerial view is Olneyville Housing Corporation's revitalization area, just below which in the lower left runs the Woonasquatucket River. The section of the OHC revitalization area in the purple box shows the 3 problem properties on Manton Avenue, Aleppo Street and Hillard Street and "the cave" on Aleppo.



Open Space Steward; Office Manager; and Maintenance Mechanic. This nonprofit group's annual operating budget in 2007 was \$450,000; and OHC counts among its principal funders and investors the City of Providence Department of Planning and Development, Housing Network of Rhode Island, Fannie Mae Corporation, Bank of America, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the National Equity Fund, The Providence Plan, Providence Weed and Seed Program, Rhode Island Foundation, Rhode Island Housing, and United Way of Rhode Island.

OHC's 15-member board of directors includes Olneyville residents as well as local business owners and artists, financial industry professionals, a lawyer, accountant, OHC homeowners, a developer, and a key representative from the Providence Police Department. The most recent Providence Police representative on the board is Lt. Dean Isabella, who had worked for several years in District 5 (which serves the Olneyville neighborhood) and in early 2008 was promoted to lieutenant, succeeding Lt. Bob Lepre as commander of that District.

Like the other developers profiled in the *Building Our Way Out of Crime* book, OHC engages in comprehensive planning, operating from multi-year development plans, yet remaining flexible in order to capitalize on unanticipated opportunities and to counter surprise threats.

To ensure the sustainability of the affordable housing it builds and sells, OHC relies on a system of long-term, renewable leases under a land trust arrangement. This approach is explained on OHC's website in the context of marketing the Riverside Townhomes development:

"The Riverside Townhomes are part of a Community Housing Land Trust. A CHLT is an arrangement that keeps homes and land committed to affordable housing forever. In a CHLT, you own the home and lease the land from a non-profit community organization. You can build equity in your home and pass it on to your heirs. You pay a mortgage and taxes and are responsible for maintenance and repairs. In exchange for the low price you pay for your home, you may only sell your home to another in-

come-qualified household like yourself according to an agreed-upon resale formula."

Methods such as this for maintaining the affordability of high quality housing in revitalizing neighborhoods are crucial ingredients of success. Thom Deller, head of the Providence Department of Planning and Development, noted that this approach could fail without the cooperation of tax assessors, who must be made aware of—and incorporate in their appraisals—the deed restrictions requiring sales to low-income buyers. If the assessor "doesn't know about the deed restriction," Deller said, "he looks at the house and says, 'Oh, this is worth \$300,000.' Taxes skyrocket. So, we need to create a clear and uniform policy so that there can be the potential to grow wealth, while protecting some of these owners...." A recent policy change that can benefit developers of affordable housing, such as OHC, is a Rhode Island law which, as Thom Deller explained, "allows any community in the state to grant tax stabilizations for affordable housing. First time it's been on the books. Now you can just say, 'If you do affordable, we'll give you tax breaks.'" (*The Agenda*, 2006, pg. 5)

OHC, which completed its one-hundredth unit of affordable housing in September 2007, won two unrestricted cash awards that same year: the Bank of America Foundation Neighborhood Builder Award and the MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award. (Providence Journal, 2007k; Smith, 2007s; Barbarisi, 2007l) OHC has also been selected to participate in the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Sustainable Communities National Pilot Program. That program attempts to "build healthy, sustainable communities [by] creating opportunities for residents of those communities to raise their incomes, build assets and gain access to quality education, health care, jobs, services and recreational amenities." (Rhode Island LISC, 2008b) More recently, in May 2008, OHC was named one of four recipients in the State of Rhode Island of a \$50,000 grant under Rhode Island Housing's new multi-million dollar "KeepSpace" program. That program supports comprehensive community planning and action to foster neighborhood development resulting in "good homes, strong commerce, a healthy environment, sensible infrastructure, positive community impact, and integrated arts, recreation, culture

and religion.” (Rhode Island Housing, 2008; Shalvey, 2008)

As OHC’s development capacity has grown, the organization has capitalized on a strong track record for affordable housing development to forge partnerships with other developers, including for-profit firms, to advance the OHC mission of bringing affordable housing to the neighborhood. A project announced in September 2007 will redevelop the American Locomotive Works industrial site into retail space and mixed-income housing. This \$40 million venture—part of a larger \$333 million conversion of industrial sites into commercial and residential uses commenced in 2006—will include “126 affordable and 75 other housing units in a five-story, 211,000 square-foot building. The complex, to include a two-story garage and an additional 8,000 square-foot retail space along Valley Street, will sit on a 2-acre parcel.” (Shalvey, 2007)

The affordable units that OHC will develop (with monthly rents ranging from \$675-\$900) will help meet a pressing need, as Frank Shea noted during the September 2007 kickoff news conference: “There’s a huge need for affordable housing. First and foremost, it’s 126 units of affordable housing that will be available to working families in this neighborhood. It’s just huge. That’s a tremendous contribution.” The 126 affordable units slated for this project will exceed the total production of affordable housing in all of Providence during 2006, when 102 such units were developed. (Shalvey, 2007)

Aided by its Spring 2008 award from Rhode Island Housing’s KeepSpace program, OHC will supplement its housing accomplishments with commercial development aimed at jobs creation, according to *Providence Business News*:

“The nonprofit has rebuilt 51 affordable residential units so far, with another 120 planned, said Executive Director Frank Shea. But nearby there needs be a retail center, where those residents can work, Shea said. With the KeepSpace funds, OHC will begin community planning for a 120,000-square-foot retail-focused redevelopment of Paragon Mill, which will ‘allow us to develop a property with an eye toward

jobs that can be filled by local residents,’ Shea said.” (Shalvey, 2008)

OHC Executive Director Frank Shea.

Profiled by one of the City’s alternative newspapers, *The Phoenix*, Frank Shea was saluted as someone “whose efforts make Rhode Island a better place.” By 2002, “largely beneath the radar screen of the news media,” “the rebirth of Olneyville [had] begun and one of the key players in the neighborhood’s revitalization” was the “energetic and focused” Frank Shea. (Cheeks, 2002)

In 2000, 12 years after the CDC’s launch, Frank came to OHC after serving as director of program



*Figure 8. OHC Executive Director Frank Shea (2007)
Photo: Geller*

development for the National Association of Housing Partnerships (now known as the Housing Partnership Network), a national network of large, public-private housing development organizations. Frank has been active as a board member and president of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (the statewide CDC association) and as a board member and treasurer of the Statewide Housing Action Coalition and the Rhode Island Statewide Housing Land Trust.

He was awarded a fellowship from the Rhode Island Foundation in 2005 to study CDC approaches to industrial development and was chosen to participate in the NeighborWorks-Harvard

Kennedy School of Government Achieving Excellence in Community Development program (Class 3, 2006-2008) and the Development Training Institutes Bank of America Leadership Academy (Class of 2002). Frank is a Boston native and 1984 graduate of Harvard College. His wife is a family doctor, and they have two children.

Shea leads his own housing group and participates in a wide-ranging consortium known as the Olneyville Collaborative, which encompasses religious, business, merchant, arts, and environmental organizations, and Providence Weed and Seed. The Collaborative meets monthly to advance their mission to improve quality of life in Olneyville through “positive social, economic, environmental and community change.”

A motivation for assembling the Olneyville Collaborative was Shea’s view that “the task of community revitalization cannot be done piecemeal. All the parts—from education, health services, environmental concerns, recreation and housing—have to fit.” (Cheeks, 2002) It’s essential, as he told us, that there be “comprehensive planning with all the neighborhood groups and residents involved.”

Of special importance for our purposes is that Frank Shea—with the full support of his board of directors (led early on by Michael Solomon and more recently Robinson Alston, Jr.)—has both informal and formal roles in working with public safety collaborators. For instance, for several years Shea has been a member of the Providence Weed and Seed program Steering Committee and as of early 2008 was serving as its Vice Chair. And, as indicated, he has reciprocated by integrating police into his CDC’s core business—by having the District 5 police commander serve on OHC’s board of directors.

Rhode Island LISC

The Local Initiatives Support Corporation’s Rhode Island program, under the staff leadership of Executive Director Barbara Fields, plays an active support role for OHC and other nonprofit community developers in the state and merits description to help set the rich context within which police, other units of local and state government, and OHC work together productively.

Like other LISC programs around the country, Rhode Island LISC’s mission is to “provide community organizations with technical and financial resources to help transform distressed neighborhoods into vibrant and healthy places to live, work, do business and raise children.” As Barbara Fields put it at a public forum in March 2006, “We believe in the places and people that others are too quick to write off.” (Smith, 2006a) The Rhode Island program has been active since 1991 and had, by September 2008, invested more than \$210 million and leveraged an additional \$400 million in community development in its focus areas within the state. (Rhode Island LISC, 2008e) In 2001, this LISC program launched the Rhode Island Child Care Facilities Fund, which has developed new or renovated childcare facilities for nearly 100 providers, serving more than 5,500 low-income children. (Rhode Island LISC, 2008d)

The most productive year in RI-LISC’s history was 2007, when \$38.9 million was invested in a combination of low-interest loans to support ac-



Figure 9. Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields addresses local and national police and development practitioners at Providence Police Headquarters March 1, 2006.

“There is nothing worse than having abandoned property in the neighborhoods because it is a magnet for crime. CDCs have come in and refurbished and maintained properties, and crime moves out of that neighborhood because there is no longer a place for these people to congregate. We’ve seen this in street after street. It creates a powerful feeling of hope and strength for the neighbors. People feel like this is someplace they want to sink their roots in. Their kids can play in their yards; they can walk three blocks to their school and not be in fear all the time. When the ‘broken windows’ get repaired, no one else is going to try to vandalize the building. We’ve had tremendous stories where we’ve got millions of dollars of development going in and not one tool is stolen because people feel a sense of pride that this is happening in their neighborhood. And then this brings merchants into their neighborhood.—Barbara Fields, RI LISC Executive Director

quisition and construction of projects; zero-interest recoverable grants to support projects in their infancy; non-recoverable grants to community development corporations for operating support and other purposes; and Low-Income Housing and New Market Tax Credit investments through LISC’s National Equity Fund. Investments during those 12 months supported construction and renovation of football fields, child care facilities, and commercial space; community safety initiatives; and affordable housing developments.

Between Rhode Island LISC’s launch in 1991 and September 2008, the program’s investments have produced more than 6,000 affordable homes and created over 600,000 square-feet of community, child care, and retail space. (Rhode Island LISC, 2008d, 2008e) Since 1993, Rhode Island LISC has fielded 97 AmeriCorps members to support neighborhood development.

Of central importance to this case study, Rhode Island LISC adopted national LISC’s Community Safety Initiative (CSI) in 2004 as a core strategy for supporting and sustaining community development. “CSI was interesting to me,” Barbara Fields said in an interview with us in 2003, “be-

cause I don’t think you can do housing and ignore neighborhood safety. I’m finding that many of our CDCs are very concerned about safety. It keeps coming up in survey after survey of our neighborhoods. Over and over again, we hear, ‘We need better schools, more housing and public safety’—but public safety is at the top of their list. If your business is housing, you’d have to be someone who worked on another planet not to be interested in safety.”

Fields had been discussing the possibility of adopting the CSI approach for some time with LISC colleague Lisa Belsky, who ran the national CSI program (and co-founded it with Bill Geller several years earlier). But by 2003, Fields’ earlier concerns that local funding sources were already pretty well tapped by Rhode Island LISC for other LISC programs were allayed by the November 2002 election of Mayor David N. Cicilline. “If the Mayor tells the funders, ‘This is something I want to do,’ it is totally different than having me walk in. Plus the Mayor has gone outside of Rhode Island and hired Dean Esserman, who has a lot of credibility and a commitment to community policing, to be police chief,” Fields added.

Besides seeing practical ways in which police could assist community developers, Fields also ventured that CDCs would be an important conduit between residents and cops: “Organizations on the ground day to day are out there not just

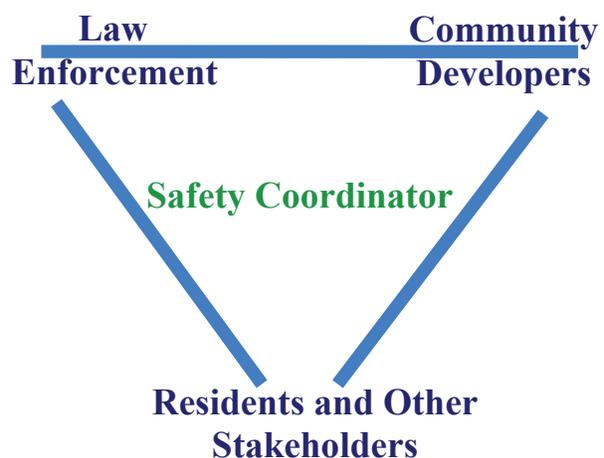


Figure 10. Rhode Island LISC’s concept is that its in-house Safety Coordinator, hired as part of the Community Safety Initiative of national LISC, helps encourage and support robust collaboration among police, prosecutors, developers and other stakeholders.



Figure 11. Mayor David N. Cicilline at news conference in Riverside Park (November 2007)

building housing but being a resource to residents if they need to do repairs to their home or their kids need some after school counseling. They trust that the organization might be able to send them in the right direction. So as the CDCs hear the other issues—around broken windows, cars being vandalized, and drug dealers on the corner—here is an opportunity to say, ‘OK let’s work with our community police officers.’ This is happening here in Olneyville.”

Another reason Barbara Fields was willing to invest in police-community developer partnerships at the time she did was that a number of CDCs in Rhode Island had matured to the point where they represented a tangible asset to their neighborhoods. She explained in an April 2003 discussion with us and Chief Esserman:

“I think we do have an opportunity now to build alliances with your efforts, Dean, and with the willingness of CDCs to engage in a broader arena, because they have built up their credibility slowly. This wouldn’t have been possible five years ago with the groups we worked with in the City because they hadn’t done that many houses, people didn’t know who they were, they were doing maybe a fall festival, helping a dozen people buy homes. But

now they’re producing more and more, and they are realizing that for them to be a part of the community they need to do it with a long-term commitment.”

Since Rhode Island LISC agreed to actively support police-developer collaboration, LISC’s national CSI program has provided underwriting and a variety of technical assistance for a Safety Coordinator, based in the Rhode Island LISC Office. (Smith, 2007g) CSI’s consulting services have been provided primarily by CSI program co-founder Lisa Belsky, with active support from current CSI national Program Director Julia Ryan. The Providence-based Community Safety Coordinator—Nancy Howard—has played a central role in convening, enhancing and assessing the collaborative efforts of police, LISC-affiliated community development corporations and other partners



Figure 12. Safety Coordinator Nancy Howard joins colleagues and other celebrants in Olneyville at the November 2007 presentation to the partnership of the MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award (1st place prize). Front row (L-R): Nancy Howard, OHC Board President Robinson (Bob) Alston, Jr., U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI, who as Rhode Island Attorney General helped produce the Olneyville turnaround through his Nuisance Abatement Task Force’s 2002-03 work), OHC Executive Director Frank Shea, and Providence Police Lt. Bob Lepre, then-commander of District 5 and member of OHC’s board.

in the several LISC Rhode Island focus communities (see Figure 10). She enhances partnership activities through training, research and brokering expert consulting. Nancy was appointed to the Weed and Seed Steering Committee, which was mutually beneficial. That role gave her convenient access to a variety of law enforcement officials and provided the Weed and Seed program with the benefit of her organizational skills as they recruited additional Committee members and transitioned to their next coordinator after an open and competitive hiring process.

As Nancy Howard attests, a key to her success has been steady support from Lisa Belsky. As opportunities and obstacles arise, Lisa provides strategic guidance to Rhode Island LISC and their police and community development partners. She has been both sounding board and resource conduit, helping the participants find additional resources and deploy them productively. Belsky's excellent relationships with Providence Police Department leaders have helped Nancy Howard and others in the Providence community development arena communicate effectively and efficiently with Providence Police officials to devise and implement valuable projects.

The Rhode Island LISC Community Safety Initiative program is not limited to Providence; it works statewide with CDCs and other organizations to improve their collaboration with police officers and the communities they serve. An example is a project in Pawtucket, Rhode Island that has been successfully addressing prostitution problems and the obstacles those problems present to community vitality and revitalization. (Rhode Island LISC, 2008c; Kirwan, 2008) Rhode Island LISC provides financial support to police-developer collaborations for various purposes. One illustration is an award in 2007 to the Providence Police Department of \$11,500 to pay for police overtime to support a problem-oriented policing project in the South Providence and Elmwood neighborhoods. (Smith, 2007g)

Barbara Fields often plays a pivotal role in advancing the goals of her clients—the LISC-affiliated CDCs in Rhode Island. We will see later in this case study that, once the Olneyville collaborators set their sights on prodding the City to invest in key infrastructure improvements to enable

progress in building away crime, Barbara was a relentless advocate for their position with a variety of public officials.

Providence Police Department

Mayor David Cicilline won his primary election in September 2002 on the promise of more effective, efficient, honest city government. Among other things, he wanted to bring a new day to the City's police department, which had suffered low public and professional esteem due to a variety of



Figure 13. Chief Dean Esserman (photo by Officer Ronald Pino of the Providence Police Dept., March 2008)

integrity problems (including employees cheating on promotional exams and the consequences of “political manipulation from City Hall”—Milkovits, 2003). Many in Providence suggest that these issues were part of broader municipal misconduct which, among other things, landed Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., Mayor Cicilline's predecessor, in prison. (Police Assessment Resource Center, 2007)

To help him fulfill this promise, the Mayor-elect turned for advice on police chief selection to a widely admired police chief (then serving in Stamford, Connecticut but a veteran leader of several agencies), Dean Esserman. Cicilline said he wanted to find a police leader with a proven track record of successfully using innovative community collaborations, together with tough traditional law enforcement, to address problems of crime and community decline. Over the next several weeks, Cicilline realized his executive search advisor was the man for the job.

Those who know Dean Esserman can readily im-

agine some of his qualities that captivated Mayor Cicilline: a bold vision of what police and communities can accomplish working together; a confident candor; a willingness to stand against the tide of opinion in pursuit of better results obtained more honorably; and a genuine comfort with people in every walk of life, from the elite to the street. Those who don't know Esserman can get a hint of these qualities in his own voice, in a Rhode Island Public Radio commentary aired in June 2008 (Esserman, 2008). There, Chief Esserman decried the nation's seeming acceptance of, and sense of powerlessness to stop, the killing of its young people by other young people on urban streets. While acknowledging tough budget decisions facing the nation, he declared that "the best way to fight crime is to invest in kids, not just to arrest them."

Two days after Mayor Cicilline's inauguration on January 8, 2003, he swore in Dean Esserman as Providence's Chief of Police, giving him a four-year employment contract as a safeguard against political interference with the Department. (Milkovits, 2003)

As of late 2006, the Providence Police Department (PPD) had 579 total employees, of whom 480 were sworn and 99 were civilian. (FBI, 2006) In February 2008 the Department employed 482 sworn personnel (of the 489 authorized), but City budget challenges required the organization to lay off four civilian staff and to significantly curtail discretionary overtime expenditures. To stay within its 2008 appropriation of \$43.3 million, the PPD had to cut \$660,000 in spending. (Smith, 2008a; Smith, 2008b) This was the first police budget cut in the five years since Mayor Cicilline hired Dean Esserman as chief of police.

Since Esserman took the helm in January 2003, he and his command staff have marshaled the talents of the Department's employees and generated a new wave of police strategic innovation, professional accountability and crime-suppression effectiveness, resulting in a flood of favorable publicity and, according to community leaders, a palpable increase in public confidence in and cooperation with their police.

"Providence is the only city in the nation in which crime has declined five years in a row," Chief Es-

serman declared at a December 11, 2007 award ceremony. (Smith, 2007v) Although the decline in Part I crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny) was small from 2006 to 2007 (from 9,829 to 9,821), nevertheless, as Deputy Chief Paul J. Kennedy told a reporter, "We were able to sustain the success that we've had over the last five years"—a notable accomplishment since crime rose during 2007 in many cities around the nation. (Smith, 2008b) And taking the longer view, as Chief Esserman put it in early 2008, "There were 4,000-plus fewer crime victims last year than there were in 2002...." The citywide drop in Part I reported offenses from 14,039 in 2002 to 9,821 in 2007 represents a 30% decrease and, in fact, a 30-year low for the City. (Smith, 2008b; Smith, 2007g)

"Community policing, which entails the decentralization of police work, is the hallmark of the Esserman administration and the strategy for which he credits the five-year downward trend in crime." (Smith, 2008b; Smith, 2008c) On Valentine's Day, 2008, Chief Esserman reiterated his results-driven affection for community policing by marking the fifth year of progress under that strategy and by honoring the Department's close partnerships with five organizations and nine individuals. Two of the award recipients were Rhode Island LISC and Robinson Alston, Jr., board president of Olneyville Housing Corporation. (Smith, 2008c)

As testament to the PPD's effectiveness in getting its message out through the media, the *Providence Journal* story on the awards ceremony included a clearer statement of community policing's core strategies than one usually finds in the daily press around the nation: "Community policing is the decentralization of police work, collaboration with community groups and citizens and the emphasizing of problem-solving and prevention rather than reaction to crime and calls for service." (Smith, 2008c; Rhode Island LISC, 2008a) At the February 14th event, Mayor Cicilline echoed a perspective often articulated by Chief Esserman: "We have built a police force based on the principle that its most important asset is not manpower or technology. It is trust." To which the Chief added: "We belong to you. I hope the Police Department is now part of the community and no

longer apart.” (Smith, 2008c)

The PPD’s successes with community partnerships for problem solving, crime prevention, and trust building have turned many professional eyes to Providence to see what’s working so well. One of the Department’s New England neighbors, the Boston Police Department, in March 2007 sent a team to Providence led by Boston Police Commissioner Ed Davis, himself a widely admired innovator over a long career in law enforcement. A news account of the visit said that the Boston police team sought to “identify keys to successful crime reduction, including especially the ways in which the Providence police cooperate with LISC to make neighborhoods safer.” (Smith, 2007g) Understanding the police-LISC partnership as practiced in Providence would be useful as Commissioner Davis sought to forge police-community developer collaborations in Boston, an interest which led him to serve a stint on the national advisory board of LISC’s Community Safety Initiative.

Other delegations of law enforcement officials have traveled much longer distances to Providence than the Boston leaders did. In March 2008, for instance, a group from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland came to study in several American cities how a police organization could overcome historic disconnects with its service population. After exploring how the PPD interacts with the community, Brian Maguire, Chief Superintendent of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, commented publicly:

“Policing is much too important a job to be left to the police alone. That was very, very evident here today. A very powerful statement was made ... this morning, where all the partner organizations and agencies were present, working together, [showing policing that is built on] the consent and cooperation of the community.” (Smith, 2008d)

Another visiting official from the same agency, Superintendent Nigel Grimshaw, added: “The key word this morning was relationships.” (Smith, 2008d)

In 2003, shortly after Chief Esserman’s appointment, the Providence Police Department’s patrol

operations were reorganized into nine districts, which “fall generally along established neighborhood boundaries,” according to the agency’s website. As the Chief explained, “We reorganized ourselves to become a truly neighborhood-based police department driven by neighborhood concerns.” (Police Assessment Resource Center, 2007) Each of the PPD’s nine districts is divided into four “car posts”. The Olneyville neighborhood falls within Car Post 1 of the Fifth District. Based on 2000 Census data, District 5 serves a population of 23,852—13.7% of the City’s residents.

We interviewed Dean Esserman a few weeks after his arrival in Providence, and he told us why he welcomed the partnership his Department was about to launch with Rhode Island LISC:

“My sense is that police in most cities are not that good at partnering, and when they need to partner, they aren’t that good unless they are in charge of the partnership. So who are we partnering with? We are partnering with people who live in their neighborhood, who work there, who are in that community ’round the clock. And it sometimes seems that police feel they should lead that effort and direct it. Over time I’ve come to believe that doesn’t have to be the case at all, that it shouldn’t be the case many times. The stronger the community is, the more capacity that is built in the community, the stronger the partner is that the police will work with.”

What the Partners Did: The Building Blocks of a Comprehensive Revitalization Agenda

Early Nuisance Abatement Efforts

Prior to Mayor Cicilline taking office and Chief Esserman being hired in 2003, Officer Tom Masse, assigned to work the Olneyville and adjacent neighborhoods in the Department’s Weed

and Seed-funded Community Policing Bureau, began to sink his teeth into Olneyville's chronic nuisance properties. He did so as one of the street-level practitioners actively involved with then-Attorney General (now U.S. Senator) Sheldon Whitehouse's Nuisance Abatement Task Force, on which the AG's principal point person was Assistant Attorney General Jim Baum. In the compact state of Rhode Island, the Attorney General has statewide responsibilities and also serves as the local prosecutor for felony cases.

Masse emphasized to us the contributions made by Attorney General Whitehouse's Nuisance Abatement Task Force: "The AG's Office was the biggest partner with the Police Department in those days. The leverage they brought to us to be able to take landlords to court was huge." Masse's input at that Task Force's weekly meetings and elsewhere in the community was informed by a stimulating national conference sponsored by Weed and Seed at which LISC Community Safety Initiative staff presented a workshop. "OHC staff relate that Masse came back from [the] conference looking to sit down with staff members and get a clearer sense of all that OHC needed to be effective," according to a LISC description of police collaboration in Olneyville. "If I know more about what you do, I can help you more," Masse told Frank Shea at OHC. "At the same time, police were realizing," as Major Paul Fitzgerald recalled, "that 'we could use Frank Shea...to solve police problems'." (Jordan and Davis, 2007) Fitzgerald from 1992 to 2003 headed the Department's 40-50 officer Community Policing Bureau, in which Officer Masse served.

Fitzgerald, then a lieutenant, played a crucial role in giving Officer Masse the flexibility and time to try different, higher-impact ways of working with OHC and the Nuisance Abatement Task Force to accomplish core police goals. Many of Masse's peers in patrol assignments were not as understanding and supportive as Fitzgerald was of Masse's unconventional policing methods.

Regular patrol officers' resentment of peers serving in special community policing units is a common problem in many police forces. Scheider (2008) presents a good description of advantages and disadvantages of special community policing units. The complaint typically is that the special



Figure 14. Major Paul Fitzgerald, Providence Police Dept. (2005) When, as a lieutenant, he commanded the Department's Community Policing Bureau, he supported Officer Tom Masse's innovative work in partnership with Olneyville Housing Corporation. In early 2008 he was head of the PPD's Uniform Division.

unit cops have cushy jobs with flexible hours, don't carry their fair share of responding to 9-1-1 calls and, by spending a lot of time meeting with community groups, don't do "real" police work. Even when, as in Masse's case, the alternate methods over time turn out to be quite productive—and are communicated to other personnel—resentments can linger among those who prefer methods they find more familiar.

While doubts and debates about the crime-stopping potency of community policing may have lingered, as we will discuss soon beginning in 2003 the PPD under Chief Esserman's leadership started to supplement the trailblazing efforts of Officer Masse and his non-police collaborators by deploying regular patrol personnel to attack long-festering problems in Olneyville.

Seizing an Opportunity to Plan for More than Abatement: A Coalition of Stakeholders Does Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning and Agrees on a Revitalization Focus Area

A broad, potent coalition convenes.

Prior to 2003 the cooperation of this lone officer, the Attorney General's Nuisance Abatement Task Force and OHC helped tamp down crime at a couple of neighborhood hot spots (especially the notorious Manton Avenue property). But significant, sustainable transformation would not be possible until Olneyville Housing Corporation and other development practitioners began actively collaborating in 2003 with Officer Masse, the Attorney General's task force and others. The *preparatory* work for this eventual robust partnership (including planning, developing and honing expertise and building good cross-organizational relationships) was kicked off two years earlier by the 13-member Olneyville Collaborative (it now has 21 members). The Collaborative organized a comprehensive neighborhood planning process in 2001 and 2002, which was supported by a grant from the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (now called Rhode Island Housing). Barbara Fields told us that much credit for that grant goes to Thom Deller, who then worked at Rhode Island Housing, in between stints at the City's Planning Department.

The government agencies and private-sector groups represented in this 2001-2002 planning were:

- Olneyville Housing Corporation
- Rhode Island LISC
- Providence Police Department
- Providence Planning Department
- Providence Parks Department
- Providence Inspection and Standards Department
- Providence Housing Authority
- Rhode Island Attorney General's Nuisance Abatement Task Force
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
- Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance

- Corporation (now Rhode Island Housing)
- Providence Weed and Seed
- The Steel Yard (a multi-use education and training center for metal work, ceramics and other creative and industrial arts housed in the historic Providence Steel and Iron building on the river)
- Struever Bros. Eccles and Rouse (a Baltimore-based developer)
- Fannie Mae Corporation
- Bank of America
- Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston
- United Way
- Olneyville Collaborative

These groups cared about conditions in Olneyville, and during this planning effort they were forging the capacity, working together, to translate their concerns and ideas into tangible improvements for Olneyville.

The presence of state organizations in this locally-focused revitalization collaborative is partly a function of Rhode Island's size and of the fact that Providence is the state capital. State officials, as well as the two United States Senators, take an active role in civic life in Providence, and local government and private-sector organizations that are successful in their work typically have good ties and working relationships with these officials and units of government. Moreover, as noted earlier, the Attorney General of Rhode Island has dual responsibility as a statewide official and as local prosecutor.

Participants in this planning effort focused, among other things, on a new nine-acre park (with a bike path and walking trail). The park would run between Aleppo Street on the north and the Woonasquatucket River on the south. Public agencies had already commenced the brownfield remediation and habitat restoration that would be necessary prior to park construction. A great deal of remediation was required: the river was badly polluted; and the several acres running between it and Aleppo Street were heavily contaminated by oil and other chemicals deposited there by Riverside Mills and by the fire which destroyed the complex in 1989. (Barbarisi, 2007I; Davis, 2006; Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, 2007)

The environmentally damaged former location of Riverside Mills is “the kind of site that any rational developer would just pass on by.” —OHC executive director Frank Shea, interviewed in *The Providence Journal* (Barbarisi, 2007l)

Public funding for the park and bike path had been won years earlier, thanks to advocacy by the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, as OHC’s Frank Shea told us in 2007:

“The new park south of Aleppo is part of a greenway that goes along the whole river from downtown Providence, where the Providence mall is. The bike path connects up with bike paths throughout the state. That was the genesis of the Olneyville accomplishments. It was an open space advocacy group—the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council—that said, ‘Here you have this river, which was an economic development generator for the neighborhoods a hundred years ago and even 50 years ago. And now it’s been abandoned because the mills have been abandoned. If you could

revitalize the river, and reopen the river to the community, it would bring open space and a lot of economic benefits to these neighborhoods.’

So they started to lobby for the creation of this bike path and the revitalization of the river. A new nine-acre park planned for Olneyville was a significant objective of this effort. The open space advocacy has exceeded anyone’s expectation because when you couple this with a generous historic preservation grant program—Rhode Island’s historic tax credit—there’s been an immense amount of construction in the three miles or so along this river between Olneyville and downtown Providence. Thousands of units of housing are being developed. The rediscovery of the river has been the fuel of all this.”

Rhode Island LISC staff, too, emphasized in our interviews the vital role played by the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council in developing Riverside Park and the greenway. Among other things, the Watershed Council helped secure funding and worked closely since 1994 with the Providence Parks Department and DOT on creating the Park and the Fred Lippitt Woonasquatucket River Greenway. The Watershed Council also played a key role in persuading the Streuver Bros. development firm to do significant revitalization work in Olneyville.

A crucial consensus: The Park will fail unless we address blight and crime in the area, and the Park can anchor Olneyville’s revitalization.

One significant need that emerged when the planning participants thought more comprehensively and deeply about the park during 2001 and 2002 was for a strategy for the swath between Aleppo Street and Manton Avenue, a main thoroughfare with a mix of commercial and residential properties. As Frank Shea explained, the planning groups reached broad agreement that the various visions for the park and a reclaimed river would be difficult to implement—and almost impossible to sustain—unless something dramatic was done about the crime and blight in the

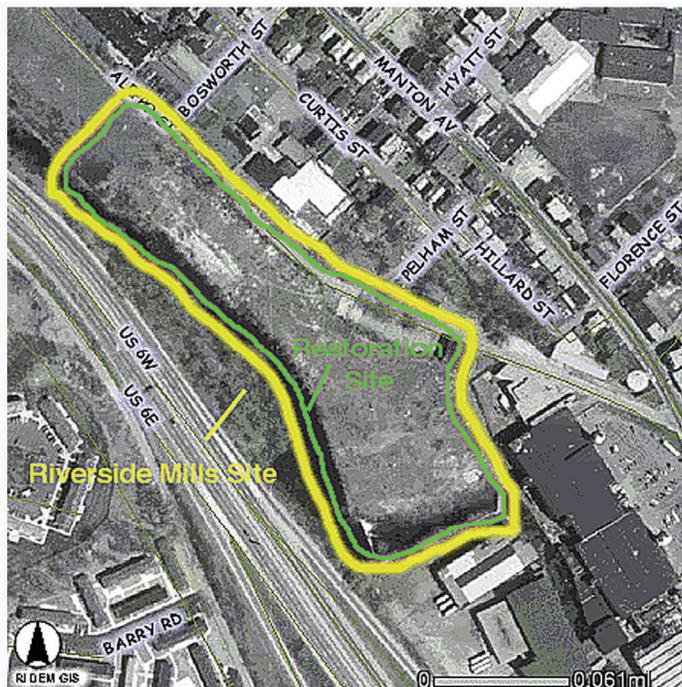


Figure 15. Riverside Mills site was slated for environmental restoration, followed by development of the new \$2.2 million Riverside Park.

area of Olneyville between Manton Avenue on the north and the River on the south. Without an aggressive development strategy for this crime-afflicted area, the participants realized, the transformative impact the park could have on the neighborhood—stimulating development of quality, affordable housing—would be lost and the public investment in the park wasted.

Thus, the groups began to plot how to develop the park and new housing in the area. They adopted a game plan that focused on the kind of development and programming which would bring resident engagement and 18 hour-a-day positive activity to the park and adjacent areas. “Eyes” on the park from residents of planned new residential units (sited predominantly on the vacant land on Aleppo facing the park) would be needed to work with the Police Department and the Parks Department to protect this investment. In short, their

separate developments, each targeted at different segments of low-income residents, which together would provide about 60 units of housing (Figures 16 and 17). Two of these developments were the Gateway project (with 31 residential rental units in 12 buildings and two commercial store fronts) and the Riverside Townhomes (which would convert the former brownfield site into 20 new townhouse condominiums for sale to first time homeowners, seven of which would face Aleppo and the park across the street). Both projects secured funding from a variety of public and private sources, including an EPA grant for environmental remediation through the Federal Brownfields program. (Barbarisi, 2007; Davis, 2006)

The third component of the Riverside initiatives called for transforming the former Riverside Mill office building into housing units for artists and space for community organizations, performances

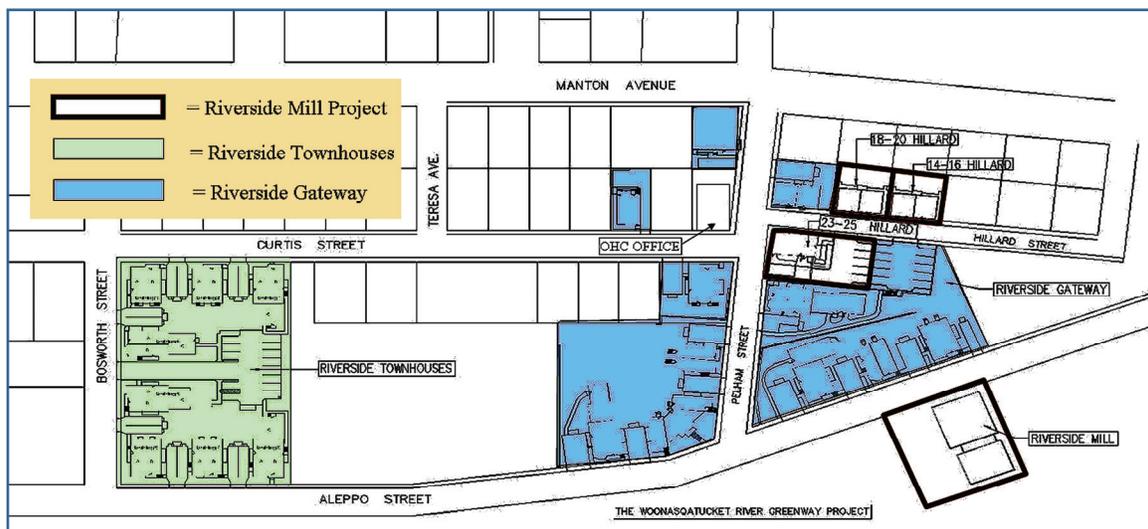


Figure 16. OHC's comprehensive revitalization plan—the Riverside Mill Project, Riverside Townhouses & Riverside Gateway.

strategy was that the new park and new residential units facing it would be mutually supportive, bolstering each other's value and safety.

A vision for new, affordable housing.

Thus a comprehensive plan emerged, according to which OHC (with substantial support from the Department of Planning) would develop new affordable housing overlooking the park and would renovate or replace existing problem properties nearby. Aleppo and intersecting streets would be transformed by the “Riverside initiatives”—three

and celebrations. According to the comprehensive plan, to be selected as tenants in this building, artists must demonstrate how they will engage neighborhood residents and park users—that is, how they will promote the park's transformative impact on the neighborhood.

Also according to plan, three historic worker cottages on Pelham and Hillard streets, originally built in the 1860s, will be rebuilt to provide homes for seven working families; and a large vacant site between a nearby public housing project and the



park will house 39 additional families. This project was scheduled to begin construction in 2008 and be completed by the end of 2009.

Innovative Property Acquisition Strategies Involving Law Enforcement

Building on the success of the earlier nuisance ab-

atement efforts—and drawing confidence and support from the commitment of the new mayor and new chief to innovative community problem-solving approaches—Fifth District police, Olneyville Housing Corporation staff, the Attorney General’s Nuisance Abatement Task Force and other stakeholders undertook a coordinated campaign to stop rampant criminal activity and code violations at the neighborhood’s worst hot spots. They did this to lay a foundation of safety and order on which OHC and the Park developers could build the core of a revitalized neighborhood.

Their concentrated efforts began around mid-2003 and (as we will illustrate later with public safety data) showed almost immediate results in calming the crime and calls for service in areas of greatest concern to the collaborating organizations.

Former District 5 Commander (promoted in November 2008 to Major) Hugh Clements recalled the stepped up enforcement efforts in Olneyville that he authorized not long after Dean Esserman took the helm as Chief in early 2003:

“Shortly after starting the decentralized District plan in early 2003, we intensified our approach on Manton Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood. When we first started, there was only the one patrol car for each shift on this car post. Almost immediately, we strengthened the manpower compliment to this lone post with two foot patrolmen and a two-man sector car. At times we would use an additional two-man sector car. Also,

weather permitting this additional unit would often-times take to bicycle patrol.

One of the major reasons for the success in this neighborhood was that we had great police manpower that had bid into District 5 for all three shifts. In the beginning, the officers were uncertain of the total community approach but almost instantly they ‘bought’ into it. I believe this happened because they began by attacking what police considered real crime problems.

With this added police presence we would provide a full array of police services to this needy community, but most importantly in the beginning were the blatantly obvious quality-of-life issues. These issues included open market drug dealing, assaults, robberies, public drinking, public urination, gang presence, etc. Our ‘zero tolerance’ approach to public disorder and quality-of-life problems took several forms. We kept constant pressure on the corner gangs, letting them know ‘It is no longer your corner.’ We let the drug dealers know, ‘It’s our street, time to shut down or move on elsewhere.’ Uniform officers made a ton of drug arrests as we started this approach. Every public drinker got arrested to send the message. And we continuously locked up offenders with outstanding warrants. The hookers, junkies and players on the corners never made their court appearances or paid their fines. ‘Every time you see a known player,’ we told our officers, ‘check them in the system, and arrest them where you can.’ We also made a lot of car stops. The message to District 5 personnel was, ‘Keep the blues and reds flashing. Let them feel our presence.’ Few of these players have a valid license or registration or pay their traffic fines. The tow operators loved the pressure we exerted. In the early days, the presence of the City tow trucks was almost as prevalent as patrol cars.

A task left unfinished or a situation that was carried into the next shift was communicated and addressed. We tried to have constant communication between the shifts. The sergeants in this district were without

question the key ingredient. We constantly had to work out the kinks and tweak our approach, but the officers on the street were enthusiastic about what they were slowly accomplishing. The offenders got the message, but we had to continue to maintain this presence and pressure.” (Clements, 2008)

In order to sustain such gains, achieved through heavy enforcement, *without the need for constant intensive police attention*, the police-developer partners set out to secure permanent site control of key problem properties in the neighborhood. This included Olneyville Housing Corporation’s acquisition of the area’s three most notorious crime hot spots.

In 2003, OHC used a variety of acquisition methods to begin assembling property for affordable housing on the park. It purchased property from private owners in traditional transactions, secured several City-owned properties, and gained City cooperation in foreclosing on tax titles and demolition liens.

For the three hot spot properties—the houses at 218-220 Manton Avenue, 63 Aleppo Street, and

“In Providence, when an abandoned house is rehabilitated, the nonprofit organization or the City...gains ownership over the parcel. The organization then has the ability to renovate and rent out apartments or to sell the whole house to a local homeowner. Importantly, there is now someone (or many people) who are charged with overseeing the property—the City, the nonprofit, a new homeowner—whereas when it was vacant, there was no one.” (Coletta, 2002)

23-25 Hillard Street—partnerships with public safety agencies proved critical to gaining site control. Starting in 2003, public safety agencies participated in discussions convened by the Providence Weed and Seed program. Police were invested in and understood the goals of the community planning process, so their cooperation came easily, according to local practitioners. The Rhode Island Attorney General’s Nuisance Abatement Task Force also emerged as a key asset, bringing con-

centrated efforts of several agencies to bear on negligent property owners. As we shall see, this attention both held owners accountable for operating their properties legally and effectively and persuaded some to sell their properties for redevelopment.

Acquiring and Transforming the Three Hot Spots

The Manton Avenue house. At this worst address in the neighborhood, during 2003 the Nuisance Abatement Task Force “hit the building very hard,” Frank Shea recalled, “bringing coordinated enforcement from every relevant city and state agency—Police, Fire, Building Inspection and the Attorney General’s office. The attention of the Task Force was drawn to the Manton Avenue building by Shea and then-Fifth District Commander Hugh Clements. “We asked for action by the Task Force,” Shea explained, “in the interests of our own peace of mind and self-preservation. This Manton address is a corner property on the main street in the neighborhood. It’s the first building people see coming up the hill, and it was a real menace in the neighborhood.”

Shea elaborated the impact of this one Manton Avenue building and steps that were taken to reverse those effects:

“This building is directly behind our office, and our conference room looks out on the back of it. So we saw close up and every day the activities that went on there. It was sort of an open house in the apartments. Anything was allowed to go on there. It became a big gathering spot. You’d regularly see people shooting up out the window. You’d see people defecating, people dealing—just everything. I’d walk out of my office and see two junkies sticking needles in their arms. So when the Nuisance Task Force hit the guy—who was an incompetent owner more than a malicious owner—they made him clean the property up and deal with all of his code activities. They had nine or 10 full dumpsters that got dropped off and filled. They took the windows out of the building and threw garbage out. It’s hard to imagine that a building that size had that many tires, hundreds of milk

crates, that much stuff they tossed out.

The Nuisance Task Force convinced the owner that selling the building was in his interest. At that point he evicted the problem tenants, and the building calmed down just prior to our buying it in December 2003. Once those tenants were gone, that building got better. But you couldn’t keep a building in that vacant state, so it needed renovation through our work.”

Converting the Manton building from a parasitic to symbiotic relationship with the neighborhood was a gradual process, requiring patience and persistence by the police, developers and other partners. The property’s criminal tenants were removed promptly at the end of 2003, but physical changes to the interior and exterior took several more years. Legitimate tenants moved back in during the fall of 2006. “So it took us a long time to get all of the pieces and the development scheme together for that building,” Shea said. He continued:

“The residential part upstairs was vacant for a number of years. The commercial units on the first floor were active until we got into construction. One of the two commercial tenants chose to move and we chose not to move them back. The guy had a strange business that didn’t make a lot of sense and wasn’t great about paying his rent. So when it was time for the relocation, we made that a permanent relocation. So now [July 2007] the four residential units upstairs are occupied, there’s one commercial business which was there before and has moved back, and our own staff is going to occupy the other retail space for about nine months while we’re building out a permanent space for ourselves. The commercial tenant who moved back does money transfers—basically people who want to send money to family in the Dominican Republic or Mexico or their country of origin go in there. He transfers the money, and there’s also a phone set up for people to call their families in their home countries. It’s not an ideal business for the location, but it’s not really predatory. He was a good tenant. It’s a very clean business. His lease has a lot of re-

strictions on predatory activities that he can't do."

Thus, the turnaround of 218-220 Manton, starting in mid-2003 and intensifying through the end of the year, would be a key building block in the process of revitalizing Olneyville. Besides being a fount of violence and fear in the neighborhood, the Manton property was a strategic target because, as Frank Shea noted, it was on a key corner—a gateway to the new park from a major thoroughfare. The quality of this Manton property, the partners concluded, could make or break the success of the park, which, in turn, could make or break the new housing lining the park.

The house on Hillard. 23-25 Hillard was the house Lt. Lepre characterized as so disgusting his officers hated to spend any time in there and got in and out as quickly as possible when handling calls. Shea concurred: "That house had a lot of traffic and a lot of activity—a lot of violence associated with it. That was such a nightmare of a property." Shea described the acquisition of this building and removal of its tenants:

"The property had recently changed hands. We had been negotiating with the realtor that was listing it, so we were in good touch with the whole process. The property was bought by a suburban guy who was some kind of financial manager looking to diversify his retirement portfolio. It's hard to imagine why the person thought this would be a good idea. But he purchased the property at his friend's, the realtor's, suggestion. The building had criminal activity in all three units that was out of control. One of the families was involved in prostitution, and the other family was involved in drugs pretty heavily. The basement tenant had a pretty active drug trade. There was constant traffic of people being there for 30-45 seconds at a time. With the attention of police enforcement activities, the suburban owner quickly determined that he was not up to the challenge of managing the three tenants. He sought out OHC to purchase the property and OHC did so in April 2004. The realtor had moved the families on, so when we purchased the property the first floor units were vacant."

Turning around problem properties often necessitates involuntary relocation of current tenants, a process which can be a cumbersome, slow, expensive and, at times, frustrating for developer-police teams. "The relocation rules are so crazy," Shea said, "that we have to assist the person and go through a process before we can have them move on without the ability to prove the drug dealing. The relocation benefits are pretty extensive. We have to pay 42 months of a difference in their rent. We have to help with moving expenses. Sometimes you're doing it with people that you know are drug dealers, which is kind of crazy. The person in the Hillard property just wouldn't give us any information or cooperate in any way. So it came down to, 'Okay, you just have to move so we can fix up this building'."

Aleppo Street. Lt. Bob Lepre assessed the neighborhood impact of the activities in and near 63 Aleppo:

"The family at Aleppo Street was involved in a lot of activity, whether it was at the house on Aleppo or the kids venturing out to all the areas of the neighborhood and committing various crimes. As they got a little older their crimes began getting a little more serious. Right at the property they were involved in some drug transactions. That was the only house on Aleppo Street, so Aleppo didn't really have any routine traffic. People went there to circle around to that house and Hillard to be involved in narcotics or prostitution. Right across from Aleppo was a wooded area. The park didn't exist at that time. There used to be all kinds of drug use going on over there. There was also a lot of illegal dumping out of Aleppo Street which used up DPW's resources. They would often get called to clean up the mess that was dumped in the middle of the street. The people at 63 Aleppo didn't call to try to stop this stuff; they were part of the problem."

Shea added: "It was a part of the neighborhood that everyone had given up on. It was disinvested. Everybody just said 'Forget about that piece of that street.' It was in thinking about the park coming that it became important to us. At that point, the City confronted the owner, and he was en-



Figure 18. Participants in the May 2-3, 2005 CPTED training studied data about the future site of Riverside Park. Over 40 police officers, architects, CDC staff, and government representatives met in a Fraternal Order of Police facility near the western end of the park site.

couraged to make this property available for OHC’s revitalization initiative.”

Olneyville Housing Corporation acquired 63 Aleppo in October 2004. As Shea reported, “There were two families that were living at 63 Aleppo. One left in December 2004 and the other left in March 2005. The family that was the biggest problem was the one that left in March 2005.” OHC was responsible for relocating the residents, and Shea noted that the relocation prompted some concern from police, just as the prior relocation of the Hillard house tenants did: “The lieutenant was a little mad because we’re obliged to assist families who cooperate with us and help them find other places to live. And in this case the lieutenant wished that we had found them a place anywhere but in his area in Providence!”

Thus did OHC, with key assistance from police and other City officials, succeed in gaining site control over—and altering activity at—the three worst properties in Olneyville. This site control would curtail a myriad of harms to the neighborhood—violence, drug deals, prostitution, illegal

dumping, public health and blight problems—in a much more durable and desirable way than police continually having to do heavy enforcement at and around the properties. But removing problems wasn’t enough. The OHC-police plan called for replacing these liabilities with assets—renovated or new affordable housing for low-income residents. The area’s full transformation through the Riverside initiatives would take time, however, which made the *sustainability* of a robust police-developer partnership vitally important.

Designing for Crime Prevention

One of the steps that helped maintain and deepen this partnership was the key stakeholders engaging in a process of careful analysis of how to design the park and new housing with an optimal balance of attractiveness and resistance to crime. This analysis was conducted in 2005, during the first focused Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) training program in Rhode Island. The “CPTED” term was coined in 1971 by Florida State University criminologist C. Ray Jeffery (Hunter, 2008), and the concept as

practiced by some planners, police and others has evolved over the years to include both “downstream” factors such as protective design of predetermined land uses and “upstream” issues such as land use choices intended to promote neighborhood safety and vitality. CPTED expert Gregory Saville, under the banners “Second Generation CPTED” (Cleveland and Saville, 2003a, 2003b) and “SafeGrowth” (Saville, 2008), has integrated CPTED’s focus on the physical environment with strategies to enhance revitalization through comprehensive community building on social and other dimensions.

The stated purpose of the 2005 CPTED working session in Providence was “to do neighborhood-scale problem solving to turn troubled areas around, prevent additional crimes from occurring, and foster a more vibrant, economically sound community.” The training was coordinated by the LISC Community Safety Initiative, with Providence-based Safety Coordinator Nancy Howard taking the lead in identifying and hiring an expert trainer, Arthur S. Hushen of the National Institute of Crime Prevention in Tampa, Florida. Funding came from national LISC’s CSI program and the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council.

More than 40 residents, police officers (from patrol officers to senior leadership), OHC staff, City staff, architects, planners and others met over two

days in May 2005 on the site of the planned housing and park. The participants each stated their foremost concerns. For instance, OHC wanted the police to safeguard their planned new housing against criminal incursions. The police wanted the value and condition of the new housing to be sustainable long term, lest the properties revert to crime hot spots. And the residents said their top goal was to remove the drug, prostitution and loitering problems that had troubled this part of Olneyville for so long.

As each priority was articulated, the participants came to realize that they had a number of common interests and that their individual needs could not be met efficiently or effectively unless they

“Riverside Park...has been laid out—the placement of lighting, paths and plantings—with security in mind, Shea said. Shrubbery has been configured, for example, in a way that minimizes hiding places for muggers.”
(Smith, 2007g)

teamed up and forged a joint agenda. As a result, the group concurred on a number of key findings:

- Aleppo Street should remain open to Bosworth Street (at the west end of the new Riverside Park site) and be well lighted.



Fig. 19. New Riverside Park site (between **Woonasquatucket River** and **Aleppo Street**, as well as the **Fraternal Order of Police meeting hall**). The FOP hall on Sheridan Street and new homes on Aleppo will have “eyes” on the Park and bike path. Police driving their beat along elevated parts of Aleppo Street will be able to see the entire park at a glance.

- All area streets should be well lit, with new sidewalks on finger streets leading to the park, creating a safe passage way from the Community School Program/Recreation Center to the planned Riverside Mills Park. The objective was to foster a perception of safety and promote synergy for after-school programming to take place.
- Park amenities should be dispersed throughout the park to foster “eyes on the park” in all areas.
- Activities should take place away from the road, providing a buffer from the play area and roadway to prevent kidnapping and accidents.
- Community gardens should be actively encouraged (a beautification measure as well as another way to enhance park use and surveillance during early evening hours).
- Larger windows and/or deck space should be added to the Fraternal Order of Police building (see Figure 19). (At the northwest end of the new park site, on Sheridan Street near King Street, is a modest social club/meeting space used by the Providence branch—Lodge 3—of this national police union. The thrust of this recommendation is to create the impression for bike path users that off-duty police officers in the facility are able to see the greenway, whether or not anyone is actually present in the club or glancing out the window. Former District 5 Commander Hugh Clements is a trustee—a board of directors member—of the national FOP.)
- The park should be well signed, with rules of the park and bikeway posted in English and Spanish.
- Bench design should not allow sleeping (for instance, by having an arm rest in middle of the benches).
- The partners should recruit a Boys and Girls Club or other active presence at the site, particularly to create a venue for after school activities.
- Focused police presence should begin during park construction to protect the site from theft and vandalism and to start sending the message that “the cops care about this place.”
- Remove the “cave”—the drug dealer/prostitute hangout mentioned earlier which was in a concealed area between the foundations of the casket warehouse on

- Aleppo Street facing the new park site.
- Graffiti should be directed to dedicated spaces, using a “graffiti board.” (Note the tactic of *channeling* rather than attempting to *stop* the youthful fad of tagging public spaces with graffiti.)
- RIPTA (public transit) connection to the park should be created.
- The planting plan for the park should be altered to include “thorn bushes...thickly along a retaining wall on the riverbank to discourage criminals from lurking there.” (Smith, 2007s; Smith, 2007g)
- Public bathrooms at the Riverside Mills building should be sited facing the street and the of-

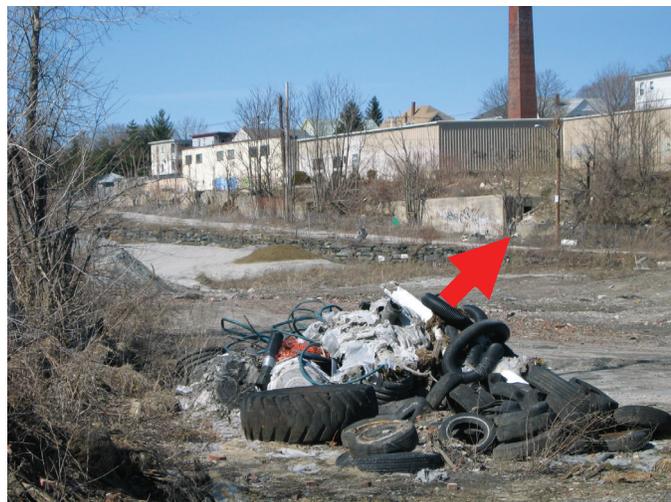


Figure 20. Above: “The cave” in its most active days (circa 2000). Below: The same location after Lt. Bob Lepre had a construction crew place a huge concrete block in front of the entrance to the cave in May 2005, ending its use for drug deals and prostitution. (2005 photo by Bill Geller)





Figure 21. Lt. Robert Lepre, when he was District 5 Commander, Providence Police Department

office reception spaces (rather than behind the building facing the park) to discourage misuse.

A quick win following the CPTED analysis was the immediate closure by the police of “the cave.” Frank Shea recalled admiringly that

Lt. Bob Lepre “dropped a boulder on it.” A news account elaborated: “Lt. Robert Lepre, commander of the local police district, and Sgt. Patrick Reddy saw to it



Figure 22. **Above:** Concrete block barring entrance to “the cave” on Aleppo Street (March 2008 photo by Geller). **Below:** Interior walls of the cave viewed through the small space above the concrete block (March 2008 photo by Providence Police Department Officer Ron Pino).

that ... [this] haven for drug dealers and prostitutes was made unusable. *** They had a worker building the park use his front-end loader to drop a boulder into place that served to block access to ‘the cave’. ‘Once we did that, the fun was over,’ Lepre said.” (Smith, 2007s)

The “boulder” actually was a hefty concrete block, about six feet long by two feet high and deep. Since concrete normally weighs about 150 pounds per cubic foot, Lepre’s “boulder” probably weighs about 3,600 pounds. (ConcreteNetwork.com, 2008) Detective Tom Masse recalled in a March 2008 conversation with Bill Geller that the entrance to the cave used to be about 3 feet square. “I’m not sure you could stand up in there, but there was a couch and a pretty large space inside,” he said.

Besides shutting the cave, all the other key recommendations and learnings from the CPTED training were applied to the development process. Beyond the very practical benefits for improved design, the training experience also served as a further opportunity to strengthen existing police-community bonds in the neighborhood.

In Tandem, Police and Community are Powerful Advocates

Those bonds were especially bolstered in the aftermath of the CPTED analysis as collaborators realized they had to persuade the City to reverse its decision to abandon a portion of Aleppo Street adjacent to the park (from Pelham to Bosworth). That stretch of Aleppo had been damaged and rendered impassible as a result of a construction error during the brownfield remediation. But repairing Aleppo, the City decided, was unaffordable after cost-overruns on addressing the park-site’s environmental contamination.

Police officers at the CPTED training realized that vehicle access to that portion of the street was important as patrol officers could see the whole nine acre site from the elevated portion near Bosworth Street. As Shea recalled, the officers were candid, saying it would be impractical for them to get out of their patrol cars and observe the park on foot, but if the street were rebuilt they could easily keep an eye on the park by driving along Aleppo during their regular rounds. Moreover, left as it was,

Aleppo was the kind of dead end, poorly patrolled street which invited loitering and more serious criminal activity. Beyond wanting the routine police presence to safeguard the park, OHC development staff also needed the Aleppo Street frontage to build new homes. And neighborhood residents concurred: additional affordable housing was much needed, and the whole area would be safer with vehicle access along the entire length of the park.

Accordingly, on the heels of the training, participants teamed up and engaged in a focused lobbying campaign to reverse the City's decision. OHC executive director Frank Shea described why the campaign succeeded:

"I spend a lot of my time harping to the City about resources. But this time I and others were harping to the City saying, 'We had this CPTED process, we had this expert come in, we had all these people in the room, the police being the significant piece. And the police said this was key to the success of this park. It wasn't just me saying, 'We need this to be able to build our houses.' Now the message was, 'We've looked at this because we want to be able to be sure this park is safe and successful. The police say that this is a key element.' That was the difference. We definitely need to give [Rhode Island LISC executive director] Barbara Fields credit. I think every time she saw any City official with any impact over this—which was probably every day—she would say to somebody from the City, 'What are you doing about Aleppo Street?' And Barbara can be pretty effective doing that."

Fields recalled part of what she told government officials at the time: "I know you have a long list of roads that need repair, but what other road construction project besides this one is going to unleash a \$10 million public and private investment in new, affordable housing?" Among the additional arguments the advocates made to the City was that Aleppo's reconstruction would protect the investments in the new park and housing by enabling easy, free or inexpensive surveillance of the area by residents and police.

This lobbying effort took six to nine months, but, as Shea put it, "confronted with this broad group arguing for the same outcome, the City Planning Department identified resources to reopen that portion of the street." Rhode Island LISC's Barbara Fields adds that a key ingredient in the success of this advocacy effort was a sympathetic ear from the head of the Providence Department of Planning and Development, Thom Deller, who had a long history, with different agencies, of supporting revitalization in neighborhoods like Olneyville. (see *The Agenda*, summer 2006) Shortly after the decision was made to spend the money to rebuild the street, the necessary construction began. (see Smith, 2007s; Davis, 2006)

The coalition's success in saving Aleppo as a drivable street, opening opportunities for new affordable housing and a sustainably attractive and useful park, is testament to the power of joint advocacy—a tactic

used in a variety of police-community developer collaborations around the nation. For instance, in Seattle's Chinatown-International District more than a decade ago, Police Officer Tom Doran neatly captured his new-found power

when, alongside his neighborhood developer colleagues, he approached negligent landlords, irresponsible convenience store owners, and powers-that-be in City Hall: "They could ignore any one of us if we approached individually," he said. "But now they'd have to try telling *both of us* 'no'." In Olneyville, without this police-developer advocacy, the chain of events that produced a neighborhood turnaround would have stopped at the dead end on Aleppo Street. The combined critical thinking and networking of the partners enabled them to use state-of-the-art approaches, such as in their design of Riverside Park. (see, e.g., Hilborn, 2009)

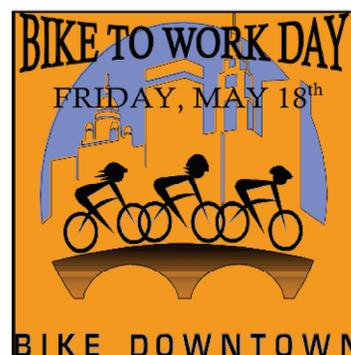


Figure 23. Poster for Providence's participation in National Bike to Work Day, 5/18/07. The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, champion of reviving the River and its environs, organized riders for the event.

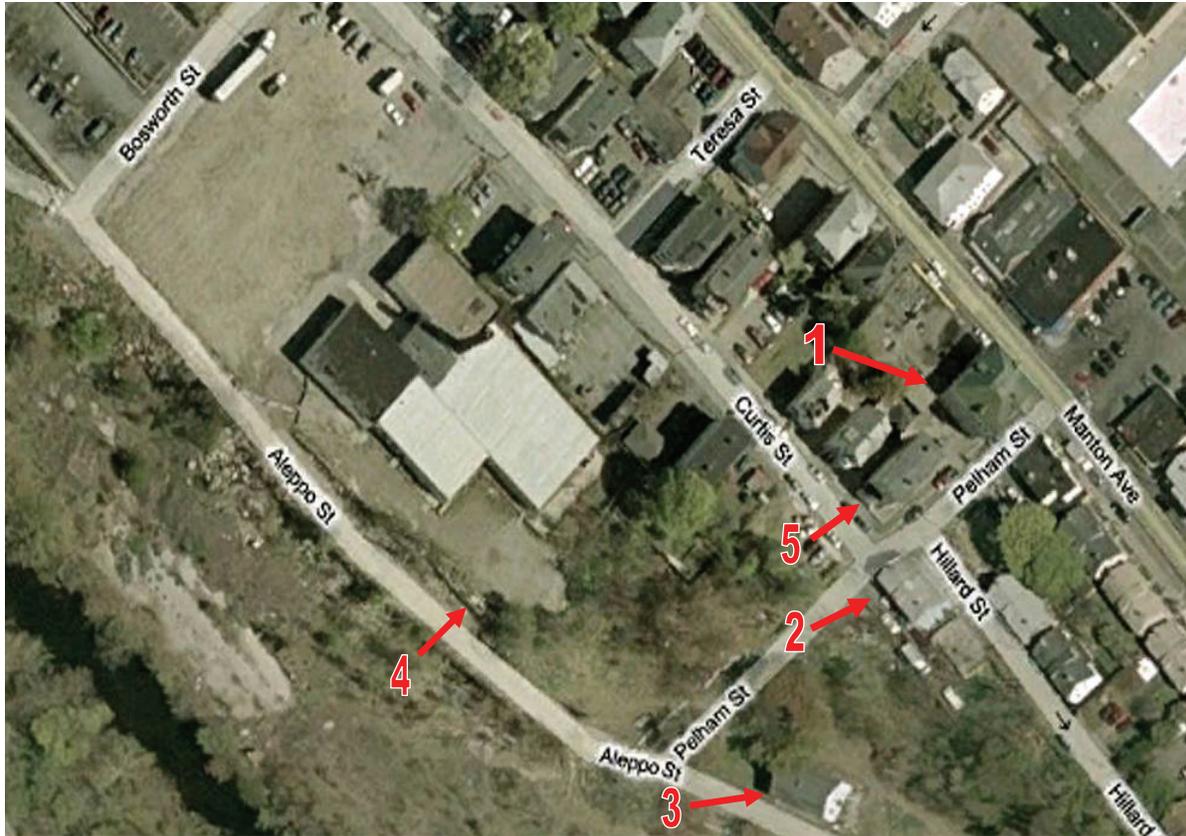


Figure 24. **Above:** Hot spots area before home and park construction: (1) 218-220 Manton; (2) 23-25 Hillard; (3) 63 Aleppo; (4) “the cave” in damaged foundation of casket warehouse; (5) OHC’s first floor office at 1 Curtis St. The brownfield which would be converted to Riverside Park lies between Aleppo and the Woonasquatucket River and between Pelham and slightly west of Bosworth. **Right:** The same area, hot spots and OHC’s Office, showing greater elevation on the buildings.



Award-Winning Design Assistance for Further Development in the Area

OHC's implementation of its development plan would result in dozens of new, affordable housing units. Adding still more impetus to OHC's forward motion in the neighborhood was the good news, in 2006, that OHC was selected to participate in the Citizens Housing and Planning Association/Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston Affordable Housing Development Competition. An inter-disciplinary team of Harvard and M.I.T. architecture, design, planning, finance and public policy students crafted a design of an affordable development project for the last remaining parcels in the area that are still in need of revitalization. Their design won the competition, and as of early 2008 OHC is pursuing an acquisition strategy for the properties covered by this plan.

A Donation Spurs Community Involvement in Building the Park

Park construction, too, was further jump-started in 2006—by a donation from Struever Brothers, Eccles & Rouse, the Baltimore-based developer that was doing work in Olneyville. The Baltimore firm sponsored a James Rouse Community Service Day at Riverside Park (Smith, 2007s), citing the mission of “turning our face back to the river” and serving as “stewards of the river.” (Barbarisi, 2007t) Jim Rouse, in whose memory the service day was named, was the founder of a major development company and of the national Enterprise Foundation (now called Enterprise Community Partners)—the nation's second largest community development umbrella organization after LISC.

In September 2006, more than 300 volunteers installed 1,000 trees and other plantings, built a canoe launch, set up creative mile markers fashioned by local artists along the bike path, painted bike racks, and removed invasive plants. A sculpture was made from debris removed from the river—with a collection of junk to choose from that included shopping carts, car batteries, tires, refrigerators, and sofas. (Davis, 2006; Barbarisi, 2007t) And the following year, the fifth annual Rouse Community Service Day drew another 250 volunteers—including police officers, residents, public officials, and housing developers—who focused

on building a playground and community garden in the new Riverside Park at 50 Aleppo Street. (*Providence Journal*, 2007k) Because of a safety-first orientation toward the kids and adults who use the park, eventually the sponsors of the river junk sculpture opted to remove it from the park. The program director of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council said the sculptor had “welded together debris” and “created a fish out of mainly shopping carts. We decided it was a little to dangerous to keep permanently in the park.” (Aurecchia, 2009)

Some Concerns along the Way over Neighborhood Gentrification

As often happens in revitalizing neighborhoods, community stakeholders in Olneyville hold diverse opinions about whether the nature and amount of revitalization are completely positive. Dealing with the criticisms some people expressed of Olneyville's redevelopment has required adroit political and organizing skills, persistence, and pragmatism on the part of those collaborating on the redevelopment and community safety efforts.

Some vocal detractors of parts of the Olneyville development plans—especially mixed-income housing development to be done by the Struever Bros., Eccles & Rouse firm—expressed concern about gentrifying Olneyville over the past several years. (Barbarisi 2007m; Barbarisi, 2007r)

A colorful dustup illustrative of this dissent involved an artist who had been commissioned to create public art (several decorated, functional trash cans). This sculptor (not the river debris artist), who had founded a blacksmithing program at the Steel Yard, ended up surprising her benefactors—including OHC—by adorning one of the green and white cans with the proclamation: “In the beginning of the 21st century, with the financial and political support of the City of Providence, private developers purchased much of the industrial property in Olneyville, creating luxury living in the city's poorest neighborhood.” (Barbarisi, 2007p) When this protest can was canned by the revitalization team, some artists' groups, neighborhood residents, the Olneyville Neighborhood Association, the ACLU and others jumped into the fray, angrily alleging censorship and class warfare. A *ProJo* story said the community dis-

sension over the display of the cans and the underlying concerns about gentrification serve as “a reminder that nothing is simple lately in Olneyville.” (Barbarisi, 2007p; see also Dujardin, 2007b; Barbarisi, 2007v; Barbarisi, 2007u)

At the end of the day, however, there was sufficiently broad buy-in for the redevelopment plans—including from the *Providence Journal*, which decried “trash talk on trash cans” (Editorial, 2007d)—that the revitalization agenda proceeded despite some objections. (Barbarisi, 2007s) As noted earlier, for its part, Olneyville Housing Corporation is committed to maintaining the long-term affordability of its housing, and placed provisions in its real estate sales contracts to accomplish this result.

Building Sustainable Revitalization and Safety Partnerships: Toward a New Way of Doing Business

Making and safeguarding substantial change depends on a persistent commitment of resources, leadership and tactical know-how. In many communities it is difficult to muster the needed concentration of interest and assets for long enough to make a real difference. But Providence has benefited over the past several years from a critical mass of leadership—by Mayor David Cicilline, Police Chief Dean Esserman, Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields, Olneyville Housing Corporation Executive Director Frank Shea, the Rhode Island Attorney General, Providence’s and Rhode Island’s Congressional delegation, and a number of others in the public and private sectors. Their combined determination and savvy has helped forge a variety of formal and informal arrangements that constitute a growing infrastructure for durable police-developer collaboration.

The formal (or structural) components include the appointment of *police* officials to governance roles in the *community development* arena and the service of *developers* in policy roles in *public safety* consortiums. For instance, as indicted earlier, the Providence Police District 5 commander serves on the OHC board of directors, and OHC executive director Frank Shea is Vice Chair of the

Providence Weed and Seed program. It is noteworthy that in some cities where police-community collaboration is strongly endorsed, police nevertheless are forbidden to serve on community organization boards. In Providence, however, this practice is embraced and encouraged as a way to build communication, trust and effectiveness in solving problems. As of early 2008 police were serving throughout the City on a variety of neighborhood organizations’ governing boards and committees (Smith, 2008c), perhaps a reflection of the value Chief Esserman has found over the years from his own participation on the boards of several non-law enforcement organizations. Another key structural element is having a full-time, paid Safety Coordinator—Nancy Howard—supported by a very active national LISC Community Safety Initiative technical assistance provider, Lisa Belsky.

Such board appointments, staffing and consultant engagements occur and persist because of the priorities and principles of the community’s public safety, development and political leaders. Within a couple of months of assuming his job as Providence Police Chief at the beginning of 2003, Dean Esserman told us how he saw community development corporations fitting into his strategy for improving public safety and community well-being:

“We need partners like CDCs. The stronger the community is, the closer we all get to achieving our goals. A key problem for neighborhoods is absentee landlords. CDCs are the exact opposite of that. Here we are talking about community investments in their own community. People have a vested interest; they are committed physically to where they are. In the nine weeks I’ve been in Providence, I’ve gone to sometimes two community meetings a night, but it’s been an extraordinary education for me. I keep on hearing the same things. No one is talking about the City of Providence. Rather, everyone is talking about his or her neighborhoods. Their passions are all about where they live. There can be no greater motivation than to invest yourself in a community where you live.”

The Chief also opined how helpful it would be if

many police employees were deeply dedicated to improving neighborhoods:

“We should think about police becoming part of the neighborhood. I’ve always wrestled with residency requirements and residency incentives, and I hope there would be motivation for them to say, ‘I would like to be part of this myself.’ But maybe in a less dramatic example than moving into a neighborhood, I would hope that officers would be allowed to really spend time in a community and would realize the tremendous sense of accomplishment in seeing a neighborhood so different than when they first started a project or began key relationships a year, two or three years ago. There is a sense of pride that they labored and can now see what they built and accomplished. That is something that is so needed in police culture—to be able to hold up high accomplishments that aren’t quick, meritorious or heroic ‘chases and grabs,’ but rather are long-term, hard working and sustained efforts that help the community build itself. Maybe one day, one of those commendations or merit badges for police officers on their chests would be the ‘LISC commendation’.”

Importantly, Esserman arrived in Providence well aware that many police might find the cultural adjustment to working actively with community developers somewhat challenging:

“I think there are going to be tremendous internal issues because the organizational culture will have difficulty embracing it. Supervisors and managers are used to supervising and managing things they can quantify. They will have a difficult time knowing how to support this. I can see officers not feeling strong support and encouragement from their supervisors because not only do they not really understand it, they also have not experienced it. It may be a totally new concept for the Police Department and unfortunately, perhaps only a few new officers on the ground have seen its value firsthand.”

Developing a new collaborative approach at the operating level of the Department

One of those on the ground who, as we have indicated, saw firsthand the benefits of mutual assistance between police and community developers was Officer Tom Masse. In fact, his contributions during 2002 and 2003 helped the Olneyville/ Providence Weed and Seed Program win the 2003 MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award. Among many other things, as noted earlier, Tom used his seat on the Rhode Island Attorney General’s Nuisance Abatement Task Force to make Olneyville’s problems a top priority for the Task Force. And he helped considerably streamline the nuisance complaint process by which residents could get the City to address neighborhood nuisances. Not surprisingly, “Such enhanced results [helped] repair residents’ feelings of distrust towards the police and... positively [reinforced] their participation in their community’s revitalization.” (Community Safety Initiative, 2004)

As noted, much of Masse’s trailblazing work preceded the arrival in town of new Chief Dean Esserman, and until that time Masse was often bucking the system, as an earlier LISC publication described:

“[O]ne of his many challenges was trying to make sense of the mixed signals from headquarters. At first he found himself adrift in the neighborhood as the community policing division to which he was assigned was dismantled around him. (Tom’s beat was maintained because Olneyville was a Weed and Seed site, and the contract required it.) At the time, the community was disconnected, institutionally, from the community. As a result, as PPD Major Paul Fitzgerald put it, ‘Masse was isolated. That was the biggest hurdle. *** [B]ut with Fitzgerald (then his lieutenant) ... willing to create space for him to try new approaches, Masse began to explore how he might begin to help the Olneyville neighborhood.’ After considerable talking with people in the neighborhood about what could be done to address Olneyville’s crime and blight challenges, Masse began to take a leader-

ship role in bringing diverse stakeholders together. ‘Lt. Hugh Clements, who would become patrol commander two years later and build on the foundations that Masse established, said, ‘Tommy became a neighborhood driver’.’ (Jordan and Davis, 2007)

Situations in which police officers like Tom Masse go against the grain of their own organization’s culture and bureaucracy to more effectively thwart crime often prove to be both exhilarating and exhausting experiences for the trailblazers. A Harvard University (Kennedy School of Government) case study of groundbreaking police-community developer collaboration in New York City and Seattle observed that, notwithstanding strong leadership at the top of the police departments (in the NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton and in the Seattle PD Chief Norm Stamper), the officers most directly engaged in boundary spanning between participating organizations sometimes become “guerillas in the bureaucracy.” (Thacher, 2000) But without top level and mid-management support, the street-level trailblazers may find their efforts far more exhausting than exciting.

In the early years of trying to institutionalize a new, collaborative problem-solving way of doing police business, clear and consistent support is needed as well from the city’s political leadership. The durability of the OHC-police collaboration over the past several years owes much to the leadership of Chief Dean Esserman and his key unit commanders (backed enthusiastically and openly by Mayor David Cicilline), whose belief in robust problem-solving partnerships drives resource commitments and incentives for officer participation.

A prime example of Chief Esserman and his team building a collaborative program at the operating level of the Department is the partnership between the PPD and Family Service of Rhode Island—a partnership which has both provided improved crime-prevention services to Olneyville and fostered the po-

lice-community trust that has been so vital to the launching and maintenance of a robust partnership between police and other neighborhood-rooted organizations such as CDCs. Major Hugh Clements, who served as District 5 Commander in the early years of Chief Esserman’s tenure in Providence, described the close working relationship between Family Service and the PPD:

“In early 2003, when we first started the decentralized ‘District’ approach in the neighborhoods within the city and specifically District 5, Family Service offered a case worker to ride along with police officers on their daily patrols.

District 5 immediately embraced the idea, and Carla Cuellar—the liaison from Family Service—began to ride with officers in the Olneyville District on the 3:00-11:00 pm shift (Out-First Shift). Prior to this relationship we would respond to a call of violence, take a report and look for the suspects to arrest. As we would leave, officers would see the torment and pain in the victims’ eyes. Through Carla, this early relationship allowed this social service agency to inter-



Figure 25. At the PPD’s Senior Staff Retreat in March 2008, Family Service of Rhode Island staff members present Chief Esserman with a certificate of appreciation for the PPD’s collaboration with their agency. The staff (L-R) are Carla Cuellar, Coordinator of the Providence Police Go-Team for Family Service, and Susan Erstling, Ph.D, Senior Vice President of the Trauma Intake and Emergency Services Department of the agency.

vene with families who had been caught up in violence and other crimes. She assisted on most every type of call including serious home invasions, robberies, and domestic violence situations.

Carla rode Monday through Friday nights, and the officers in the District came to rely heavily on her assistance. The residents of this neighborhood were needy in many ways, and Carla's assistance in the early days of District 5 certainly contributed to the success the officers and the district were able to accomplish. She initially patrolled predominantly in the Olneyville section of the city (Car Post 5-1), but soon after branched out to other car posts in District 5 and later throughout the whole city. Presently, Carla shows up at roll calls and is given an assignment as to what car post she will be on patrol with. When officers encountered a particular situation requiring on-scene crisis intervention, it quickly became routine for them to broadcast over the police radio for assistance from Carla, who is Coordinator of the Providence Police 'Go-Team' for Family Service.

This alliance and relationship augmented everything we were trying to accomplish in the neighborhoods. This professional organization immediately provided services that, quite frankly, were not the responsibility of the police and that the police are unable to provide. However, it is a service that has taken the burden away from the police agency and has delivered huge dividends within the community." (Clements, 2008)

Until collaborative approaches are institutionalized, they will be highly vulnerable to changes in organizational leadership

Embedding robust collaboration with communities deeply into the operating routines and ethos of any police organization can take many years. That is partly because large police agencies are complex organizations with powerful incentives and means to resist change. It is also partly because

the *mechanisms* for institutionalizing and mandating routine use of productive public safety-community development partnerships are not yet well defined, refined and bureaucratically enshrined.

Steps toward institutionalizing this kind of collaboration: Performance-drivers and recruitment of officers with an affinity for team problem-solving

One of the steps that is needed in numerous jurisdictions, if community development *strategies and resources* are to be embedded in the *routine* decision-making and deployment mechanisms of police agencies, is a tweaking of police Compstat-like systems. That tweaking would support user-friendly monitoring for opportunities for *development* to advance police objectives, coupled with a management system for police and their development compatriots (and other stakeholders) to track police engagement with developers, development progress, and public safety outcomes.

Until such institutionalization of the public safety-community development strategy occurs, a significant change in police leadership—for example, if Dean Esserman were succeeded by a chief who rejected his methods—could unravel the threads of partnership painstakingly woven by officers and community development practitioners. To be sure, as we have seen in a number of cities, a new chief trying to undo a popular community policing program may have to weather a storm of protest from neighborhood groups and their political representatives, community developers, police officers and perhaps editorial writers. But if the new top cop has sufficient political backing, as we see in locales where elected officials and opinion-shapers ridicule community partnerships as ineffectual and inefficient and call for a return to enforcement-dominated approaches, effective problem-solving partnerships can indeed be crippled or shut down.

Police-developer partnerships could be undermined not only by a new chief but also by new leadership in the community development organizations. A successor to Barbara Fields as Rhode Island LISC executive director or to Frank Shea as



Figure 26. The 2003 MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award ceremony in Providence, celebrating the work of the Olneyville/Providence Weed & Seed Program. L-R: Lt. Hugh Clements, Chief Dean Esserman, Detective Tom Masse, Providence Weed & Seed coordinator Melanie Wilson, President and CEO of MetLife Foundation Sibyl Jacobson and Mayor David N. Cicilline.

Olneyville Housing Corporation head could decide to stop investments in working closely and respectfully with police and other public safety practitioners.

Besides Compstat-like performance drivers, another basic change that may help grow productive innovation throughout police workforces is a shift in employee recruitment criteria. Scrivner (2006) emphasizes recruitment for the spirit of service rather than, as scholar Egon Bittner put it some years ago, “a spirit of adventure.” While a general service orientation is important, a conversation we had recently with two field leaders of the Providence Police Department underscored our belief that recruitment of a particular type of service-oriented person—the natural problem-solver—is vitally important.

In separate conversations with Major Hugh Clements and Lt. Dean Isabella, the former and current commanders, respectively, of District 5 and both close collaborators with Olneyville Housing Corporation, we put the question: Suppose all 480 of the PPD’s sworn officers were lined up on one side of a gymnasium and you and Frank Shea made a clear, fact-filled, five-minute presentation to them about how the cops and developers worked together in Olneyville and what you accomplished in cutting crime and revitalizing the

neighborhood. If we then said to the group, “Anyone who thinks the police participation in this partnership was valuable—was ‘real police work’—walk to the other side of the gym,” what percentage of the cops do you think would cross?

Clements estimated about 30-40%. We asked who they would be, and he said probably mostly the officers who had worked in districts where this kind of collaboration has been going on in a deep way. Isabella was less sanguine on the numbers and differed in his explanation for who would express approval. He said about 20-30% of the sworn personnel would cross the gym and speculated they would be cops who, by personality, are natural problem solvers, both on the job and in their personal lives. Simply working in a district which is a hotbed of innovative problem-solving collaboration, Isabella thought, would not influence cops who sought work that was more routine than what creative problem-solving requires.

Combining Clements’ and Isabella’s educated guesses about their colleagues, we think the implications for police leaders striving to diffuse innovation throughout their departments and city governments is to experiment with doing what both of these hard-working PPD leaders suggest. Thus, we urge experimentation with recruiting new employees using an effective screen for prob-



Figure 27. The Providence Police Department and Rhode Island LISC co-sponsored a colloquium on March 1, 2006 at the Police Department to highlight the strategic importance of police-developer partnerships. Among the thought leaders in the conversation were (L-R) Paul Grogan, President of the Boston Foundation and former LISC national President; LAPD Chief Bill Bratton; Rhode Island LISC Board Chair Manny Vales; and Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields.

lem-solving appetite and talent, as well as watching carefully as these new employees are trained and then put to work to see who benefits deeply from opportunities to observe and engage in robust, cross-functional problem-solving teamwork.

Building local and national support for continued progress in Providence

Well aware of the need to keep widening and deepening the pool of support for productive problem-solving partnerships in Providence, local police and development leaders have been shrewd about using good publicity as a motivator. Sometimes such attention has come from inviting national public safety and development leaders to visit and comment publicly on local activities. An example of this approach was a forum on community safety as a key ingredient of neighborhood revitalization, held in March 2006 as part of Rhode Island LISC's 15th anniversary celebrations. This session was held at Police Headquarters (the Public Safety Complex) and featured talks by Bill Bratton and Paul Grogan—coauthors of the foreword to *Building Our Way Out of Crime*. Bratton is Los Angeles Police Chief and a mentor to Dean Esserman; he was also Esserman's boss several years ago when Bratton served as Chief and Esserman as General Counsel at the

New York City Transit Police Department. Paul Grogan is President of the Boston Foundation, former national LISC President and a current advisory board member for LISC's national Community Safety Initiative. (Smith, 2006a)

Another example of using national policing experts to guide and reinforce progress in Providence was Chief Esserman's inviting problem-oriented policing architect Professor Herman Goldstein to visit Providence and see the kinds of problem-solving approaches the Department had been using. Fortuitously, Goldstein's visit coincided with a November 2007 MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award ceremony honoring police-OHC accomplishments. After the

event, Goldstein told a reporter: "What has occurred in Olneyville, in many respects, is a 'perfect example' of problem-oriented policing.... Rather than repetitively respond to crimes at the dens of prostitution and drug-peddling and prosecute their habitués in the criminal justice system, according to problem-oriented policing, it is much preferable to eliminate those dens." (Smith, 2007r) In problem-oriented policing terms, as Herman Goldstein put it to Bill Geller some years earlier, the problem being addressed here is community disintegration, and the response is multi-dimensional community development and production of safety.

Other initiatives also are helping to sustain the idea of police-community partnerships for public safety in Providence. For instance, Chief Esserman has sought to promote transparency, public accountability, problem-solving collaboration, and stakeholder support for his Department by inviting a variety of non-police to sit in on his Tuesday morning command staff meetings. "[F]or the first time in the history of the Providence P.D.," a reporter for *Rhode Island Monthly* wrote in 2007, Esserman has invited "social service agencies [typically, Family Service of RI social workers], out-of-town law enforcement experts, ... clergy ... and even reporters into the inner sanctum of his weekly command staff meetings where his

leadership style—a sometimes combustible mixture of Donald Trump’s candor and the probing questions of Socrates—is on full display.” Another regular attendee at these staff meetings is “a representative from the state’s probation department.” (Taricani, 2007) The attendance at PPD senior staff meetings of a Family Service of Rhode Island representative provides important support for the street-level collaboration between officers and social worker Carla Cuellar and her agency.

We attended one of the Chief’s command staff meetings, to which he had invited Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields to brief the group on her organization’s capabilities and willingness to work with the Department for neighborhood improvement. Fields took full advantage of the opportunity and made a succinct, dollars-and-sense PowerPoint presentation that seemed to us to leave little doubt among the Department’s key leadership that the police would do well, in pursuing their core mission, to embrace increasingly robust partnerships with the commu-

nity development industry in Providence.

The Chief’s support for sustaining partnerships shapes command staff practices

Having a strong police chief who is vocal about his support for useful police-community developer collaborations—bolstered by locally and nationally influential supporters—helps ensure police follow-through on partnership obligations. The chief’s beliefs also produce forward motion notwithstanding the inevitable reassignment every couple of years of key police players in these collaborations, as Frank Shea and Lt. Bob Lepre noted when we interviewed them in 2007. “When Esserman came to Providence,” Shea said, “the police learned that there should be a smooth transition from one police manager to the next in working with OHC. It became clear that you get ahead in the Police Department by working with a CDC.” Shea and Lepre explained that they did not know each other before Lepre was promoted to Lieutenant and put in charge of District 5 in early



Figure 28. The Providence police officers who, in their District 5 assignments, led the PPD’s collaboration with Olneyville Housing Corporation. At a March 2008 PPD Senior Staff Retreat, they lined up in the sequence they served in the Fifth District. All have been promoted in the past several years. Their assignments and ranks during their close work with OHC were (L-R): Officer Tom Masse, Commander Hugh Clements, Commander Robert Lepre, and current District 5 Commander Dean Isabella (who previously served as a sergeant in that district under then-Lieutenants Clements and Lepre). (Photo-Geller)

2005, but the Lieutenant learned from his predecessor (Lt. Hugh Clements) that it would be useful to get to know and work with Shea.

Clements made clear during his tenure as commander of District 5 how practical he found the police-community developer working relationship. He frequently told his officers the same thing he told attendees at a Providence PD command staff meeting some years ago: “Working with CDCs makes our job easier.” He and Tom Masse, as a LISC write up reported, could “cite off the top of their heads (with quiet pride) tens of millions of dollars in private investment capital and grant funds that have flowed into the Olneyville neighborhood and its adjacent old mill district as a direct result of the police-community developer partnership.” (Jordan and Davis, 2007)

So it was no surprise that Lt. Clements told his successor that OHC was a resource to take very seriously. “Hugh took me around when I got promoted to lieutenant and introduced me to a lot of people in the neighborhood,” Bob Lepre said.

“He introduced me to Frank at a neighborhood meeting when Frank was doing a presentation for this whole new project. I was very happy to hear which houses they were going to refurbish and build. I was in the drug unit before, and I had a lot of experience with the Hillard Street house, executing search warrants and purchasing drugs. Knowing what the area was, I was excited to see the plans ... because I knew all the attention that we paid over here. The police did active drug and prostitution enforcement in the area between Aleppo and the river during 2004.”

On his introduction by Lt. Clements to Frank Shea in 2005, new District Commander Bob Lepre struck a note that was most reassuring to Shea, saying simply, “Your project will make a huge difference in what I’m doing.” Lepre never wavered from that perspective. Interviewed by a City of Providence on-line newsletter in February 2007, the District Commander listed the “really strong, active groups that help us do our job—like reducing crime.” The first two on his list were Olneyville Housing Corporation and the Olneyville Collaborative (for which OHC is fiscal agent and

convener). Asked by the article’s interviewer “What would you want to see happen in the future for your district?” Lepre replied: “I would like to reduce the amount of absentee landlords. *** [I]f we can address this problem, we’d have a more solid resident population, more properties in our district would be further maintained, we’d take away the appearance of disorder, improve the quality of life for residents, and keep crime at a low.” (*Providence City News*, 2007)

Frank Shea reflected further in early 2008 on the durability of his police-developer collaboration over the past half dozen years, notwithstanding the transfers and promotions of several key police partners:

“It is funny how when we lost Tom Masse [after several years patrolling Olneyville he was promoted to Detective and transferred to a new assignment in May 2003], we thought it was the end of the world. But we have been fortunate to get some really great individuals to follow in Hugh Clements, Bob Lepre and now [since December 2007] Dean Isabella [each as District 5 commander]. Dean Isabella, in addition to having been a sergeant in the neighborhood for more than five years, also grew up here. He participated in the CPTED process [in Olneyville] and he, Nancy Howard and I presented at the international CPTED conference in July [2007]. He really gets what we are doing and how it all fits. But this really works because structurally our work is so complementary. With support from the top (Mayor and Chief), it will succeed because our work makes it possible for them to reach their community policing goals and vice versa.”

As further evidence of the Chief’s and command staff’s (and the Providence development community’s) widespread and ever-deepening belief in the power of multi-party collaborations featuring police and community developers, a recent exciting accomplishment to gain high visibility is in the PPD’s Second District (led until recently by Commander George Stamatakos). It involves significant crime reduction and community revitalization along an entire block, Parkis Avenue, in Providence’s Elmwood neighborhood. Key par-

ticipants in the project are community residents; District 2 officers; the Probation Division of the State Department of Corrections; CommunityWorks Rhode Island (a new CDC led by Cynthia Langlykke and established through the merger of two CDCs—Greater Elmwood Neighborhood Services and The Elmwood Foundation—Rhode Island LISC, 2008d); Rhode Island LISC (especially Executive Director Barbara Fields and Community Safety Coordinator Nancy Howard); LISC’s national Community Safety Initiative (where extensive technical assistance has been provided by Lisa Belsky); and The Providence Plan (which has contributed its distinctive expertise in data compilation and analysis).

Together, according to CommunityWorks Rhode Island (CWRI), this team has produced remarkable improvements by “acquiring practically a full street of run-down residences that had become an open-air drug and prostitution market.” This “Parkis/North Elmwood Revitalization” project is “a five-year redevelopment investment of approximately \$25 million, 100 affordable housing units, and 50 construction jobs, all designed to

make historic Parkis Avenue an asset to the neighborhood and an affordable and family-friendly place to live.” (Greater Elmwood Neighborhood Services, 2008)

It wasn’t only CWRI which saw its accomplishments as noteworthy. The CDC was honored in 2008, along with their police and other partners, when the MetLife Foundation announced the group would receive the \$25,000 top prize in the annual MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award (see Figure 29). Speaking at the October 20, 2008 MetLife Foundation Award ceremony on a sunny fall day that showed off the beautiful housing restorations to great advantage, Rhode Island Executive Director Barbara Fields noted that Rhode Island is producing a concentration of nationally exemplary police-community developer partnerships:

“We are thrilled that CommunityWorks RI and their partners are receiving this national recognition for their outstanding community safety work. This is the third year in a row that a LISC partner CDC has brought



Figure 29. Left: At the October 20, 2008 MetLife Community-Police Partnership Awards Ceremony at 39 Parkis Avenue in Providence’s North Elmwood neighborhood, the MetLife Foundation gave the honorees certificates and presented the CommunityWorks Rhode Island CDC with a \$25,000 1st place prize. CommunityWorks, in turn, surprised the Providence PD with the gift of a new bicycle for officers who will patrol the revitalized neighborhood. L-R: Congressman Jim Langevin (D-2nd District, Rhode Island), CommunityWorks executive director Cynthia Langlykke, PPD Chief Dean Esserman, PPD District Commander George Stamatakos, U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), RI LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields, Mayor David Cicilline, MetLife Foundation representative Robert Lundgren (Vice President of MetLife Auto & Home), and RI Department of Corrections Director A.T. Wall. (Photo by Bill Geller, 10/20/08) Right: LISC Community Safety Initiative Program Director Julia Ryan, shown here with Senator Whitehouse and RI LISC head Barbara Fields, came from New York to join in the MetLife Foundation Award celebration. (Photo by Bill Geller, 10/20/08)

this prestigious award to Rhode Island—a remarkable track record of success that is a testament to the effectiveness of LISC’s strategy of building the partnerships that make real change happen.”

Teasing out the contribution that bricks-and-mortar development has made to sustainable drug market disruption in the Parkis Avenue area of District 2 will require some further analysis by others because during this same time period the police and others in that district implemented another drug-control strategy, the “High Point” approach originated by police in High Point, North Carolina working with John Jay College of Criminal Justice Professor David Kennedy. (Milkovits, 2008)

In any event, the work of the police-community development collaborators in North Elmwood, participants report, has been informed by and informative to the partners who have produced the remarkable public safety and revitalization achievements in Olneyville, to which we turn now.

Building Away Crime

The Data Used to Assess Public Safety Changes—and the Data Sources

The Providence Plan

To help identify the kind of information that would illuminate whether changes in public safety, if any, coincided with interventions aimed at revitalization and crime control, we had extensive conversations with staff at The Providence Plan. Given the relatively unusual nature of this organization and its high value as a data source, it merits a description before we identify the data it provided to us.

Earlier we referred to The Providence Plan as a data intermediary. It is also described as a “private non-profit corporation charged with the mission of developing and overseeing a comprehensive and strategic plan for the revitalization of the city.”

(National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, 2008) Among key activities of the Providence Plan are data collection and analysis and public dissemination of information. Founded in 1992 to serve governments and community organizations in Providence and the region, the Providence Plan is one of several data intermediaries launched in a few cities around the nation in the 1990s. These organizations were an outgrowth of a vibrant movement within the planning, community development and related industries to “democratize data”—make accurate information which is useful for planning, policymaking and community building readily accessible to interested parties, including community organizations and public policymakers.

As is the case with The Providence Plan, the data that users can obtain in their “one-stop shopping” at these information intermediaries cover a range of “social indicators,” including gauges of crime, housing, health, property values and conditions, school attendance and student achievement, family characteristics and other topics. Importantly, organizations such as The Providence Plan help assure data quality and are able to provide information portraying the neighborhood and sub-neighborhood areas using state-of-the-art computer mapping technology. (Kingsley, 1999; Kingsley and Pettit, 2004; Kingsley and Pettit, 2007) As of 2004, a network of such data intermediaries in 21 cities worked closely with the Urban Institute’s National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP), under the direction of Thomas Kingsley. By 2008 that network had expanded to 35 organizations in 30 cities. (National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, 2008)

As with other data intermediaries around the nation, by formal agreement with the local police department, staff at The Providence Plan electronically pull raw data relating to reported offenses and police enforcement activity directly from Providence Police records. The data system is maintained by the Taubman Center for Public Policy at Brown University. The Providence Plan uses those data to respond to requests for information from police, other public officials, community groups and people like us who are writing about community building efforts in Providence. (Lucht, 2008; National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, 2008) Indeed, the NNIP has a core

mission that embraces such efforts. Its member data intermediaries must support three core principles:

“Their primary job is to use data to support policy development and action agendas that will facilitate positive change, not just create data and research for their own sake. The second is to give priority to improving conditions in distressed neighborhoods. The third is to conduct their work in a manner that *democratizes information*. This means placing information in the hands of relevant local stakeholders (at the community and citywide levels) and helping those actors use it to change things for the better themselves (so the stakeholders feel primary ownership for the results.” (Kingsley and Pettit, 2007, p. 3)

The data

The available data pulled for us by The Providence Plan are reported serious crimes and selected calls-for-service for three geographic areas: (1) the OHC revitalization area; (2) the segment of that revitalization area containing the three hot

spot buildings, “the cave,” and nearby parcels (which we refer to as the “4 hot spots area”); and (3) the entire Olneyville neighborhood. The data retrieval system permitted going back only as far as 2002 for address-specific information (which is required since we are examining geographic areas different from those customarily included in routine crime analyses). Our data cover the years 2002 through 2007 and are presented both as annual tallies and, where appropriate, as monthly or quarterly counts.

The reported crimes documented are murder, rape, robbery, felony assault with (and without) a firearm, burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny from a motor vehicle, “other larceny,” simple assault, other sexual assault, drug-related offenses, vandalism, “liquor” violations, and other “weapons” crimes. (“Other Larceny” includes shoplifting, pickpocket, purse snatch, from building, bicycles, motor vehicle parts or accessories, and other.) The calls for service identified are the public’s calls to police pertaining to “shots fired,” “person with a gun,” “drugs,” and “loud music/party.”

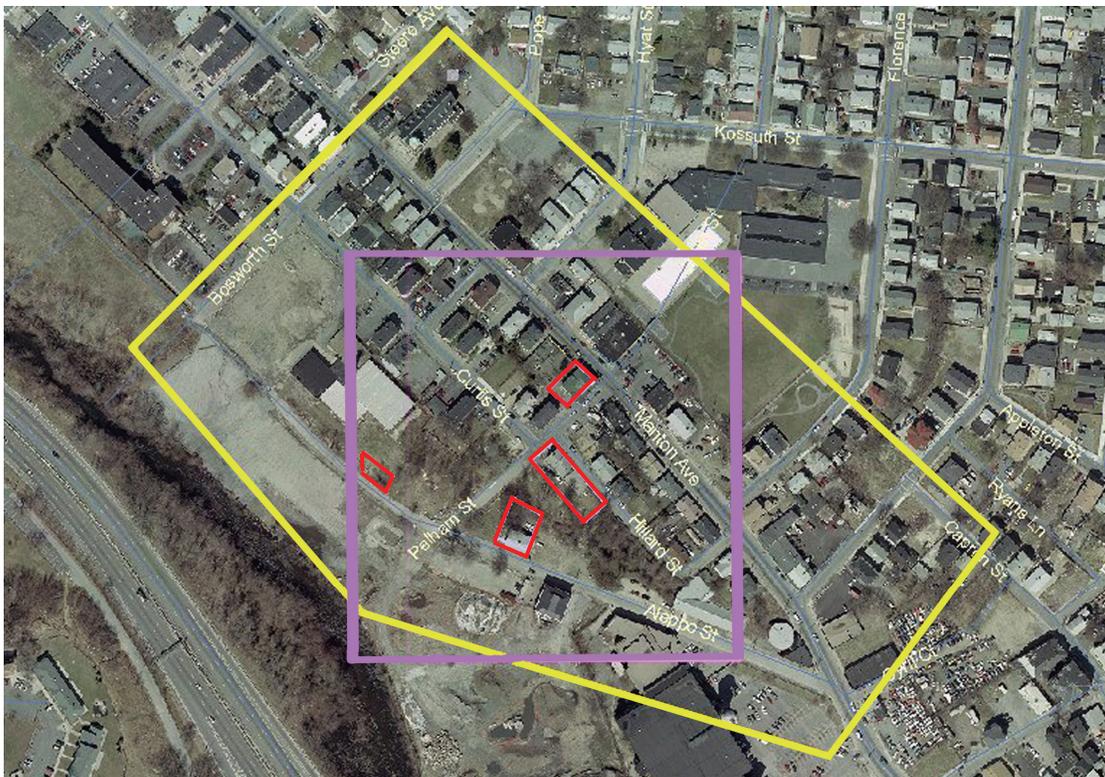


Figure 30. The area in the yellow box is the OHC revitalization area, and the smaller included area in the purple box shows the 3 problem properties and “the cave,” just off Aleppo Street, for which reported crime and calls-for-service data were compiled by The Providence Plan.

Public Safety Changes

As shown in the tables and graphs that follow, reported crime showed double-digit declines from 2002 to 2007. The drop was 57.4% for the OHC revitalization area and 59.7% for the 4 hot spots area. These drops greatly exceeded the neighborhood-wide decline in reported crime of 10.4%. In OHC's revitalization area, there had been three murders in 2001, but not one since then.

The changes in *calls for service* to the police about shots fired, people with guns, drug problems and loud music/parties were even more pronounced than shifts in *reported crime*. The reduction in such calls between 2002 and 2007 in the small area including the four hot spots was 86.6% (from 112 calls to 15). Similarly, the larger target area for OHC revitalization enjoyed a drop in calls of 80.6% over these six years (from 175 to 34). By comparison, the whole Olneyville neighborhood in 2002 accounted for 708 calls for service, a tally that dropped by 2007 to 454—a 35.9% difference.

According to police and development experts we interviewed, these salutary neighborhood-wide improvements were partly a reflection of the considerable crime control progress made in the

toughest parts of Olneyville (the OHC revitalization area, which includes the four hot spots). Barbara Fields, in a February 2009 meeting in Providence Mayor Cicilline's office to take stock of the Olneyville turnaround, observed that there are more residents in Olneyville since the dozens of new housing units have been built, so it's even more impressive that calls for service went down in the OHC focus areas.

The bar graph (Figure 34) illustrates that the Hot Spots Area and Revitalization Area, *before* the interventions, consumed a considerably larger share of the neighborhood's police services than one might expect based on their physical area. But after the interventions, these two focus areas claimed a much smaller proportion of police attention—almost identical to what their land area would predict. Specifically, the Hot Spots Area, which constitutes 3% of the Olneyville land, accounted for 15.8% of the entire neighborhood's calls for service before the principal interventions, a demand level that fell to 3.3% after the interventions began in earnest. Similarly, the OHC Revitalization Area (7.8% of the neighborhood land) used to account for 24.7% of Olneyville's calls for service, but after interventions that percentage dropped to 7.5%.

Table 1: Reported Crime & Calls for Service: Areas in the Olneyville Neighborhood 2002 - 2007						
Area	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
REPORTED CRIME						
4 hot spots	72	79	45	42	30	29
OHC revitalization area	169	167	127	121	85	72
Olneyville Neighborhood	1,094	1,177	1,059	1,122	1,056	980
CALLS FOR SERVICE						
4 hot spots	112	80	18	48	21	15
OHC revitalization area	175	107	52	64	25	34
Olneyville Neighborhood	708	612	501	471	477	454

Table 2: % Change in Crimes & Calls for Service from 2002 to 2007 for 3 areas in the Olneyville Neighborhood			
Event Type	Area		
	Near 4 hot spots	OHC Revitalization Area	Olneyville-wide
Reported Crime	-59.7%	-57.4%	-10.4%
Calls for Service	-86.6%	-80.6%	-35.9%

Reported Crime, Olneyville Areas

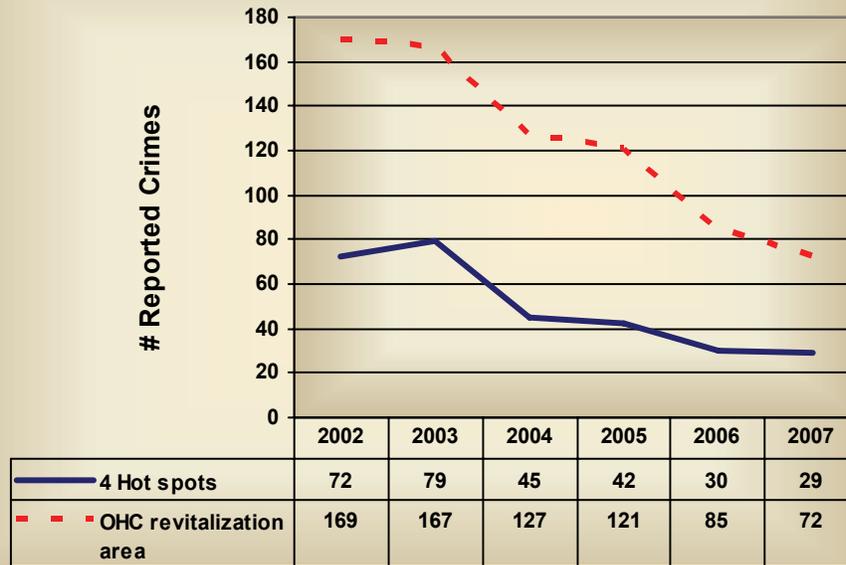


Figure 31. **Reported Crime, Focus Areas in Olneyville Neighborhood, 2002-2007.** Reported crime includes murder, rape, robbery, felony assault with (and without) a firearm, burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny from a motor vehicle, "other larceny," simple assault, other sexual assault, drug-related offenses, vandalism, "liquor" violations, and other "weapons" crimes. ("Other Larceny" includes shoplifting, pickpocket, purse snatch, from building, bicycles, motor vehicle parts or accessories, and other.)

Calls for Service, Olneyville Areas

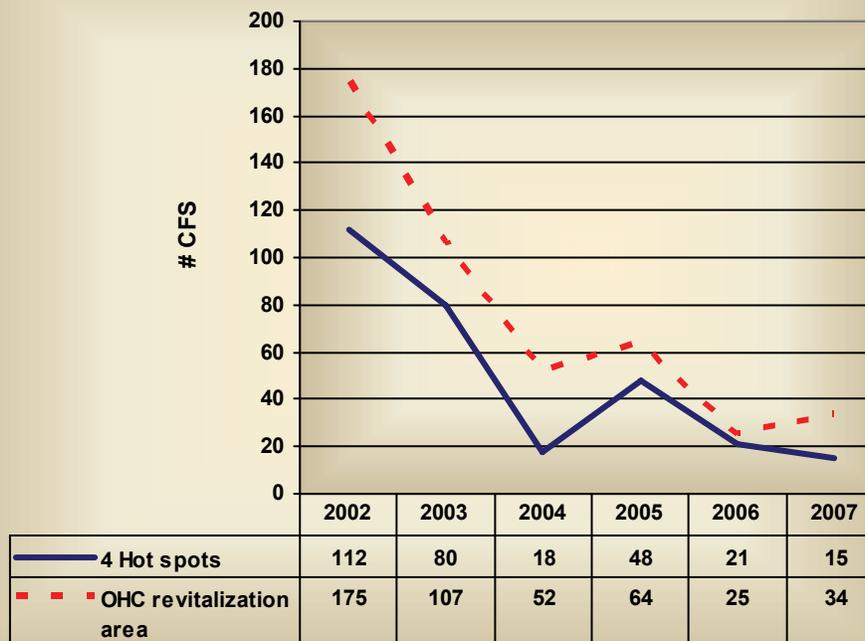


Figure 32. **Calls for Service, Focus Areas in Olneyville Neighborhood, 2002-2007.** The CFS include shots fired, person with a gun, drugs, and loud music/party

Olneyville-wide Crime & CFS

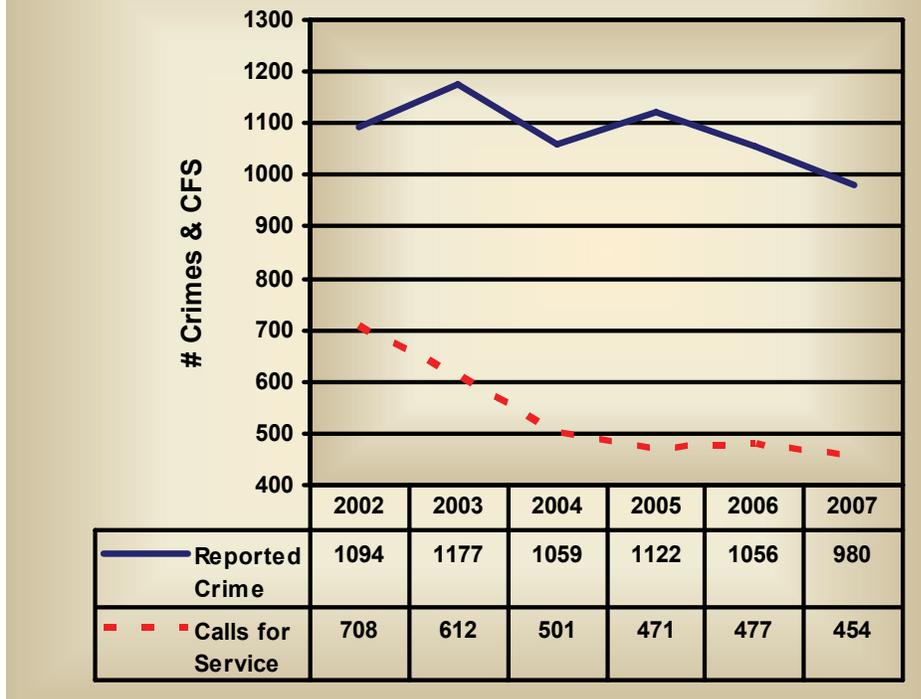


Figure 33. Reported Crime & Calls for Service, Entire Olneyville Neighborhood, 2002-2007

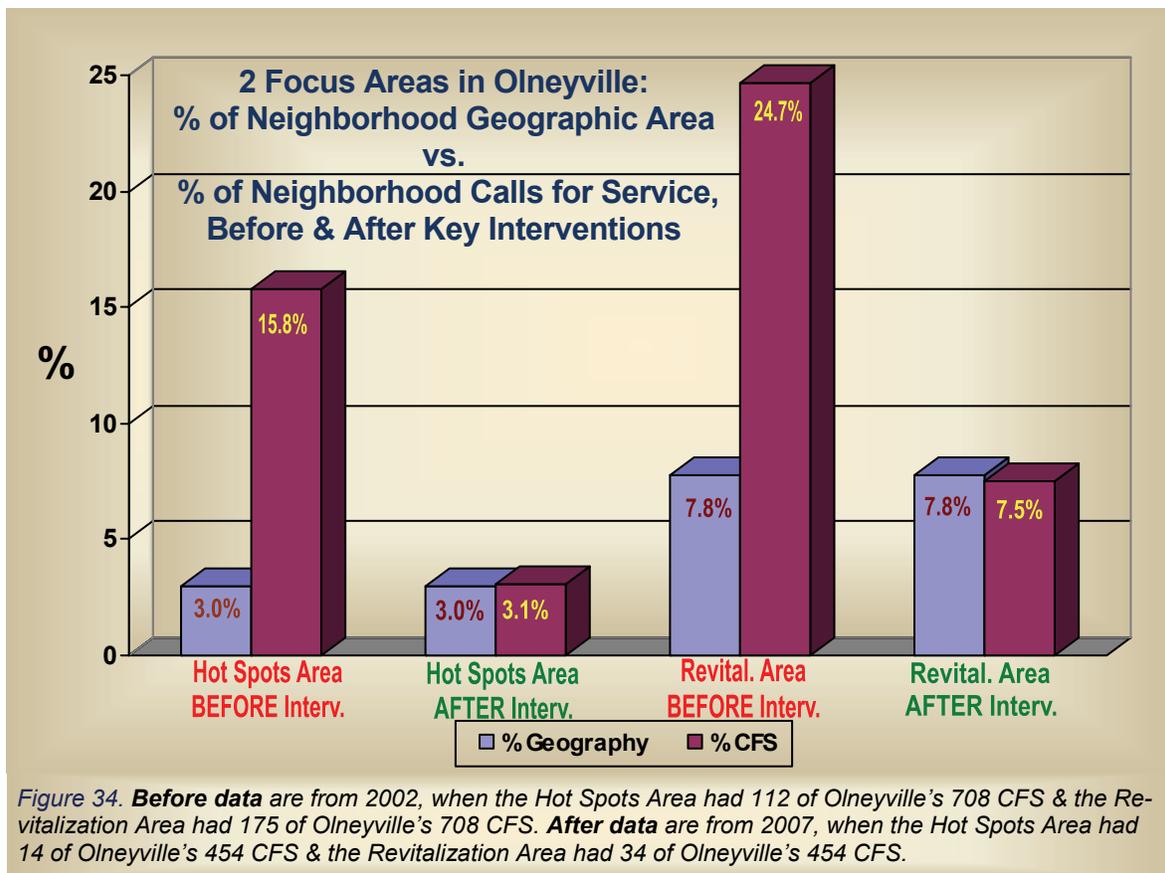


Figure 34. **Before data** are from 2002, when the Hot Spots Area had 112 of Olneyville's 708 CFS & the Revitalization Area had 175 of Olneyville's 708 CFS. **After data** are from 2007, when the Hot Spots Area had 14 of Olneyville's 454 CFS & the Revitalization Area had 34 of Olneyville's 454 CFS.

Site Control of Hot Spots Coincides with Public Safety Improvements

The crime and calls-for-service reductions achieved near the four hot spots and in the OHC revitalization area coincide reasonably well with the interventions by the community developer, the police, and other enforcement authorities and revitalization groups. Given the focus and timing of these efforts, both the developers and police expected to see some significant behavior change in terms of crime problems and calls for service beginning around mid-2003 and continuing (and stabilizing) during 2004 and following years. Police Officer Tom Masse of the PPD's Community Policing Bureau, other regular patrol officers, and the Attorney General's Nuisance Abatement Task Force began focusing on the Manton Avenue hot spot somewhat earlier, but expectations for really significant impact were linked to the combined

and coordinated interventions of developers, police, code enforcement and other partners that began in mid-2003 (Figure 35). The data track pretty well with the practitioners' expectations.

Looking at the annual calls for service data (displayed in the tables and graphs above), between 2002 and 2003 we see a 28.5% drop in calls within the area around the four hot spots and a 38.9% drop in the larger OHC revitalization area. But as testament to the stabilizing effect of integrated enforcement and responsible site control, even more sizable reductions in calls for service occurred between 2003 (when the first key coordinated public safety-development interventions commenced) and 2004 (during which additional interventions bolstered earlier interventions). Thus, between 2003 and 2004 there was a 77.5% fall-off in calls pertaining to the hot spots area (from 80 to 18) and a 51.4% drop in calls for the

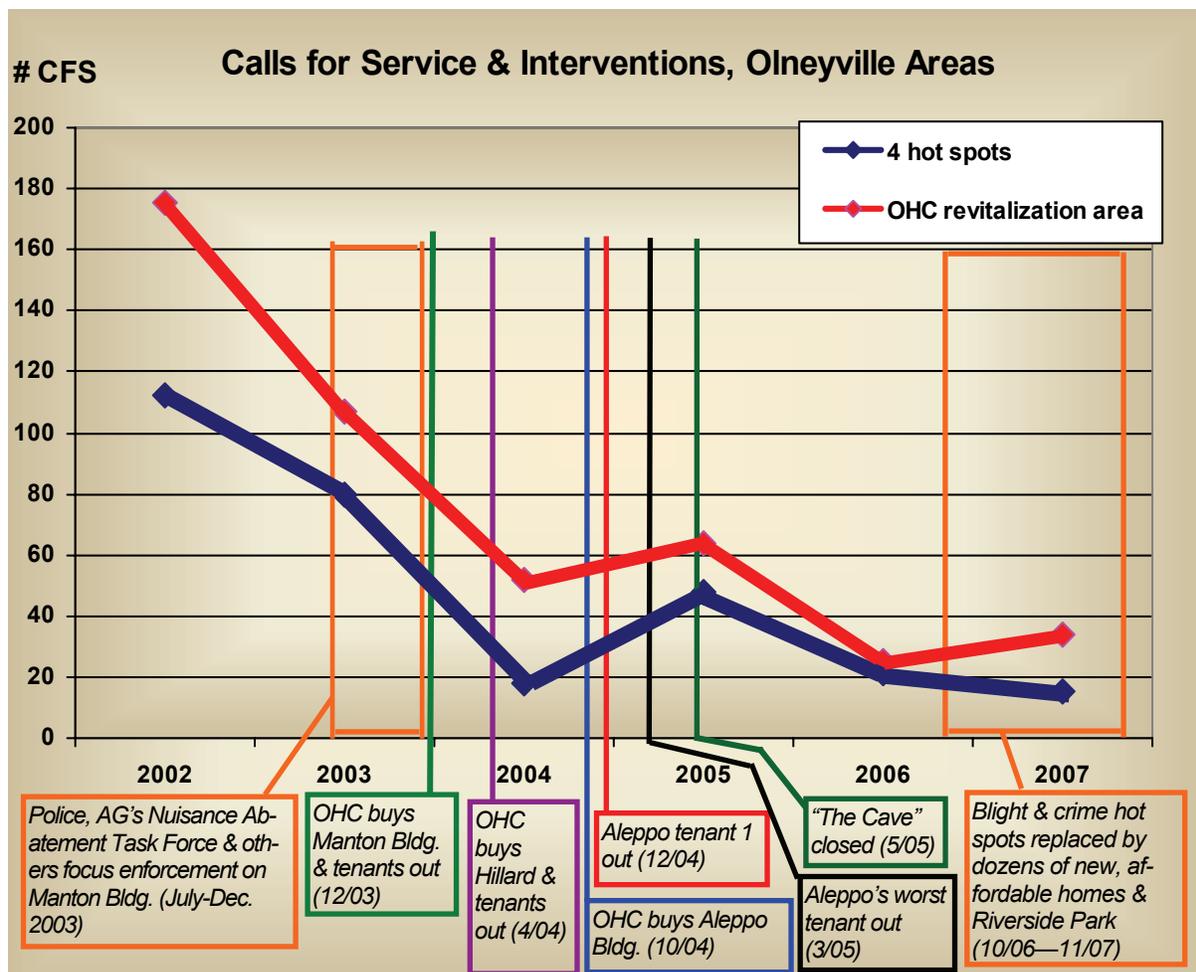


Figure 35. Calls for Service & Interventions by Police, AG's Nuisance Abatement Task Force & OHC in 2 Olneyville Focus Areas, 2002-2007 The CFS include shots fired, person with a gun, drugs, and loud music/party.

OHC revitalization region (from 107 to 52). The graphs show that, in the hot spots area, the declines in citizen calls for service which began in 2003 persisted through 2007. In the larger OHC revitalization area, calls for service declined steadily from 2002 through 2005 and then ticked up slightly in 2007, but still remained at levels well below the annual numbers for 2002-2005.

Interviews with people who know Olneyville and its residents very well suggest that the dramatic reductions in calls for service came in the face of growing public confidence that calling the cops is a worthwhile thing to do if crimes are committed.

To be more specific about the timing of interventions and behavior changes, as Figure 35 shows, beginning in mid-2003 there were coordinated, persistent and synergistic development and crime-control efforts focused on the Manton Avenue address by OHC, the police, the Attorney General's Nuisance Abatement Task Force and other partners. In December of that year, OHC capitalized on the reductions in crime and disorder at this property, took site control and relocated that building's troublesome residents. In April 2004, OHC took control of the Hillard property and relocated its residents, who were involved in drug crimes and prostitution. At the Aleppo location, the community developer took site control in October 2004, resulting in one troublesome family moving out in December 2004 and another (the bigger troublemaker of the two) leaving in March 2005.

Police and development leaders in Providence suggest that some of the crime and calls for service related to the 63 Aleppo house would have declined earlier than its residents vacated the property because of spillover effects from crime and call reductions at the nearby hot spots on Manton and Hillard. As the Police Department's Lt. Bob Lepre explained, the troublesome residents of 63 Aleppo committed many of their crimes, generating calls for service, within the several blocks around their home rather than directly at the building.

A next key intervention depicted on Figure 35 is the May 2005 closure of "the cave"—the underground den adjacent to the casket warehouse on Aleppo Street used for drug deals and prostitution. This intervention came hot on the heels of the

energizing CPTED training that month. As noted earlier, Fifth District Lieutenant Bob Lepre and one of his sergeants, in Frank Shea's fond recollection, "dropped a boulder on the cave." Finally, between October 2006 and November 2007, to much fanfare, ribbon snipping and awards for jobs well done, dozens of units of highly sought after new housing and the new Riverside Park and playground were completed in OHC's revitalization area. These 2006 and 2007 interventions and community improvements served to fortify and extend the previous public safety progress.

Quarterly tallies of calls for service permit a more discrete examination than do annual tallies of the sequencing of interventions and public safety changes. The two following graphs provide this closer glimpse. Figure 36 shows that a marked decline in calls for service commenced just about the time—mid-2003—that police, prosecutors and developers began intensely focusing on Olneyville's three worst crime-generating buildings. Figure 36 shows the quarterly tallies for the period from July 2002 through June 2004.

The beginning of this period (in 2002) is about when the comprehensive neighborhood planning effort, convened by the Olneyville Collaborative, crystallized the participants' understanding that something had to be done to tame crime and disorder between Manton Avenue and the River if there was any hope for successful, sustainable redevelopment of the area. By the end of this period, in mid-2004, many important interventions had occurred: A new regime of police-community partnerships for public safety under Chief Esserman was taking hold in Providence. Rhode Island LISC had begun to actively support such partnerships, deepening their impact, with the hiring of a full-time Community Safety Coordinator. And, with considerable help from the police, prosecutors and other enforcement agencies, OHC had gained site control over the Manton and Hillard buildings and their problematic tenants, who were no longer in a position to ruin Olneyville for their neighbors.

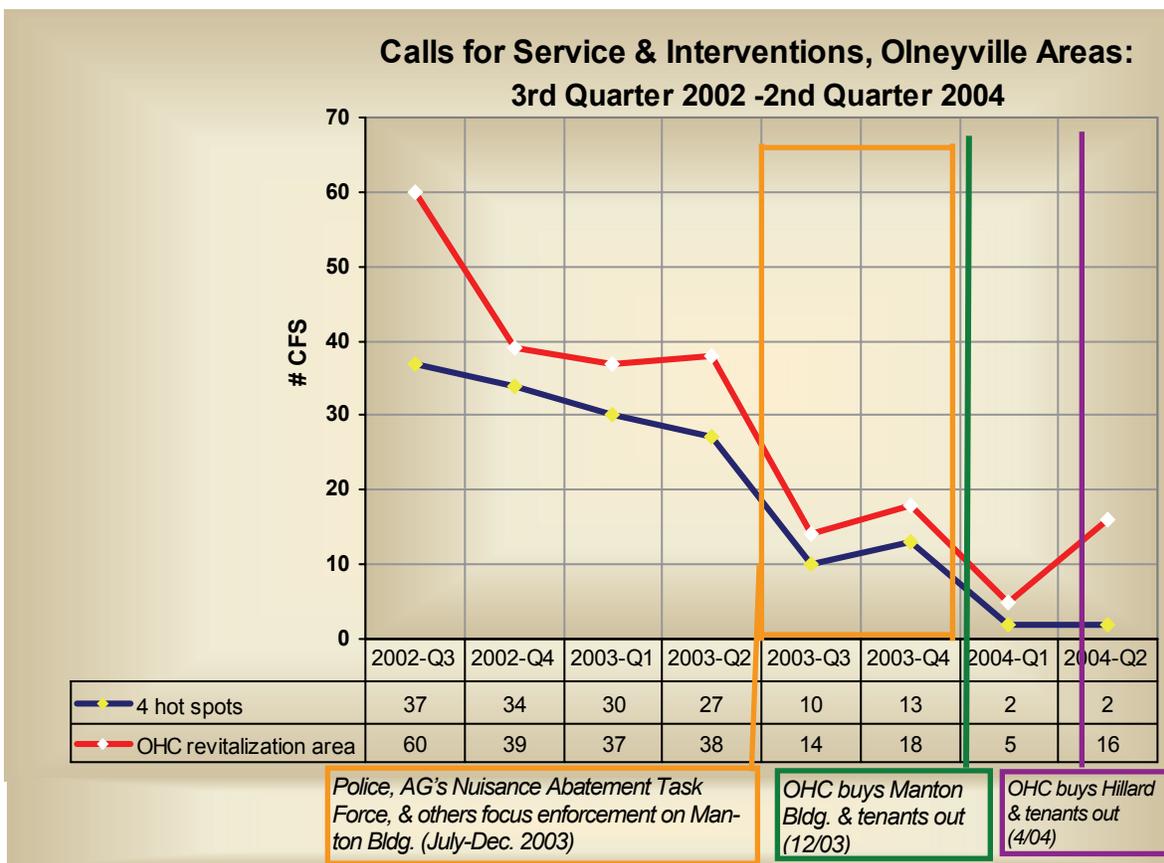


Figure 36. Calls for Service, Focus Areas in Olneyville Neighborhood, 3rd Quarter 2002 - 2nd Quarter 2004. The CFS include shots fired, person with a gun, drugs, and loud music/party

Table 3 facilitates further examination of the crucial 2002-2004 period in the two Olneyville focus areas, showing calls for service data by month, by quarter, and in two 12-month periods (before and after concerted public safety-developer interventions commenced in mid-2003).

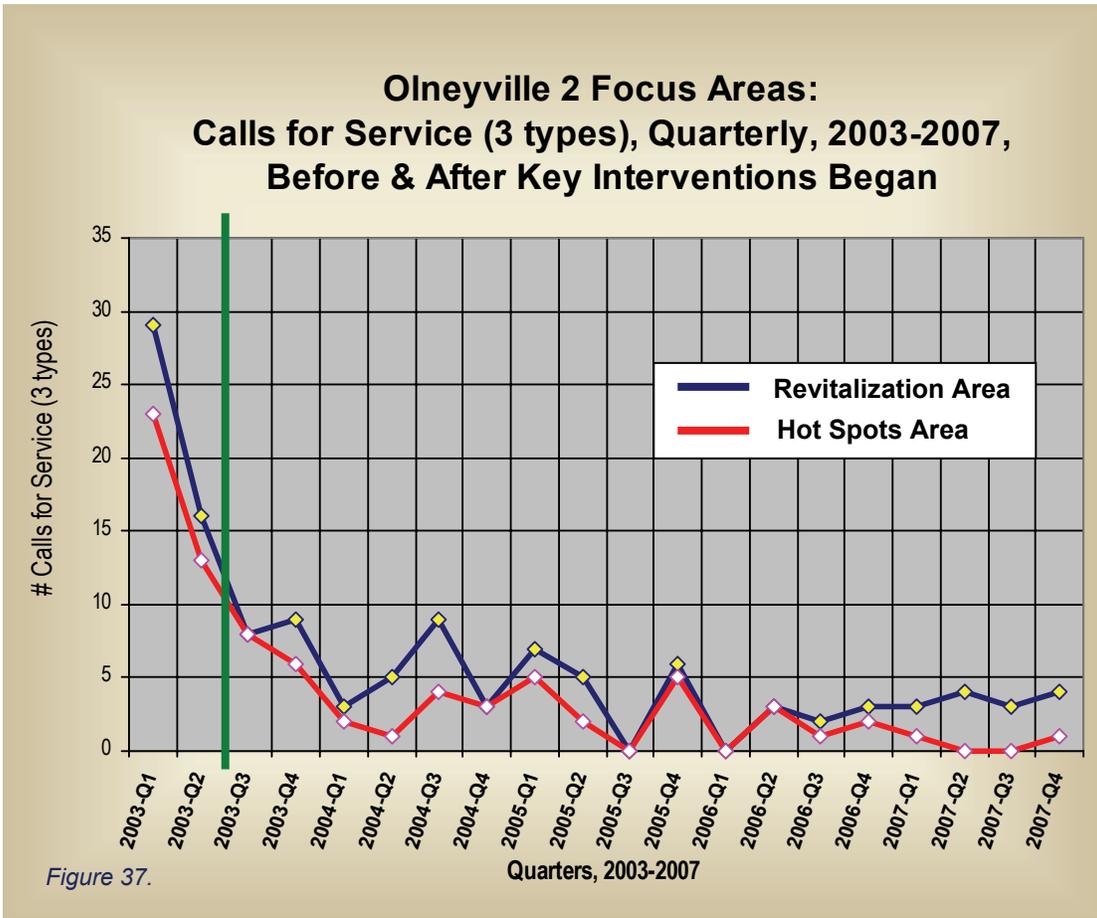
Comparing the 12 months prior to July 2003 to the 12 months starting in July 2003, in the Revitalization Area calls for service dropped by 69% (from 174 to 53), and in the Hot Spots Area those calls dropped 78% (from 128 to 27). From the first month of this period (July 2002) to the last month (June 2004), calls for service in the Revitalization Area dropped 72% (from 18 to 5) and in the Hot Spots Area dropped 91% (from 11 to 1).

Figure 37 helps further explore the relationship between interventions and calls for service. It shows three (rather than all four) of the types of calls for service. We omitted the complaints about loud music/parties, wanting to see how interventions might coincide with the more serious problems people summoned police to address: “shots

fired,” “people with guns,” and “drugs.” The graph shows a marked, sustained change in the neighborhood residents’ experiences once the police, developers and other partners, in mid-2003, began their concerted focus on alleviating blight and crime problems at the neighborhood’s worst properties. Although the numbers of calls for service in any given quarter are not particularly large, it is reasonable to assume that, in Olneyville as in neighborhoods nationwide, more crime occurs than residents report to the police even when the public has a high level of confidence in the police. So if—as we believe is true based on interviews with locally-based police and developers—the proportional decrease in gun and drug crimes shown in this graph is a valid indication of real changes in criminal victimizations, it is no wonder that Olneyville residents celebrate a genuine transformation in the focus areas brought about by the team of public safety and development practitioners.

Table 3: Olneyville Focus Areas: Calls for Service (4 types) Before & After Key Interventions in Mid-2003																									
Period 1 (before interventions)												Period 2 (after interventions)													
2002						2003						2004													
Revitalization Area		July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
		18	22	20	27	8	4	12	9	16	8	14	16	7	4	3	5	6	7	1	1	3	6	5	5
		174												53											
		Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Quarter 1			Quarter 2		
		60			39			37			38			14			18			5			16		
4 Hot Spots Area		July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
		11	18	8	24	6	4	9	7	14	7	11	9	6	3	1	3	5	5	1	1	0	1	0	1
		128												27											
		Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			Quarter 1			Quarter 2		
		37			34			30			27			10			13			2			2		

Calls for service are public calls to the police about shots fired, person with a gun, drug problems and loud music/parties.



As we see in this and the other cases in the *Building Our Way Out of Crime* book, the interrelated, mutually-reinforcing efforts of law enforcement officials and community developers can be a potent force that both knocks crime down and keeps it down.

Development Impact

The physical transformations of the Aleppo and Manton locations are shown in before-after photographs (Figures 38, 39nd 41-44). The Hillard location was boarded up and remained in that condition as of October 2008, awaiting funding for rehab and new occupancy. The design of the Hillard home was in keeping with the classic mill worker duplex design of other homes on the street, and that basic appearance will be replicated once it is restored to useful condition.

Taken as a whole, according to Frank Shea, the three modified sites produced positive ripple effects on other neighborhood developments (what crime analysts would call “diffusion of benefits”). These effects became most apparent in 2006 and 2007, when OHC and their partners had a lot of ribbons to cut in Olneyville. The completion of the \$6.8 million Riverside Gateway project, which, as planned, provided 31 residential and two commercial units—and which, among other things, supplanted the 63 Aleppo hot spot—was celebrated on October 27, 2006. The next year, the \$4 million Riverside Townhomes development was completed, as promised transforming an eyesore and former brownfield site into 20 new affordable townhouse condominiums for sale to first time homebuyers. (Smith, 2007s) And the nine acres running along the river have evolved from a major liability to a serious community asset. Vigilance has been needed in protecting this burgeoning new neighborhood from family-unfriendly influences, such as a



Figure 38. 63 Aleppo Street in 2001 (top—OHC photo) and new OHC-developed homes at 61-63 Aleppo (gray duplex) and adjacent parcels in 2007 (middle and bottom—Geller photos).

proposed strip club in a former nightclub space south of the redeveloped area. In keeping with the PPD's motto, "Semper Vigilans," and as a result of the effective CPTED planning that went into siting the new Riverside Park, it was not only legal tactics and police objections that were employed to keep the strip club from going into business. *Physical* barriers also would hold the proposed club's patrons and employees at bay. Even though, as the crow flies, the club would be less than 500 feet from Riverside Park, "it is separated...by formidable obstacles,"—a major highway and the Woonasquatucket River. (Smith, 2007p)

By the end of 2008, according to LISC's Barbara Fields and Superintendent Robert McMahon of the Providence Parks Department, the swath of Olneyville from Manton Avenue to the River represented combined investments in 60 homes, road repair, brownfield remediation, river reclamation and Riverside Park and bike path development of over \$16 million. The biggest ticket items on this list were the housing (\$12.1 million), brownfield remediation (\$2.2 million), bike path through the park (\$600,000), fish ladder in the River (\$600,000), and road repair needed for access to the homes and park (\$400,000). The Parks Department was planning to invest an additional \$200,000 on Riverside Park in 2009 for such items as more trees, other plantings, fencing, and playground equipment.

With all these productive investments, OHC and its collaborators were on course to complete the ambitious transformation of this formerly blighted and perilous tract of Olneyville into a good and affordable place for families to live and raise children.



Figure 40. Jorge Burgos and Casilda Pallero, soon to be parents of twin boys, celebrated with Mayor Cicilline and dozens of their new neighbors at a housewarming party in their OHC-developed Olneyville home. Burgos, 27, a fork-lift operator, and Pallero, 23, a bank teller, bought their three-bedroom home from OHC for \$140,000. (Photo: Rhode Island LISC, February 2009)



Figure 39. 218-220 Manton Avenue before (left) and after OHC site control, relocation of problem residents and renovation (Before photo: OHC. After Photo-Bill Geller)



Figure 41. Providence Police Chief Dean Esserman speaks at the MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award Ceremony in Olneyville on November 5, 2007. Behind him to the left (white shirt) is Lt. Bob Lepre and to the right is OHC Executive Director Frank Shea. Seated (L-R) are Providence Mayor David Cicilline, Rhode Island U.S. Senator (and former Rhode Island Attorney General) Sheldon Whitehouse, and Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields. The ceremony was held in the newly developed Riverside Park playground area on the south side of Aleppo Street, across the street from new OHC-developed housing at 61-63 Aleppo. The intersecting street rising in the distance on the left of the photo, Pelham Street, includes OHC's office (gray 3-story building). Just beyond that, at the corner of Pelham and Manton Avenue, is the once-notorious residential/commercial building at 218-220 Manton.



Figure 42. Looking south across Aleppo Street at the new Riverside Park playground, where the MetLife Awards ceremony was held. Residents of the new Aleppo Street homes will have "eyes" on the playground and park and can summon help if they see safety, blight or other problems in the park or on the street.



From Brownfield to Sprouting Community

Fig. 43. The environmentally and criminally hazardous site between Aleppo Street and the River gave way to Riverside Park, a bike path running to Downtown, and new homes whose residents could enjoy the park and help keep watch to ensure it remains safe and attractive. The homes, shown during construction in June 2007 and completed in November 2007, are part of OHC's "Riverside Gateway" development along Aleppo Street—where "nobody used to come except for drugs and prostitution."





Figure 44. Welcome signs of healthy, normal family life returning to Olneyville—**Above:** A school bus stops in front of 61-63 Aleppo Street and the Riverside Park playground. **Below:** Young people enjoy the new bike path in Riverside Park. (Photos: Joe Vaughan for Rhode Island LISC, 11/07 and 8/08)



Lessons Learned

The police and developer partners must be technically capable, ambitious in setting their goals and persistent and creative in pursuing them

Several of the chronic problems plaguing Olneyville called for physical transformations of properties, a goal that not all community development corporations are equipped to attain and that not all police departments understand how to effectively support at critical decision points. Fortunately for this neighborhood, the Police and Olneyville Housing Corporation and its support system of Rhode Island LISC, funders and other stakeholders had the capacity, interest, creativity and flexibility to pursue a physical turnaround strategy. Part of OHC's capacity was a *track record* that was reassuring to others whose support was important. Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields noted: "People were concerned with OHC doing rental housing and luckily they had the track record of doing 32 units on the other side of Manton. That changed a lot of people's minds."

Fields also recalled that persistence and effective use of allies were imperative at several stages of this process: "Frank had a lot to fight in putting the financing together (including last minute changes imposed by a major investor). One of the things Frank used well was a board who trusted him. His board president, Michael Solomon, owner of Wes' Rib House, quietly helped more than most know."

Structure and formalize the police-developer engagement and mutual assistance

The coming together of police and development leaders to identify problems, plan long-term solutions and take persistent action happens not as a result of chance meetings but by structuring how and on what schedule the parties will work together. It is true that in the early days police-developer collaboration was tried and evolved more informally, often on an *ad hoc* basis—mostly through the cooperative efforts of one community policing officer and one motivated organizer. To

be sure, the capacity and willingness to improvise, "calling audibles" as opportunities and obstacles appear, remains a key success factor in efforts to build safer, more viable neighborhoods. But as the goals sought by the partners become more ambitious and require consistent, coordinated, efficient and sometimes expensive engagement by many parties, a more orderly, structured, predictable, accountable, business-like work process must be devised.

Accordingly, as leaders in the police and community development industries in Providence recognized the considerable promise of joint efforts against crime and blight, more formal opportunities—and expectations—for interaction were devised. Today, through structured agreements, these collaborators are involved in each other's *core* business—not just liaising for public relations or customer relations reasons. For instance, as noted earlier, the police lieutenant who commands the police district serving Olneyville sits on OHC's board of directors, participating in key decisions about the CDC's investment agenda. And OHC's executive director holds a leadership position in the Providence Weed and Seed program, involved in helping to target public safety investments. Moreover, in early 2008 Chief Esserman joined Rhode Island LISC's Local Advisory Committee, a group of prominent public- and private-sector leaders who assist LISC staff in designing and implementing its multi-million dollar investment strategy.

Building trust takes time and many small, repetitive steps

As the Olneyville players showed us, it can't be accomplished in just one meeting or one phone call. All potential key partners need over time to demonstrate to one another that their interest and willingness to make and keep promises is real and consistent. Regular contact is the key, as Barbara Fields explained:

"There had to be initial steps to build trust between police and community. Early on that started with just meeting each other. Then it grew to regular calls between Frank Shea and Tom Masse and then the others. Then it was the visits from police, just showing up at the OHC office, dropping in

to OHC board meetings—establishing that this was truly a new way of doing business. Next OHC executive director Frank Shea and Lt. Hugh Clements exchanged cell phone numbers. Finally, two years later, Lt. Bob Lepre was put on the OHC Board. So it grew organically. It didn't happen overnight. And each side had to prove to the other that they were going to stay with this, deliver results and show up and support each other at various times.”

Role flexibility and persistence by participants and frequent leadership reinforcement of the strategy support unconventional collaborations

Providence police frequently acted outside conventional law enforcement roles, helping OHC think through its development plans (construction siting and sequencing choices, for instance) and joining with community groups to advocate that local government reverse a decision about infrastructure improvement (rebuilding the damaged stretch of Aleppo Street).

Leaders on the police and development sides, especially Providence Police Chief Dean Esserman and Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields, created meaningful incentives for managers and staff to implement police-developer partnerships. Chief Dean Esserman took a variety of initiatives to bolster operational-level personnel in their confidence to play flexible, effective roles with collaborators. One of the ways he did this was by bringing community development experts into his command staff conversations to help figure out jointly the nexus between police problem-solving approaches and community revitalization work. In March 2008, he also kicked off the Providence Police Department's annual two-day Senior Staff Retreat with a success story illustrating the practicality of partnerships for public safety. Before an audience of about 50 that also included a number of local, state and federal officials, the Chief had Bill Geller and Barbara Fields describe in some detail the public safety and community revitalization accomplishments in Olneyville over the past several years. Emblematic of Chief Esserman's style, he invited now-Detective Tom Masse to join the otherwise command-rank meeting, guessing that the Geller-Fields telling of the

Olneyville tale would include mention of Masse's trailblazing contributions. And when the group duly applauded the accomplishments in Olneyville, Chief Esserman addressed the self-effacing Masse publicly, saying, “You made this happen, pal.”

For their part, the developer (OHC) and one of its key supporters (Rhode Island LISC) adopted a safety lens for looking at their core work and invested scarce resources in supporting police priorities. That safety lens is captured elegantly in a Rhode Island LISC newsletter headline: “Investing Our Way Out of Crime: It's Working.” (Rhode Island LISC, 2008c) A clear example of resource dedication is the LISC investment in hiring a Community Safety Coordinator to facilitate police-developer collaboration. A more *ad hoc* example is OHC agreeing to Officer Tom Masse's request to keep an eye on particular buildings and neighborhood troublemakers that police and prosecutors were targeting for criminal prosecution.

One of the most important lessons from this case, as Community Safety Coordinator Nancy Howard put it, is that “the commitment of the partners is key. Even when things dragged a little or one partner didn't see the immediate benefit, they all stuck with it.”

The partners' persistence stems from several factors. One is that police, development and other organizational leaders frequently emphasized the strategic advantages of collaborative approaches to crime control. A second is that the Police Department, in making personnel assignments (such as the new commanding officer in District 5, which serves Olneyville) gave consideration to selecting people who could and would keep productive collaborations going and growing, even when that meant breaking with the tradition of transferring a newly promoted lieutenant to a different district or unit. A third factor bolstering participants' dedication, at a more personal level, is that they came to know, like and trust one another as individuals. Finally, a fourth element is that the key participants increasingly realized that meeting their individual goals could be done more effectively and efficiently at times by combining their knowledge and coordinating their resources and authority. As a Providence Police lieutenant put it succinctly in what is becoming a mantra by

the PPD command staff, “working with CDCs makes my job easier.” In turn, leaders from the development side of the partnership also have learned that they can produce better and more durable results by engaging with law enforcement collaborators at many key stages of the community development process.

Bring relevant expertise to bear on key decisions and tasks

The clearest example in this case is the realization by the partners—spurred by Safety Coordinator Nancy Howard and technical assistance provider Lisa Belsky—that the planning process for the new park and nearby housing should include a rigorous CPTED analysis. Since none of the local players had sufficient CPTED proficiency, they arranged and paid for an intensive two-day CPTED training by a national expert. They also did the necessary organizing to be sure the right people from the right range of public and private organizations were involved in the classroom and field work so the new knowledge would inform those with decision authority over resource allocation and staff deployment. Providence thus avoided the misstep made by many other jurisdictions, where potentially valuable training and team-building opportunities are squandered because the right people are not brought to the table.

Sequence and bundle physical development projects and public safety efforts to maximize mutually reinforcing safety and economic viability

In this case, the group recognized that powerful interaction effects could be achieved if the new park, new housing and reconstruction of Aleppo Street could all be accomplished at about the same time. For example, the proposed housing became marketable once it was known the area across the street would be an attractive park rather than a blighted, crime-ridden brownfield on the banks of a dead river. And the park would be defensible space because the planned housing would be occupied by watchful neighbors and the rebuilt street would enable easy police observation. Even though OHC’s specialty is planning and developing housing rather than parks, the organization recognized the dividends it could realize from in-

vesting staff time in working with others to design a crime-resistant greenspace.

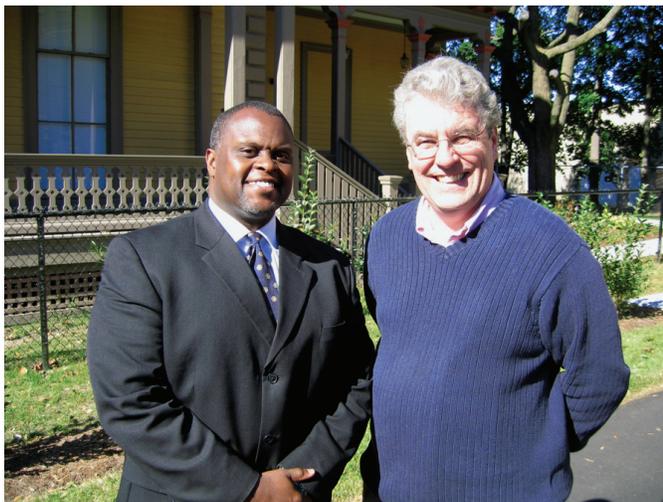


Figure 45. Under the leadership of Board Chair Robinson (Bob) Alston, Jr. (an entrepreneur and former banker) and Executive Director Frank Shea, Olneyville Housing Corporation has become a respected, high-capacity community developer, now doing housing, commercial and light industrial development. (Photo by Bill Geller/October 20, 2008)

For their part, the police have come to recognize the multiplier effect they can have on crime control if they both help shape developers’ revitalization projects and then adapt their own crime-fighting investments to bolster the community improvement impacts being achieved by developers. A national LISC Community Safety Initiative write-up on the Providence collaboration noted this strategic enhancement by the Providence PD: “[P]olice continue to weigh in regularly on community development plans and ... to structure their own crime-combating strategies around the growing number of community development projects taking shape throughout Providence.” (Community Safety Initiative, 2008, p. 10)

In shaping and advancing a development agenda the importance of trust and clear communication between the partners, which we mentioned earlier, becomes crucial to operational effectiveness. For instance, loose lips about the project concept and site prior to the developer’s acquisition of a problem property could escalate the land price to the point where the nonprofit developer could no longer afford to buy it as a site for affordable homes.

Build critical mass—major results came from a multi-year chain reaction

Working for 15 years with police-developer collaborative efforts around the nation has taught us that highly-motivated, self-starting individual officers or CDC staff members can have a significant impact on a particular place. Thus, a crime attractor/generator, such as a convenience store or house used for drug deals, might be shut down and demolished as an incorrigible nuisance. Such accomplishments, laudable as they are, often stand as isolated victories rather than as key components of an integrated action plan to durably change a neighborhood's safety and economic conditions. The story of Olneyville told in this case study is *not* a story about an individual hero who beat the odds in mastering a single problem property. Rather, it is a story about a robust, *funded*, multi-party, multi-year collaboration. To be sure, the collaboration had its individual heroes, including practitioners, advisors and investors, but its greatest power grew from persistent, integrated, synergistic work by organizations with specialized skills. Together, they accomplished more than any of them could operating individually.

The chain reaction that culminated in safer, more livable places was kept moving at many key stages by practitioners who enjoyed enough discretion over their own daily schedule or organizational resources to act on their vision of what could be. And as frequently occurs with pioneers, at moments in which formal authority was less clearly available, sometimes they decided it would be better to seek forgiveness, if necessary, than prior permission. So far as we know, no forgiveness has yet been needed.

In the Olneyville turnaround, several key components seem to have contributed importantly to the successful chain reaction. To summarize, those elements and their sequence were:

- ✱ ***One officer's initiative.*** Tom Masse was assigned to a Providence Police Department special-unit community policing program in Olneyville and adjacent neighborhoods. Energized by ideas he heard in a Community Safety Initiative workshop at a national Weed and Seed conference, he decided to venture

beyond the kind of police-community engagement generally practiced in Providence and to explore a greater power-sharing collaboration with community groups, including Olneyville Housing Corporation.

- ✱ ***Bureaucratic protection for the maverick officer.*** Masse had a couple of key allies among higher-ups in the Providence Police Department—particularly then-Lieutenant Paul Fitzgerald, who headed the Community Policing Bureau in which Masse served. By pointing to the contractual obligations of the Weed and Seed grant that funded the community policing unit, Fitzgerald was able to create a bureaucratic safety zone within which Masse could experiment with unconventional community partnerships as a means of accomplishing core police goals.
- ✱ ***Neighborhood planning crystallized the importance of transforming the area between Manton Avenue and the River.*** The Olneyville Collaborative organized a neighborhood planning process, which included consideration of how best to develop a new park on the former brownfield site between Aleppo and the River. (Funding for this park had been secured earlier.) During this planning process, it became clear that the park would not have the transformative neighborhood impact the community hoped for unless the blight and crime problems in the swath between Manton Avenue and the River were adequately addressed.
- ✱ ***New vision, strategies and determination from a new mayor and police chief.*** Mayor David Cicilline was elected on the promise of more effective, efficient, honest city government; and he sought and found in Dean Esserman a police leader with a proven track record of using unconventional community-police problem-solving collaborations, together with tough traditional law enforcement, to address long-standing problems of crime and community decline. The mayor was sworn in on January 8, 2003, and he swore in Chief Esserman two days later.

* ***A community developer sensed and acted on the new opportunity to work with police.*** Frank Shea, at the helm of the Olneyville Housing Corporation, understood that Officer Masse’s efforts were different and more promising than the style of policing to which people had become accustomed in this neighborhood. OHC staff met Masse half way, asking more of him and responding more readily to his requests that they turn their eyes, ears

and brains to specific problem locations and troublemakers the Officer wanted to address.

Shea—along with other community leaders and staff at Rhode Island LISC—also recognized the new horizons that might be opening to them as a consequence of Mayor Cicilline’s election and selection of Esserman as Chief. Years of steadfast work by OHC finally found a more fertile policy environment in which to operate. As Barbara Fields put it: “‘Luck’ in this case was preparation (OHC working steadily over years) meeting opportunity (Dean Esserman’s arrival and a return of the police to the community).” In some other cities, community developers have a big “aha” moment realizing their *self-interest* requires them to become involved with law enforcement authorities in addressing crime problems. Notably, that was *not* the transition for the key

development leaders (Frank Shea and Barbara Fields) involved in this story. Both realized for several years how important it was to somehow deal with crime as a key success factor in planning and carrying out community development. But they didn’t know what to do or who to work with. The big change for developers in this Olneyville story was encountering outward-looking, collaborative police officers—first Tom Masse and a couple



Figure 46. Above: The community garden in Riverside Park has above-ground planters because the brownfield remediation that made the park possible capped off the contaminated ground and added a thin layer of earth on top of the cap sufficient for ground cover but not vegetables. In the background, on the north side of Aleppo Street are new OHC-developed homes. (Photo: 10/20/08-Geller) **Below:** Neighborhood children have a safe playground close to home and within easy view of the homes fronting the park and of police and other guardians driving by on Aleppo or coming down the hill on Pelham Street. (Photo:10/5/09-AI Weems for Rhode Island LISC)



of supervisors in 2002 and then newly appointed Chief Dean Esserman and District Commander Hugh Clements starting in 2003. As Barbara Fields told us, “It was great that the Police Department cared and that we were working together. Even though there still would be issues, we now had a friendly, reliable partner.”

- ✱ ***A marked increase in CDC development capacity.*** Olneyville Housing Corporation, along with other CDCs affiliated with Rhode Island LISC, had matured in its capacity to produce and manage rehabbed and new housing—a new capacity that led community leaders, government officials and philanthropic foundations to consider the CDC a valued partner in a neighborhood turnaround strategy.
- ✱ ***National support for Rhode Island LISC.*** LISC’s Community Safety Initiative, led by then-program director Lisa Belsky (and in more recent years by Julia Ryan), thought the leadership and other ingredients necessary for potent police-community developer partnerships existed in Providence and energetically recommended the CSI program to Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields.
- ✱ ***Rhode Island LISC’s investment in police-developer teamwork.*** Fields tested her staff’s appetite for embracing the national CSI strategy and got a positive response. She added her staff’s enthusiasm to what she saw as a new landscape of policy, operational and investment opportunities brought to Providence by the new mayor and new chief of police. And she coupled these changes with her appraisal that several local LISC-affiliated CDCs now had a substantial bricks-and-mortar development capacity. That combination of ingredients created a tipping point, and Fields decided to take a chance on a potentially robust community development-public safety strategy. She invested the time and talents of existing Rhode Island LISC staff and, on advice from Belsky and her colleagues at CSI, hired a Community Safety Coordinator who would be based in the Rhode Island LISC office (and whose salary was underwritten in the early years by a grant from the

national CSI program).

- ✱ ***New police leadership saw a commitment to robust police-community partnerships as a centerpiece of its crime-fighting strategy.*** Under Chief Esserman’s leadership, police involvement with and support for police-community developer innovative partnering persisted and grew. He invested personal time and reputation in understanding, championing and encouraging his organization to engage imaginatively in this newfound partnership with developers. His long-standing relationship with Bill Geller in the police world gave him extra confidence to work with national LISC (where Geller served as senior public safety consultant for the Community Safety Initiative). Esserman’s new and positive relationship with CSI program director Lisa Belsky only added to his vision of what was possible. Plus he brought with him from police work and work as a prosecutor in New York City an appreciation for the potency of LISC in turning around destitute and embattled neighborhoods from Brooklyn to the South Bronx (and nationally).
- ✱ ***Hot spots were cooled.*** Working in concert OHC, the Providence police, other city agencies, and the Attorney General’s Nuisance Abatement Task Force targeted the neighborhood’s three most notorious crime-prone, blighted buildings. The result was that OHC gained site control of all three residential properties and reversed their crime-generating ways through relocation of problem tenants and rehab or replacement of the physical structures.
- ✱ ***OHC envisions the future park as the anchor for housing development and organizes stakeholders for large-scale planning.*** With the hot spots calmed and redevelopment now more feasible in the area, OHC positioned the planned park as the anchor for developing attractive, affordable new residential properties along Aleppo Street and on intersecting streets. The new homes would look out over a park on the banks of a reclaimed river. With this game plan, Frank Shea directed his own organization’s resources—and organized broader resources through the Olneyville Col-

laborative—to grow a critical mass of capacity to “build away crime” on a schedule and in a sequence that made sense to the police, public officials looking at re-election cycles, the Attorney General’s Nuisance Abatement Task Force, and other public and private-sector stakeholders.

- ✱ ***CPTED training, with the right people involved, helps shape plans for the park and adjacent housing.*** The key local players, with advice and crucial assistance from national CSI and from local Safety Coordinator Nancy Howard, decided to invest in planning the park in a way that would maximize its potential as a public safety attractor/generator. They chose to engage in an intensive, not inexpensive, professionally-led CPTED training. This training would be built not on hypothetical examples or cases from other cities but on specific local priority projects (including the planned new Riverside Park). With encouragement from Nancy Howard, the key police, government and community development leaders saw to it that the right, diverse group of professionals and community members attended the CPTED training/planning.
- ✱ ***An unconventional alliance, including police and community leaders, advocates and acts on the CPTED recommendations.*** With organizational support coming from both the police and community development industries, the collaborators grabbed and ran with key portions of the ambitious CPTED agenda they had crafted during their training. Among notable early successes was the somewhat risky and quite atypical joint lobbying effort to persuade the City to reverse course and invest in rebuilding an unusable stretch of Aleppo Street along the new Riverside Park site. Believing their advocacy goals would fall on receptive ears of City budget minders, the team adopted a persuasion strategy that avoided accusing City leadership of being uncaring and instead offered compelling evidence that the several hundred thousand dollar road repair would leverage millions of dollars of investment in much needed affordable housing and recreational space.
- ✱ ***Street access means the planned park and***

housing will be sensible and defensible.

When the street reconstruction was secured, the park could now be safeguarded efficiently by patrolling police officers, who could see the entire park from their cars. And the eventual new residents of housing along the park could keep watch for safety and maintenance issues in the park and along Aleppo Street.

- ✱ ***Real development achievements—a new park and new housing.*** Riverside Park and its bike path were built with a combination of public, private and volunteer investments, giving residents throughout Olneyville the amenity of a lovely greenway along the revived Woonasquatucket River. OHC developed new, highly desirable, affordable housing facing and near the park.
- ✱ ***Long-term stakeholders’ commitment.*** Residents are proud of what they have helped create in Olneyville—not just proud, but safer and better off financially. They have become strong stakeholders in the sustainability of these accomplishments and will continue to seek ways to build on these victories for an ever-stronger, safer, more livable neighborhood. By creating a community garden in Riverside Park, the team structured additional invitations and opportunities for community members to use the park and care about its safety and upkeep.

Share credit among collaborators

Many of the police and community development practitioners in the Olneyville story had the wisdom to share credit in public ways. The developers gave awards to the police and vice versa. People were smart about being inclusive at ribbon-cutting celebrations. The predictable result was a greater sense of involvement, mutual trust and understanding, and willingness to commit scarce resources to support continued police-developer partnering.

Measurable ROI matters

Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields, in an interview in early 2003 shortly after she agreed to invest time, reputation and dollars in a series of police-community developer collaboration, acknowledged she was concerned about

whether the return on investment could be documented in the way she was accustomed to with other LISC initiatives:

“It’s going to take a very innovative funder because we have prided ourselves in tangible results at LISC. [With this initiative] it is a different kind of result. Enhanced community safety is a lot harder to measure than 16 new apartments and 14 new homes. There are some funders who will be interested, but we really have to engage them and give them things they can look at. Some of it is intangible—it’s based on people’s perceptions. I think it’s very sellable on the CDC level. The boards of the CDCs are very excited about this because they live in the neighborhoods and they know when things have changed.”

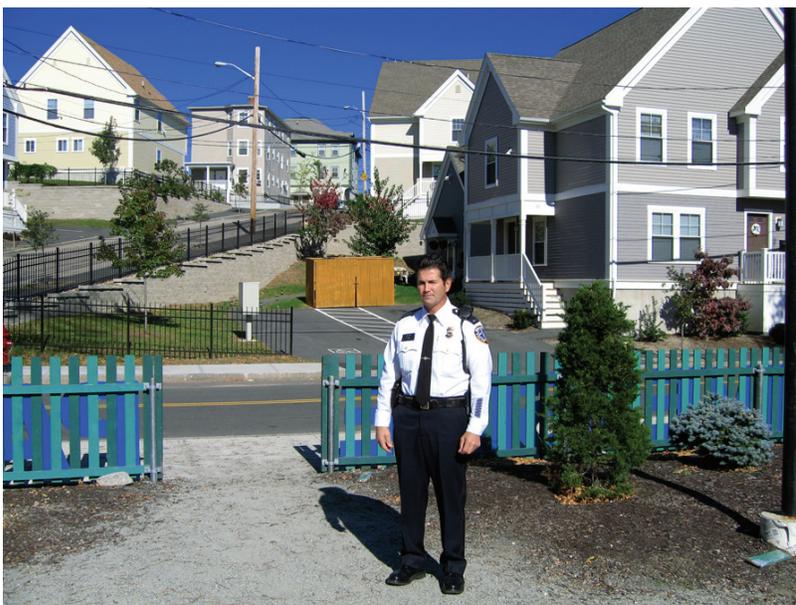
Chief Dean Esserman and Barbara Fields acknowledged in that same interview that, as others have said, what is measured is what matters, and there are parallel challenges in measuring successes in both the policing and developer domains. The Chief observed: “We still measure police performance through anecdotes...and sometimes, the more heroic the better. But we have yet to figure out how to measure long term, sustained successes. We need to encourage that.” To which Barbara Fields replied:

“I understand that. I think we are always looking for that exciting type of story. On the real estate side, I’d like to give out awards for five years of fabulous maintenance of 32 apartments. But instead, we’re there for the ribbon cutting or groundbreaking. It’s almost a parallel situation where we don’t know effectively how to do that. But I think we do

have an opportunity now to think about those things and build alliances with your efforts, Dean.”



Figure 47. Above: Lt. Dean Isabella, Commander of the Fifth District, stands in Riverside Park as local children enjoy the playground. The youngest of seven children, he grew up in this neighborhood when it was a much tougher place and is proud to have helped bring these kids a playground he never had as a child. Below: Across Aleppo Street from the playground are OHC-developed new homes that, according to the Lieutenant, have transformed this area of Olneyville, cutting crime down to “almost nothing.” A sergeant in the District when the transformative work was first being planned, Isabella said working with OHC was tremendously helpful to the police: “To be able to sit down and design the park together so we can police it better was just an enormous advantage. We’re going to have to police it eventually anyway, so getting the design right in the first place made our work much easier.” (Photos: Top, Joe Vaughan for Rhode Island LISC-8/08; bottom, Bill Geller-10/08)



One key challenge is figuring out what to measure to track changes in public safety and community livability as actually experienced by residents and others in a given area. A related challenge is incorporating the selected measurements into the planning, operational and assessment systems of busy and cash-strapped police and development organizations. Addressing both challenges is a high priority among the next steps in the evolution of “building our way out of crime” partnerships.

The foreclosure crisis is a genuine threat to sustainability of progress in neighborhoods like Olneyville

Recent times have brought an escalation in foreclosures afflicting a number of Providence’s low-income neighborhoods, including Olneyville. A newspaper story reported that

“new property owners in some neighborhoods...mark their turf with padlocks, plywood and messages such as the one scrawled on a front door in Olneyville: ‘Copper Gone.’ Vacant houses have always been easy prey for vandals, no less so when the owners are giant banks, companies representing Wall Street investors. Block by block, foreclosures are scarring the landscape in neighborhoods such as Olneyville, Elmwood and the West End, raising fears that the deteriorating real-estate market could hurt property values and undermine years of urban redevelopment efforts. These are the same neighborhoods that have absorbed tens of millions of dollars in city and state tax incentives to transform vacant mills into loft apartments, restore neglected Victorians and open restaurants.... Rhode Island’s foreclosure rate during the second quarter of [2007] was the highest in New England and above the national average, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. On average 8 out of every 1,000 mortgages in Rhode Island fell into foreclosure during the second quarter.... That is four times the foreclosure rate...in the second quarter of 1991, during the state banking crisis ... and a recession.... [T]he statewide foreclosure rate during the second

quarter was less than 1 percent, but ... in the city’s Olneyville section, state housing officials estimate the foreclosure rate is closer to 9 percent.

The potential for further deterioration in Olneyville’s housing stock worries people like Frank Shea.... Shea recently pointed to a boarded-up multi-family house on Julian Street, a stone’s throw from about \$5 million worth of housing the [Olneyville Housing] Corporation has built with grants and tax credits during the last five years. ‘This has the potential to undo 10 years of blood, sweat and tears on the community’s behalf,’ Shea said recently as he led a reporter on a tour of the neighborhood. ‘The real-estate market in this area was so hot, this neighborhood saw 350-percent price increases. But if that’s [driven by] speculation without value and home ownership, it’s devastating for the neighborhood.’” (Arditi, 2007b)

Shea pointed out a “house across the street from The D’Abate School, on Kossuth Street, which has been sold five times. The four-unit house was first sold for \$35,000 in 2002, and five sales later its price had spiked to \$350,000. The first three owners ‘doubled their money,’ Shea said, but ‘the luck ran out on the last owner.’ The house is now in foreclosure.” (Arditi, 2007a)

In September 2007, Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline “warned state housing officials that home foreclosures in the city have reached the level of a ‘crisis’ that could spread to other communities” (Arditi, 2007a)

And that was 2007.

The future prospects for successful police-developer collaboration in Olneyville

By 2009, some of the worst case predictions of two years earlier were coming to pass in Rhode Island and everywhere else. The greatest hope of Olneyville and other affordable neighborhoods

weathering the economic storm seemed to rest mainly on the ingenuity of community developers in seizing opportunities amidst declining property values and on the success of federal government efforts to continue investing in affordable housing while working pervasively to reverse the eco-



ability to gather resources). We need to pursue opportunities based on impact in the neighborhood, and the police on the street are key to informing our opinions.”

As we noted earlier in this case study, OHC has



Figure 48. Riverside park during winter 2009 became a favorite spot for cross-country skiers, a group of whom worked at a local high-tech company and skied daily during their lunch breaks. (Photo: Jessica Vega, Olneyville Housing Corp., 1/09)

conomic tsunami.

Facing economic and other challenges, what does the future look like to the leaders of the Olneyville resurgence? Barbara Fields acknowledged, “There’s a lot more to do, and the housing market will make new development tough—and it is already putting real pressure on the existing for-sale stock. A key thing left to do is to complete the park.” But she expressed confidence in following the path the Olneyville partners have blazed together over the past several years: “We have no doubt that this is the way to get things done. There is an unbreakable triangular bond now—we, OHC, and our partners in the PPD are committed to staying this course.”

Frank Shea, too, recognized the dangers presented by the current housing environment:

“The foreclosure problems suggest how easy it is for the pressures that can impact a neighborhood like this to cause a backslide in progress. The positive aspect of it is that we are hearing from the police about problem properties on an almost daily basis, and that can help to prioritize properties for us to attack. The scale of the problem in the neighborhood is beyond our resources (or

received financial awards and grants based on its accomplishments to date, and Shea insists the group has every intention of pressing forward, notwithstanding serious obstacles, with what the group and its police collaborators consider to be logical next steps in the turnaround of Olneyville:

“OHC continues to work with its partners in the area between Manton Avenue and the Woonasquatucket River. Development plans for the next five years would bring active community life to the Riverside Mills building, reclaim the casket warehouse site [on Aleppo Street next to new affordable housing] and put eyes on the park in that crucial location and on a large site across from the FOP lodge. OHC will continue to work on an advocacy strategy for the continued investment in infrastructure, park amenities and maintenance and policing.”

The bottom line: Would the partners replicate their collaboration if they had it to do over again?

As with the other case studies in this book, we asked key players in the story recounted on these pages whether, if they knew then what they know now, they would do all the work they've had to do to achieve their results. In short, was it worth it?

Nancy Howard, Rhode Island LISC's Community Safety Coordinator, told us: "The return on investment is well worth it. I don't believe that each organization individually would be able to accomplish what they have done as a team. Can it be frustrating? Of course but the outcomes help you forget most of the frustration."

Frank Shea responded: "All I can say is that it really is a partnership that is very productive for us. Sure it takes time to get to know your partners and share a mutual commitment, but somehow it doesn't feel like 'effort.' Our police partners have been genuinely good people to work with—which helps a lot. But the relationship has provided real benefits, which is why it is easy to continue."

Barbara Fields' answer:

"Would I do it again? Yes, over and over again. But without the commitment of the top official (Dean) it could have fallen apart. The cops have been great, and they have been recognized for this work. Tom Masse at first was ridiculed, I think, inside the force. In addition, if Frank [Shea] had left before the first housing was completed, then OHC would never have gotten the traction to get the recognition they needed. But they all persisted, and I would do this work again in a heartbeat. It was worth every ache, every pain—and there were many. Through persistence, good will, and hard work, we changed the way development gets done in Olneyville."

And on behalf of his team in the Providence Police Department, Chief Dean Es-serman's answer was:

"Would I invest again in police-developer collaboration? Without question! Was it Sandy Newman who said, 'The best way to fight crime is to invest in kids?' I agree, but I'd add—'and invest in neighborhoods.'"

What I've realized as a police chief facing budget challenges is that investing police resources in working with community developers becomes a *force multiplier*. We're investing dollars beyond the immediate response to crime. And those investments have paid off in lower crime rates, safer, stronger neighborhoods and better working relationships between cops and communities.

Our work with developers has also had benefits in terms of police satisfaction with the job. Because of work over the past few years, we now have several lieutenants, plus one who has gone on to be a captain, who have gotten enormous satisfaction out of leading their Police District's partnerships with developers. Each of them came to this kind of collaboration as crime fighter purists who had to be convinced. Well, their experiences *did* convince them, and as they say, converts make the best preachers.

I understand that in some cities the main contact with the police department for the community developer is the first line officer. I think we've made a good decision to have the middle ranks provide the main leadership for our partnerships with community developers. Unlike the personnel rotations in New York and some other cities, in Providence I keep the lieutenants in their district commander assignments for a few years, so they have a longer view of their job. I have those lieutenants really being the face of the Police Department in the community. It's not the people above them or below them in chain of command who are on most of the neighborhood committees. I do that on purpose because I don't want them to be shielded from most of the stakeholders in the community.

I see the passion that our field commanders are developing about building homes, about

providing the neighborhoods with a good gym, boxing rings and other recreational facilities. It's very exciting to see. Among other things, those lieutenants are asking themselves, 'What can I do to help build capacity in the neighborhood?' Those are great questions for our Department and our community partners to be addressing together."

The November 5, 2007 MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Awards ceremony, honoring the accomplishments of OHC, the police and others, was held in the children's playground at the new Riverside Park. That site is nestled be-

tween the historic Woonasquatucket River (coming back to life thanks to remediation work) and dozens of new, attractive, affordable homes on Aleppo Street—the street where, as Frank Shea once said, nobody used to come except for drugs and prostitution.

Surveying this landscape and reflecting on the creative, diligent, collaborative efforts that produced it, Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields addressed the assembled cops, residents, developers and dignitaries, saying: "I think we need to take a moment to appreciate the 'wow' of what has happened in this community." Less than two weeks earlier, Fields proudly told col-

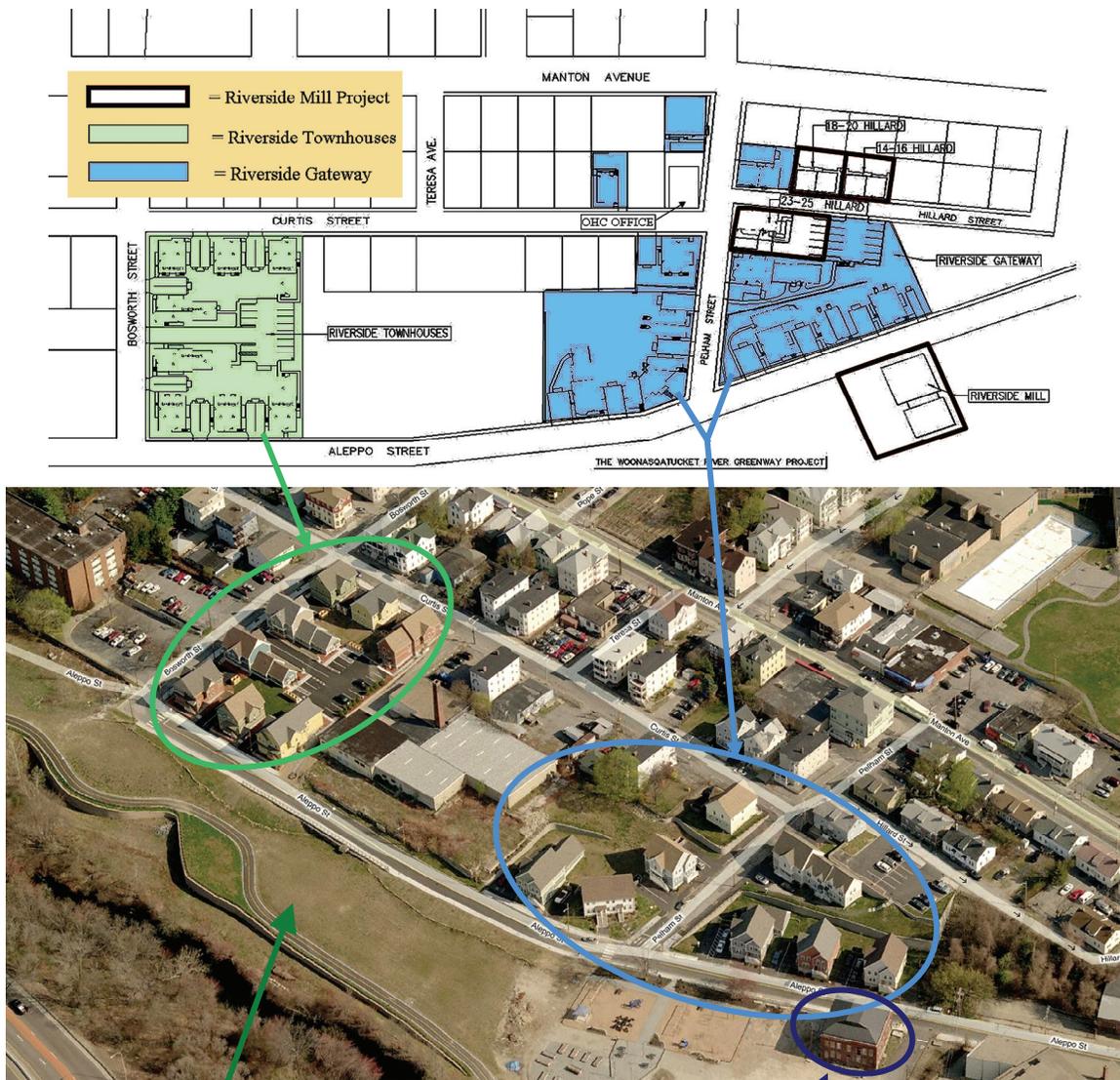


Figure 49. OHC's focus area in Olneyville, showing new OHC-developed homes along and north of Aleppo Street and the greenway/Riverside Park between Aleppo and the Woonasquatucket River. In the southeast corner is the burned-out red brick office building of Riverside Mills which will be renovated as a YMCA office & service center. (2008)

leagues that, in addition to other Rhode Island LISC partners, Olneyville Housing Corporation had just been awarded a considerable cash prize from the Bank of America Foundation to continue revitalizing Olneyville. “We couldn’t be more excited to see OHC recognized for the incredible work they have been doing tirelessly for so many years,” she wrote. “And to think that in the early ’90s I was told that the best plan for Olneyville would be to knock it down and pave it over for an industrial park. Fortunately, OHC board and staff have the vision, persistence and determination that is turning a disinvested neighborhood into a strong and resilient community.” (Fields, 2007)

Mayor David Cicilline joined the celebration of the collaboration’s landmark accomplishments at the 2007 MetLife event saying, “There’s probably not another neighborhood in Providence in which the transformation has occurred (to the extent) that has occurred in Olneyville.” (Smith, 2007s) At a previous OHC ribbon-cutting, the Mayor observed that the apartments and condominiums being dedicated will “allow working families to enjoy the benefits of safe, decent housing in a neighborhood of their choice.” (Davis, 2006) More recently, we asked Mayor Cicilline to elaborate on his thinking about the public safety-community development strategy. He said:

“Poverty is, fundamentally, a lack of opportunities and a deficit of supports. In Providence, we’ve sought to address this reality head on. We know that you can’t fight poverty and stimulate neighborhood-based economic development without focusing on crime prevention and reduction—and vice versa. We also know that public-private partnerships—built between stakeholders, the community and the men and women of our police force—can make all the difference. But while many jurisdictions see these as parallel tracks, Providence’s success has been based on the intentional merger of the public safety and community development strategies—a joining of forces that has resulted in better housing, better organized citizens, safer streets, and sustainable change.” (Cicilline, 2009)



We noted at the beginning of this case study that a decade ago, Olneyville native Jessica Vega as a teenager was warned by her mother to steer clear of the area between Manton Avenue and the river if she valued life and limb. Ms. Vega is now 29 years old. She attended the November 2007 MetLife Awards event at Riverside Park, where she told a reporter that today she has “no qualms about crossing to ‘the other side’ of Manton, going to the park and to work.” (Smith, 2007s) Her job, as a matter of fact, is right next door to the building on Manton Avenue that used to be ground zero for the neighborhood’s violence and decay. Ms. Vega works at Olneyville Housing Corporation as a Community Building Program Coordinator. We asked her to tell us what she thinks about Olneyville then and now. Her reply:

“It was an amazing experience being able to help with planning the playground and coming out with my children to build the park. Living off of Manton Avenue on Amherst Street years ago, this neighborhood was really bad and looked bad. Now it looks great, and you can actually see the change and revitalization of the neighborhood from the new homes to the new playground. When I lived here I was a young teen and even I knew not to come down by the old burned down mills on Aleppo Street where today it is Riverside Park. Now I don’t have to react as my mom did with me scared and worried because I was on the ‘other side’. I now feel safe about my own children playing down at Riverside Park with no worries. This neighborhood has definitely made many changes for the best, and I hope to continue helping in this process. Where once laid pieces of burned wood, knocked over trees, trash and bricks today stands a beautiful playground surrounded by beautiful homes, providing my old neighborhood security and life.” (Vega, 2008)

Credits, References & Sources for Additional Information

This case draws on successful MetLife Foundation Community-Police Partnership Award applications submitted for judging to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Community Safety Initiative in 2003 and 2006. The 2003 application was developed jointly by the Nickerson House Community Center, Providence Weed and Seed, and the Providence Police Department. The 2006 application was also a collaborative effort and was written principally by Frank Shea.

Interviews were conducted by Bill Geller and Lisa Belsky in 2003 with Chief Dean Esserman and Rhode Island LISC Executive Director Barbara Fields. We supplemented these formal interviews with many briefer conversations and written communications from then through February 2009. Additional interviews were conducted during 2007 and 2008 by Bill Geller and/or Lisa Belsky with OHC Executive Director Frank Shea, Chief Dean Esserman, Lt. Bob Lepre, Major Hugh Clements and Lt. Dean Isabella. Unless otherwise indicated, quotes from Dean Esserman, Barbara Fields, Frank Shea, Bob Lepre, Hugh Clements, Dean Isabella, Tom Masse and other key players are from those interviews, conversations and emails. The Providence Plan provided data on crime and calls for service and aerial photographs, and followed up with us to assist with interpretation of crime data. Crime maps and Census-based demographics for Olneyville were drawn from The Providence Plan's website.

Photo credits: Except as otherwise noted, all "before" photos of conditions in Olneyville are courtesy of the Olneyville Housing Corporation. "After" photos are from various sources: OHC, LISC's Community Safety Initiative (Julia Ryan, program director) and photos taken in March and October 2008 by Bill Geller. A photo of the interior of "the cave" as it appeared in March 2008 was taken by Officer Ron Pino. Aerial photographs are courtesy of The Providence Plan. The photograph of the 2007 MetLife Community-Police Partnership Awards ceremony in Olneyville is courtesy of LISC's Community Safety Initiative.

Photos of the Providence Police Department's Senior Staff Retreat in March 2008 and the photo of Chief Esserman at his desk in March 2008 are by Officer Ronald Pino of the Department's Information Technology unit. The group photo taken during that retreat of the PPD personnel who played key roles in the Fifth District's work in Olneyville was taken by Bill Geller, as was the March 2008 photo of Frank Shea on the front porch of OHC's office. The photographs of CPTED training in Olneyville are courtesy of Rhode Island LISC. Historic photos of Olneyville are courtesy of The Providence Plan and its collaborating organizations (e.g., Providence Preservation Society).

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The Providence Plan is a valuable resource. It was launched in 1992 as a partnership between the State of Rhode Island, the City of Providence, and the private sector. Its mission is to improve the economic and social well being of the City, its residents, and its neighborhoods. The group provides data analysis for government agencies and community groups on a variety of issues, such as economic development, public safety, health, jobs, and education. They also operate programs that focus on children's well-being, workforce development, and community building. Its board of directors includes representatives from the professions, academic and social service institutions, and state and local government. Providence Police Chief Dean Esserman is among the 15 board members. For an organizational overview, see the Providence Plan description on the website of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership: http://www2.urban.org/nnip/desc_pro.html

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Summary Table of Contents of *Building Our Way Out of Crime*

Foreword by Bill Bratton and Paul Grogan

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

Chapter 2: The Roots of Today's Community Development and Policing Strategies

A Prefatory Note about the Case Studies in Chapters 3-5

Chapter 3: Providence, Rhode Island: Olneyville Housing Corporation and Providence Police Department

Chapter 4: Charlotte, North Carolina: The Housing Partnership and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

Chapter 5: Minneapolis, Minnesota: Great Neighborhoods! Development Corporation and Minneapolis Police Department

Chapter 6: Police-Community Developer Collaboration: Getting Started and Terms of Engagement

Chapter 7: Sustaining and Growing Police-Community Developer Partnerships



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