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Response Guides Series
No. 9

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Dealing With Crime and Disorder in Urban Parks

Jim Hilborn

www.cops.usdoj.gov

Center for
Problem-Oriented Policing

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About the Response Guide Series

The *Response Guides* are one of three series of the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police.* The other two are the *Problem-Specific Guides* and *Problem-Solving Tools.*

The *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* summarize knowledge about how police can reduce the harm caused by specific crime and disorder problems. They are guides to preventing problems and improving overall incident response, not to investigating offenses or handling specific incidents. Neither do they cover all of the technical details about how to implement specific responses. The guides are written for police—of whatever rank or assignment—who must address the specific problems the guides cover. The guides will be most useful to officers who:

- Understand basic problem-oriented policing principles and methods
- Can look at problems in depth
- Are willing to consider new ways of doing police business
- Understand the value and the limits of research knowledge
- Are willing to work with other community agencies to find effective solutions to problems.

The *Response Guides* summarize knowledge about whether police should use certain responses to address various crime and disorder problems, and about what effects they might expect. Each guide:

- Describes the response
- Discusses the various ways police might apply the response
- Explains how the response is designed to reduce crime and disorder
- Examines the research knowledge about the response
- Addresses potential criticisms and negative consequences that might flow from use of the response
- Describes how police have applied the response to specific crime and disorder problems, and with what effect.

The *Response Guides* are intended to be used differently from the *Problem-Specific Guides.* Ideally, police should begin all strategic decision-making by first analyzing the specific crime and disorder problems they are confronting, and then using the analysis results to devise particular responses. But certain responses are so commonly considered and have such potential to help address a range of specific crime and disorder problems that it makes sense for police to learn more about what results they might expect from them.

Readers are cautioned that the *Response Guides* are designed to *supplement* problem analysis, not to *replace* it. Police should analyze all crime and disorder problems in their local context before implementing responses. Even if research knowledge suggests that a particular response has proved effective elsewhere, that does not mean the response will be effective everywhere. Local factors matter a lot in choosing which responses to use.

Research and practice have further demonstrated that, in most cases, the most effective overall approach to a problem is one that incorporates several different responses. So a single response guide is unlikely to provide you with sufficient information on which to base a coherent plan for addressing crime and disorder problems. Some combinations of responses work better than others. Thus, how effective a particular response is depends partly on what other responses police use to address the problem.

These guides emphasize effectiveness and fairness as the main considerations police should take into account in choosing responses, but recognize that they are not the only considerations. Police use particular responses for reasons other than, or in addition to, whether or not they will work, and whether or not they are deemed fair. Community attitudes and values, and the personalities of key decision-makers, sometimes mandate different approaches to addressing crime and disorder problems. Some communities

and individuals prefer enforcement-oriented responses, whereas others prefer collaborative, community-oriented, or harm-reduction approaches. These guides will not necessarily alter those preferences, but are intended to better inform them.

The COPS Office defines community policing as "a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime." These guides emphasize *problem-solving* and *police-community partnerships* in the context of addressing specific public safety problems. For the most part, the organizational strategies that can facilitate problem-solving and police-community partnerships vary considerably and discussion of them is beyond the scope of these guides.

These guides have drawn on research findings and police practices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. Even though laws, customs and police practices vary from country to country, it is apparent that the police everywhere experience common problems. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important that police be aware of research and successful practices beyond the borders of their own countries.

Each guide is informed by a thorough review of the research literature and reported police practice, and each guide is anonymously peer-reviewed by a line police officer, a police executive and a researcher prior to publication. The review process is independently managed by the COPS Office, which solicits the reviews.

The COPS Office and the authors encourage you to provide feedback on this guide and to report on your own agency's experiences dealing with a similar problem. Your agency may have

effectively addressed a problem using responses not considered in these guides and your experiences and knowledge could benefit others. This information will be used to update the guides. If you wish to provide feedback and share your experiences it should be sent via e-mail to askCOPSRC@usdoj.gov.

For more information about problem-oriented policing, visit the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing online at www.popcenter.org. This web site offers free online access to:

- The *Problem-Specific Guides* series
- The companion *Response Guides and Problem-Solving Tools* series
- Special publications on crime analysis and on policing terrorism
- Instructional information about problem-oriented policing and related topics
- An interactive problem-oriented policing training exercise
- An interactive *Problem Analysis Module*
- Online access to important police research and practices
- Information about problem-oriented policing conferences and award programs.

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Members of the San Diego; National City, California; and Savannah, Georgia police departments provided feedback on the guides' format and style in the early stages of the project.

Debra Cohen, Ph.D. and Cynthia Pappas oversaw the project for the COPS Office and research for the guides was conducted at the Criminal Justice Library at Rutgers University by Phyllis Schultze. Suzanne Fregly edited this guide.

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Introduction

Urban parks are often difficult to police. Compared with streets and buildings, their boundaries are complex and ill-defined. Often the police don't have accurate data on exactly *what* crime and disorder is occurring in the urban park, or *where.* Parks are also difficult to patrol, they're hard to lock up, and it is difficult to install alarm systems in them. Natural vegetation, especially in parks with more naturalistic settings, often inhibits surveillance, and closed-circuit television (CCTV) is unlikely to be able to cover the whole park.[1] There is usually a police response only when the "problems" in a park have gotten so bad that the public has demanded a visible police reaction. Until there is such a "crisis," the urban park isn't usually a policing priority.

Several of the Problem-Specific Guides provide valuable ideas for dealing with many of the antisocial and criminal acts that occur in urban parks, including the following guides:

- *Disorderly Youth in Public Places*
- *Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets*
- *Graffiti*
- *Illicit Sexual Activity in Public Places*
- *Panhandling*
- *People With Mental Illness*
- *Underage Drinking*

This Response Guide doesn't emphasize specific crimes; rather, it emphasizes reducing crime and disorder in parks as a whole. It is intended to help police take an important leadership role in reclaiming an urban park from crime and disorder and ensuring that its facilities can once again benefit a broad spectrum of citizens. Though each individual park will need its own planned intervention, this guide looks at how a park's design, maintenance, and policing can affect its crime and disorder problems. To do this, it seeks to answer two questions:

- What do police know about park design, planning, and maintenance that can explain how a park can come to be perceived as "risky," "bad," or unsafe?
- What can the police do to make the "risky" park become perceived as a safe and desirable place that is important for the local community?

This guide's core assumption is that the key to reducing crime and disorder in urban parks is for police to engage the local community in all stages of the problem-solving process, to ensure that (1) there will be a dominant legal use of the park, and (2) that local community members will act as natural guardians. The police must balance the legitimate demands of local politicians, city officials, urban planners, parks department personnel, etc., and deal with the different advocacy groups,[§] as well as listen and respond to the local community's concerns and hopes for the park. There will always be many diverse and sometimes competing stakeholders, each with their own interests in the policing of an urban park. Despite this, there are many examples of police working effectively to reclaim urban parks, as seen in Appendix B, which contains summaries of some of these projects.

[§]For example, "New Yorkers for Parks," www.ny4p.org produces publications such as *The Report Card on Parks 2007,* to pressure New York City to maintain, and even increase, the park budget; and *Tracking Crime in New York City Parks,* to demand that the New York City Police Department provide more-detailed information about park crime.

Definitions

The Place, Sense of Place, and Place-Making

To understand the urban park, one should start with the concept of place. At its most basic, place refers just to a *location*. In crime analysis,[2] place is defined as "a very small area, such as an address, street corner, or block face." A hot spot is simply a place with a "geographic concentration of crime." The recent advent of geographic information systems has made it possible to be quite precise in locating concentrations of crime and disorder, even in public open space such as an urban park. Thus place becomes a very small area with a precise geographical location and boundary.

But place is much more than just a location. Places can acquire meaning. People develop their own *sense of place.*[3] Potential users can see a park as either a place of safety or a risk to be avoided. A potential offender can see the park as an attractive place of criminal opportunity. It is critical to understand both the local community's and the offender's perceptions, because that will determine their use of the park.

Any place has a myriad of meanings attached to it—some widely shared and some idiosyncratic...When these different senses of place are both public and (to some degree) shared, there often is conflict over what the appropriate meaning of a place may be.[4]

Without such a personal *sense of place*, there is little investment in a location; instead, people see it as just a space, with no meaning or value. Without personal meaning there is little motivation to get involved in crime prevention or to cooperate with the police. In response, organizations such as the Project for Public Spaces in the United States, and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment in the United Kingdom, have been developing a model of *place-making.* [5] This is a community-organizing process that involves local people in the design and planning of

the environment, to develop a positive sense of place. Policing the urban park is in many ways a "battle for the hearts and minds" over the particular park's meaning to potential users (whether social or antisocial).

When police involve the local community in the reduction of crime and disorder in a park, they are engaged in a problem-solving process at a very specific time and place; they are also promoting community safety and strengthening the local community's sense of place. Thus there can be both an immediate crime reduction and also a more general and lasting community benefit. There is even evidence that, if people can access a safe green space such as an urban park, then there will be less crime and disorder in the local area.[6]

The Urban Park

The first modern urban park was designed in the United Kingdom in the 1890s as a solution to the social problems generated by mass urbanization. Today the park serves a wide variety of social purposes. An urban park is defined here as follows:

A bounded area of public open space that is maintained in a "natural" or semi-natural (landscaped) state and set aside for a designated purpose, usually to do with recreation. Parks are often enclosed by a boundary barrier, which may be permeable or semi-permeable (a hedge, fence, or wall). An urban park is as much a designed space as an urban shopping mall or a recreational complex such as Disneyland.

In understanding an urban park, it is important to look at the following:

- The original design and planned purpose for the park, and present maintenance
- How the park is now being used, and by what groups
- Any issues of crime and disorder
- Whether the local community sees the park as risky, or as a safe and desirable place.

The local community is defined here as people who live within 10 minutes' walk of a park, since this population is most likely to use the park regularly and to act as the park's natural guardians. Users from farther away are less likely to develop a strong place identity with the park.

The "Safe" Park

A "safe" urban park is defined here as follows:

> A dynamic place where the design, maintenance, and policing of the park work together so that the general public perceives the park as a safe place, wants to go to the park regularly, and spends their optional time in the park engaged in valued activities. Crime and disorder is limited, and diverse usage of the park by different groups is tolerated. Legal activities are the dominant activities in the park. Because the local community values the park, it has a sense of "ownership" of it, and there are sufficient numbers of users who act as "natural guardians" to ensure informal social control. They also support formal interventions by park management and police when such interventions are necessary.

These are signs that people consider a park safe:

- Parents take children there
- Females go there as often as males
- Elderly people regularly visit the park
- Workers have lunch or take breaks there.

The "Risky" Park

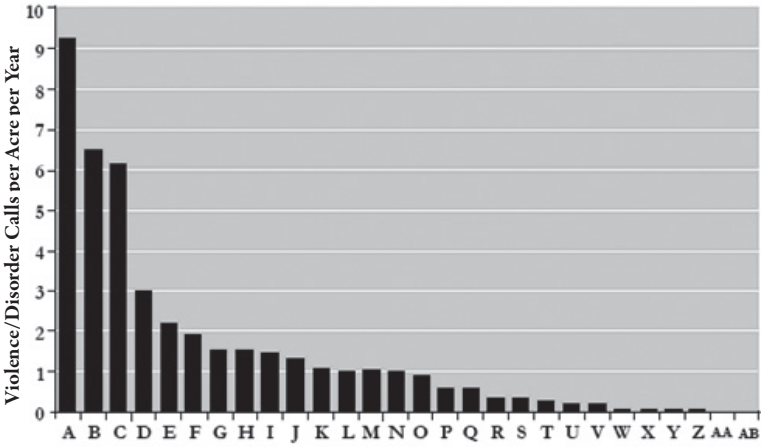
A "risky" urban park is defined here as follows:

> A place where crime and disorder has become the norm to the degree that local users consider the park unsafe, try to avoid being in the park, and limit their time in the park to necessary activities. Crime and public disorder such as vandalism, littering, dog fouling,[§] alcohol and drug abuse, and public sex have become the dominant activities in the park.

[§]The term "dog fouling" is used in the United Kingdom. Leaving your dog's solid waste is more than just littering; it's a health issue.

It is important to remember that most parks don't become problematic places. As an example, the following chart shows the concentration of crime risk in 28 parks in Chula Vista (California). Most of the parks have a low number of violence/disorder calls. Only a few parks have become "risky facilities"[7] or are seen by the public as being "bad" or unsafe. Though all could be classified as parks, only a few places were risky. These few were very different *places*.

Crime Risk in 28 Chula Vista Parks (Over Two Acres)



The concept of risky facilities is a new theory of crime concentration that further develops the idea of a hot spot. Bars, drugstores, convenience stores, certain neighborhoods, and parks are examples of places that people have often seen as likely hot spots. But the reality is that only a small proportion of any specific type of facility will account for the majority of crime and disorder problems experienced or produced by the group of facilities as a whole, as shown in the Chula Vista park system.

What makes some facilities more risky than others? The following factors can help explain the differences between safe and risky parks:

Size: The park is large and attracts many users, some of whom become victims.

Suitable targets: The park contains a lot of things particularly vulnerable to theft or vandalism.

Location: The park is close to an area with a high crime rate.

Repeat victims: The park attracts a few victims involved in a large proportion of crimes.

Crime attractor: The park attracts many offenders or a few high-rate offenders.

Poor design: The park's physical layout makes offending easy, rewarding, or risk-free.

Poor management: Management practices or processes enable or encourage offending.

The park will affect the local community. The park's crime attractors and generators can elevate the perceived neighborhood crime and incivilities, and thereby increase the local community's fear of crime. An exploratory analysis of parks and crime in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)[8] suggests the following:

- Parks can be crime generators. Crime, especially violence and disorder, clusters in parks and on immediately surrounding streets.
- Parks with more activity generators, especially sport fields, experience less crime. This may result from higher guardianship levels and natural surveillance. This relationship is stronger for larger parks, perhaps because their size draws in even more people for more guardianship.
- Parks in residential neighborhoods experience higher crime levels than in other neighborhoods. This may result from a retreat from informal control or from lower surveillance.

Parks, like other public open spaces, have a much greater positive or negative impact than previously recognized. The "risky" park should be a high policing priority.

If the "risky" park is large enough, then there may even be several distinct hot spots or unsafe places within the park as a whole. Several different crime problems may exist at each location, requiring a separate problem-solving process. However, it is also possible that diffusion will spread a successful intervention into other parts of the park.[§]

[§]See Problem-Solving Tools Guide #10 *Analyzing Crime Displacement and Diffusion.* Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

A "bad" place or risky facility sends out cues inviting crime and disorder. An important part of place-level problem-solving is to identify these cues and then change the message to one that invites civility and order. The messages in a public space tell how people are actually using it. These are signs that indicate whether people see the park as risky:

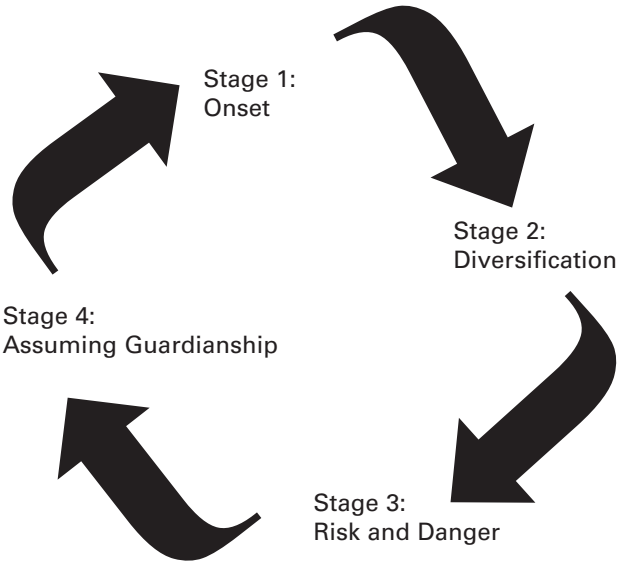
- People go through the park as quickly as possible
- Drunken people hang out there
- Young males dominate the setting
- It is littered with syringes and beer bottles
- Younger children don't play there.

Successful policing of parks is a deliberate combination of community policing and problem-oriented policing. Successful prevention in a park will usually involve (1) experimenting with different design, maintenance, and policing strategies until the right combination for that specific park and its crime and disorder problems is found, while (2) working with the different groups that use the public space to promote the active community participation necessary for long-term crime prevention and community safety.

A Park's "Criminal Career"

Places can change over time and become either better or worse. The concept of a criminal career can be applied to a place. There is a four-stage model of a park's criminal career that is based on a study of crime in U.S. and Canadian national parks.[9] This model can help police assess a park and provide the correct response to the stage.

This four-stage model is shown here as a cycle of decline and renewal since the potential for either increased crime and disorder or recovery is always present. Parks are dynamic systems, and change is the only given.



Stage 1: Onset: The Threat of Disorder and the Rise of Fear

In the majority of the parks studied, problems started with what the researchers called "visible signs of depreciative behavior." Such depreciative behavior and related disorder are often seen as being "soft crimes" because of the relatively minor or nonserious nature of the offense. However, one can argue that if unchecked, then these gateway offenses lead to a spiral of more-serious crime and disorder by causing discomfort—even fear—in legitimate park users.

This version of the broken windows thesis[§] may explain how parks can fall into disorder and crime if no one regularly maintains them. Poor maintenance sends cues that can encourage a potential offender. The would-be offender sees graffiti, vandalism, dog fouling, and litter as signs that no one cares or is in charge. It is a question of the perceptions of the potential offender and other park users. Inaction by park management may lead to increased and potentially more-serious offenses.

It is critical that the park management and police pay attention to the signs of disorder, the potential for increased crime and disorder, and the community concern about such issues. The fear of crime is often more about the *perception* that there is an increase in crime and disorder than it is about a *real* increase.

[§]The term *broken windows* is a metaphor. Briefly, it argues that just as a broken window left untended is a sign that nobody cares and invites more broken windows, so disorderly behavior left unaddressed is a sign that nobody cares and leads to fear of crime, more-serious crime, and, ultimately, urban decay (Kelling and Coles 1996).

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Poor maintenance and conditions such as litter, graffiti and vandalism send cues to would-be offenders that the park is uncared for or that no one is in charge.

As mentioned, successful park crime-and-disorder policing is a deliberate combination of community policing and problem-oriented policing. There should be a balance, since too vigorous a focus on order maintenance can damage police and community relationships. Having a good working relationship with the local community is critical for crime prevention and community safety in the park.

Stage 2: Diversification and Escalation: Whose Park Is It?

Public space such as a park will always be a "contested space." For example, a dog owner wants his dog to run freely, but a runner or a mother with small children wants the dog on a leash. And no one likes dog fouling. Such conflicts are inherent to the park: dog owners versus runners, the old versus the young, drinkers versus nondrinkers, etc. Policing crime and disorder in a park usually involves negotiation with a wide range of users to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution or solutions. If the conflict isn't going to be resolved peacefully, then one side or another must lose. Park management and police must pay attention to conflict between users and/or complaints from users. Such information can be a clear signal that the park's ownership, along with its use, is starting to change.

As legal use declines, the park can head toward a "tipping point" from safe to unsafe. The escalation of crime and disorder generally ends with a high-profile public incident that formally defines the park as a dangerous place.

It is clear that if park management and police don't sufficiently act to preserve the perception of the park as a safe place, then law-abiding users' perception can change, with the park no longer seen as safe. The perception that the park is becoming risky can quickly become a reality. The loss of trust in the park management and police can then lead to legitimate users' abandoning the park. It is important to avoid this by responding to people's concerns as soon as possible.

Stage 3: Risk and Danger

People usually voluntarily go to a park. The local community as well as "outsiders" visit the park. As people's perceptions, or *sense of place,* change from feelings of attachment and belonging to negative emotions such as unease and fear, the park usage decreases.

While there may be hot spots of criminal and antisocial activity, the perception of risk will often exceed the actual level of crime and risk in the park as a whole. People's perceptions of crime and the associated fear will not only prevent them from using parks, but also the negative sense of place can accelerate the *speed* of the park's abandonment as well.

Maintaining local people's trust and confidence in the police and park management is critical in preventing the park from being seen as unsafe. The negative perception and fear of crime are as critical as the reality. Indeed, the negative perception can be a risk factor that increases the probability that the reality of the park will become as bad as people feared.

Once people lose trust in the park management and police, the potential legitimate users will tend to avoid the park unless it is necessary. This avoidance will continue until people see evidence that the park management and police are reclaiming it from illegitimate users. The police and park management must regain people's trust before legal activities become the park norm again.

Stage 4: Assuming Guardianship: Taking Back the Park

In Stage 4 of the model, the police and park management take back control of the park. This involves (1) reestablishing guardianship, and (2) actively recruiting legitimate users to lessen the park's vulnerability to crime.

There are both *passive* and *active* measures that help to restore control.

Passive efforts focus on blocking access to the park or removing the physical elements that facilitate crime. Changes in design and maintenance remove criminal opportunities. In Boston's (Massachusetts) Franklin Park, for example, motor vehicles had almost unlimited access. Public safety began to improve only after the parks department blocked some of the old carriage entrances and protected the park's internal spaces from vehicular traffic.[10] In other places, public areas used for illicit sex or for drug-related activity were opened up to natural surveillance through landscape management techniques.

Active techniques involve direct intervention by motivated people, such as legitimate users and/or park personnel, who organize the take-back effort. These people choose to become natural guardians of their park. The message now being sent to offenders is that "someone cares."

Boston's Franklin Park Coalition has worked to bring multiple law enforcement officials together to coordinate their coverage of the park and to share ideas and information. As a result, the local community no longer sees Franklin Park as dangerous.[11] The coalition works to ensure that there is police response and park maintenance.

Deploying uniformed personnel to confront illegitimate users is the most common tactic used to take back an unsafe park. There must be a demonstration of the jurisdiction's willingness to confront people engaged in crime and disorder, and to use sanctions. The reclamation of New York's Central Park involved the development of park enforcement patrols and an urban park ranger program both to confront crime and disorder and to establish the highly visible symbols of police uniforms.

The Importance of Natural Guardians

Policing a park is as much, or even more, about working to promote and increase legal and acceptable activities as it is about working to reduce or eliminate antisocial and unacceptable activities. The American advocate of public open spaces, William H. Whyte, put it best: "So-called undesirables are not the problem. It is the measures taken to combat them that [are] the problem... The best way to handle the problem of undesirables is to make the place attractive to everyone else."

Source: www.pps.org/info/placemakingtools/placemakers/wwhyte.

Vandalism and litter easily destroy the pleasure of being in a "natural" park setting. This is the fundamental reason why a majority of users engaged in legal activity is so critical to the park's continued viability.

Natural guardians can help to ensure park safety. These guardians are just ordinary citizens going about their daily routines in the park. A guardian is someone whose presence serves as a reminder to potential offenders that someone is noticing. The guardian's behavior also communicates that antisocial behavior is unacceptable. Potential offenders know that such guardians are ready to involve the park wardens/rangers or police, if necessary. A local guardian can be anyone who values and uses the park, and who decides to take on the responsibility of safeguarding it. A guardian can be almost anyone—one's age, gender, faith, ethnicity, education, or ability isn't critical. The key is for the person to choose to be socially responsible. Police will never have the resources or time to provide such intensive guardianship. Local guardians will have to "protect" a safe park and police can encourage them to do this by educating them about their role (see Box, "Helping to Take Back a Park").

It can require a lot of police time and effort to regain people's trust and deal with their fear. People's fear of crime isn't going to disappear by *telling* them that they're safe, especially when they aren't, or *feel* they aren't. Fear of crime requires that the police and park management are very honest about the real risks, provide as much objective data as possible, offer constructive suggestions for personal safety, and show people that the police and park management are concerned and will do whatever is necessary and legal to regain control of the park. Once people are no longer too afraid, then some will choose to become guardians.

Helping To Take Back a Park: A Concerned Citizen's Guide

Be patient; reaching the "tipping point" takes time.
It can take time and lots of hard work before an abandoned park reaches the "tipping point," where it shifts from being frightening and dangerous to safe and full of life. At some point, there will be a critical mass of positive activity, and the "feel" of the park will shift. Don't give up if it doesn't happen right away.

Don't put yourself in danger.
Drug dealers and other criminals who inhabit your park can be dangerous. Don't unnecessarily risk your safety by confronting them directly. There are many other effective strategies for making your park safer.

Don't go it alone.
Your police precinct is your most important resource for fighting crime, but developing relationships with the police takes time and work. Get to know the beat cops, your precinct's community affairs officer, and your precinct's commander. Go to the monthly meeting of your local police precinct community council, and let them know about the issues that matter to you.

Be the "eyes and ears" of the police.
Neither the police nor the park enforcement patrol can be in your park all the time. You can help by reporting any problems you see. The more you report problems, the more likely the police are to help you, as their distribution of resources is determined by the number of complaints they receive. You should also report problems about parks by calling 311, the city's information line, at any time.

Be specific about the problems.
Look for patterns and report them. Is there a particular time when kids hang out, when people sell or use drugs, or when dealers walk their pit bulls? Are there "regulars" who make trouble? More details make it easier for the police and park enforcement patrol to focus on the problem people, times, and places.

Get on the agenda.
Go to every monthly meeting of your local police precinct community council. Bring others with you. There is no better way for the police to know about the issues that matter to you. Also attend meetings of your community board's parks committee, and of local block, tenants, and merchants associations. Don't forget elected officials, too.

Think about organizing a safety committee/patrol.
When done properly, having a group focused on safety issues and/or a patrol can prove a good supplement. But you must organize such groups carefully, and in full consultation with the park enforcement patrol and the police, if they're to be successful and appropriate.

Source: Adapted from *Partnerships for Parks,* a joint program of the City Parks Foundation and the New York City Parks & Recreation Department.[12]

Design and Maintenance

Until now, this guide has discussed the part that police and natural guardians play in efforts to rehabilitate a park. This section deals with design and maintenance, two other critical factors in restoring a park for community use.

[§]CABE (www.cabe.org.uk) is a very good resource for anyone seeking a better understanding of urban design and parks.

The Park's Physical Design

Physical design will either be a risk or a protective factor. In fact, it may be difficult to do much about some of the risk factors, which can result from decisions made many decades ago when the park was originally laid out. Until recently, designers and planners didn't consider crime prevention as part of the design or planning process. But that is no longer true. In the United Kingdom, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)[§] has prepared several detailed reports on park design and maintenance to reduce crime and disorder. Much of the crime prevention and planning literature, and the U.K. police experience with programs such as the Design Against Crime and Secured by Design, can also apply to parks.[13] The planning department in the U.K.'s city of Nottingham[14] has two graphics in its *Design Guide for Community Safety in Residential Areas* that illustrate the problematic and good design of two hypothetical parks occupying the same public open space. Here are some problematic design features the graphics identify:

- Narrow, unobserved footpaths hemmed in between high solid fences and dense planting
- Dense tree and shrub planting that obscures the view of open spaces from adjacent houses
- Footpaths that converge in hidden spaces, leaving no option to avoid the secluded areas
- Secluded areas that encourage misuse, posing threats to pedestrians using footpaths and adjoining property
- Children's play areas hidden from view
- Footpath alignments and dense planting that obstruct sight lines along routes to the exit

- Houses whose backs face the park and don't allow useful surveillance of the area
- Pedestrian routes that include unobserved areas blocked by high fences.

Nancy Leach

Dense tree and shrub planting that obscures the view from open spaces may encourage misuse and pose threats to pedestrians using footpaths.

In contrast, here are some good design features the Nottingham graphic identify:

- Railings around the park that prevent vehicle access and keep children away from roads
- No secluded spaces on key footpath routes or against house boundaries
- Traffic-calming measures on residential distributor roads or through-routes, including speed control bumps, surfacing changes, etc.
- Trees planted on the perimeters, selected and spread out to allow views across the park
- Perimeter roads that provide increased visibility and alternative safer routes for pedestrians at night
- Adjacent housing fronted onto the park that provides good surveillance, a sense of ownership, and benefits from the view
- All pedestrian routes feeding into the park being located on well-observed streets.

Nancy Leach

Gates preventing vehicle access to the park after hours can help to reduce crime and disorder.

Park Maintenance

Good maintenance and adequate staffing protect the park over time. In *Decent Parks? Decent Behavior?* CABE asserts the following:

> The case studies in this publication link the decline in the condition of the park and the loss of facilities, with a decline in use and an increase in vandalism. This is no chicken-and-egg conundrum; it appears quite clear which came first. The parks were in decline and failing to meet customer expectations long before antisocial behavior started to become the dominant characteristic (2005:24).

The research clearly shows that a decline in a park's condition creates the opportunity for antisocial behavior to become dominant. Therefore CABE's first answer to crime and disorder in parks is to prioritize the staffing and maintenance of these important public spaces.

According to CABE, the decline in the condition of many urban parks was basically the result of a series of cutbacks made over several decades. Park budgets became vulnerable to cutbacks during times of fiscal crisis and often weren't a high-priority item for either local government or the police. Closing buildings and eliminating staff positions resulted in immediate savings. The long-term negative results were unintended but also very predictable. Police and park personnel couldn't respond to problems of vandalism, graffiti, and littering as quickly as in the past. The decline in park maintenance and staffing conveyed the message that no one

really cared about the park and such "soft crimes." Negative park experiences led to reduced legitimate use, and increased crime and disorder filled the gap. As a result, by the early 1980s, people perceived many parks as dangerous, "no go" areas. The perception became the reality.

Then, usually because of serious crime and residents' complaints, park conditions became a political issue. Sustainability, smart growth, and urban livability were also becoming important on the political agenda. Research had started to document the social, health, economic, and even crime-prevention benefits of safe parks and other "green spaces."

In response to public pressure, local governments started to reinvest in park maintenance and staffing. New private-public partnerships such as New York's Central Park Conservancy became a critical source of additional funding, grassroots energy, and innovative ideas. In New York more than 20 large park partnerships and dozens of smaller ones help to fill the gaps between public needs and park budgets. Even cities with generous park budgets embraced the concept of private groups' supporting the parks.

Today, local advocacy groups who argue that some recent private-public agreements don't adequately represent the local community's interests are challenging those agreements. Some agreements have given special interests too great a control over the park and have restricted the local community's use of the park. The solution should be a compromise between the competing interests. As mentioned before, the park is a contested space.

There are several excellent guides on how to deal with park problems.[15] The key questions about park maintenance and staffing include the following:

- Do the city management and the police now see the importance of early detection and intervention?
- Will the city ensure that there are sufficient resources and staffing?
- Will the police allocate the necessary resources to policing the park?

Gathering Needed Information About Your Park

Every problem-oriented policing project is unique, and you should adapt this guide to address the specific problems your park poses. You should answer questions about its design and maintenance, as well as the "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how" regarding its current use.

Walking in the Park

Understanding the park's physical design and layout as a whole helps to identify its risk and protective factors. For larger parks, there are maps and aerial photos, but it is usually necessary *to walk around the area,* looking at it from potential users' and abusers' perspectives. It is important to understand people's reactions. There is no good substitute for literally being in the park. "Walking the beat" is how police officers get to know their local community; the same applies to parks.

In doing so, it is necessary to ask a series of "what if I was" questions to explore the park's potential impact on diversity issues such as gender, culture, age, race, etc. As an example, a male police officer may need to consider how a female or older person might perceive the park both during the day and at night. Different users have different opinions about the park and its appropriate use. Identifying these differences is critical to finding and involving natural guardians from the local community. It is important to talk with offenders, victims, users, and local nonusers to determine what the park means to them.

The Physical Environment's Risk and Protective Features

You should audit the park's crime-prevention-through-environmental–design (CPTED)[§] features to identify those factors that increase the probability of crime and disorder. These can be static (such as the geographic location, or offenders' age and sex) or dynamic (such as the maintenance quality or the offenders' attitudes). The audit can help to identify the factors you can change, as well as those that you should protect. The factors that can promote crime include those below.

[§]Some useful guides include the City of Edmonton, Canada's *Design Guide for a Safer City* (1995) and its *Safety Audit Guide for Crime Prevention* (2000); the City of Nottingham's *Design Guide for Community Safety in Residential Areas* (1998); and material from the city of Toronto, available from the Project for Public Spaces. Also see Wekerle and Whitzman (1995).

Lighting

- Is lighting adequate enough for a person to get a good look at someone else from a reasonable distance (12 to 15 feet away)?
- Are landscaping elements chosen and maintained so that they don't block the light?
- Are lights placed in areas where nighttime activity is appropriate, and not placed in inherently unsafe areas not intended to be used at night?
- If the park is intended for night use, then how well does the lighting illuminate pedestrian walkways? Is it __very poor, __ poor, __ satisfactory, __ good, or __ very good?
- Are there scheduled nighttime activities (e.g., baseball games or evening nature walks) that bring people into the park after dark?
- In parks where nighttime activities such as tennis or evening walks are scheduled, are the activities clustered and properly lit?
- Are nighttime activity areas near restaurants, movie theaters or other buildings used by the public?
- Are principal access routes to nighttime activity areas properly identified, and is their use encouraged? Are they properly lit so that potential hiding areas are visible?

- Are nighttime routes made more visible by improving sight lines to them and by giving priority to patrols?
- Is there a buddy system or jogging club to ensure nighttime joggers' safety? This depends on the number of users, which may be greater in larger parks.

Sight Lines

Clear sight lines are important as they let people see, without interference, what lies ahead.

- Is it possible to see most of a small park or play area from the street?
- Do housing or commercial establishments overlook small parks or the edges of larger parks?
- Do paths have unimpeded sight lines, especially where they curve or change grade, so that people can see into and out of an area?
- Are landscape materials chosen and maintained so that they don't block sight lines from the street or along paths?

Movement Predictors

Movement predictors are those lanes, paths, or tracks that follow a predictable pattern. People can easily be trapped on movement predictors if there aren't clearly visible escape routes.

- Do people have a choice of routes to and from areas of the park?
- Is there more than one entrance or exit, especially when there is a fence around a play area or a small park?
- Are there activity anchors located near movement predictors, where appropriate?

Entrapments

Entrapments are spaces usually concealed from view that offenders can use to hide, trap unwary people, and/or conceal crimes.

- Do paths have a border of low-lying or high-branching vegetation, as opposed to trees and bushes that offenders can easily use as entrapment spots?
- Are children's play structures designed to minimize entrapment spots in the play equipment or within a fenced area?
- Are toilets designed to eliminate hidden corners or entrapment areas?

Signs

- Do park entrance signs provide clear directions to major points of interest?
- Do signs clearly indicate—using words, international symbols, and maps—the location of telephones, toilets, isolated trails, heavily used routes, and park activities?
- Are signs located at decision points, such as the intersection of two major paths?
- Do area locators have a map with an enlargement of the immediate area to indicate where people are in the park and where the closest park headquarters and exit routes are?
- Do signs indicate where and how people can get help and report maintenance problems?
- Are the park's hours of operation clearly posted?
- Do park telephones have prominently displayed identification numbers known to police and park personnel?

Activity Generators

Activity generators are features that tend to create (or generate) activity. The activity may be positive or have negative consequences if it is inappropriate or a nuisance to others.

- Are activities either located along park edges or clustered together?
- Are children's playgrounds located near other activity generators such as refreshment stands?
- In smaller parks or miniparks, does the design allow space for refreshment stands?
- Does the park have flexible seating to give people choices?
- Are restrooms and/or portable toilets located near telephones? People tend to use either one or both.
- Do park planners site new toilet facilities near existing activities?
- Can park personnel easily move isolated portable toilets?

Maintenance

- Is there a clear party responsible for park maintenance?
- Are there signs of physical disorder (e.g., garbage or graffiti)?
- Do mown edges of three to four feet along paths or near plants and trees indicate that these areas are naturalized through intent rather than neglect?
- Where an area has deteriorated because its capacity has been exceeded, can planners design the environment to be more resistant to deterioration, or can they move activities to other sites to allow regeneration?
- Are there signs and garbage cans to encourage community responsibility?

Usage Diversity

- Do larger parks provide recreational opportunities beyond team sports and children's play—e.g., community gardens, small zoos or farms, puppet shows and plays, and seniors' activities—to encourage a diversity of users?
- Do park activities and design encourage a diversity of users, or do some users take over the park and drive out other users?
- Are downtown parks designed to accommodate a range of activities (e.g., space for street vendors, street entertainers, concerts, picnics, food services, and green markets), even if they are intended primarily for passive use?
- Do scheduled park activities accommodate a range of interests and park users?

Formal Surveillance

- Do either the police or park personnel provide formal park surveillance?
- Do park personnel know how to respond to various types of emergencies?
- Do park personnel receive security training?
- Is there a park safety plan that incorporates printed matter, signs, and interpretive programming?
- Does the parks department have an officer responsible for safety throughout the parks system?

Isolation

People often decide to go to the more "wild" areas of the park to be alone with nature, seeing only trees and shrubs and hearing only birds chirping. But isolation and reduced visibility also increase the risk of crime.

In *Safe Cities: Guidelines for Planning, Design, and Management,*, Wekele and Whitzman (1995) argued that planners should site activity areas near park perimeters, to enhance street surveillance. An active edge encourages use and creates a park surveillance

perimeter. Instead of creating an active edge, planners often site major park activity nodes in the park's interior, not visible from the outside, and thus with little natural surveillance from the street.

There are more aspects to isolation that you should investigate while walking through the park:

- Could anyone hear you if you shouted for help?
- Do shrubs and fences enclose the park so that passersby cannot see into it?
- Is the park above or below grade and hidden from the street?
- Is there a visible "active edge" that attracts activity and allows use without penetrating the park's interior?
- How far away is the nearest person to hear a call for help?
- How far away is the nearest emergency aid, such as an alarm, security personnel, or crisis telephone?
- Are there emergency telephones in isolated areas, including along trails?
- Can you see a telephone or sign directing you to emergency assistance?
- Does anyone patrol the area? If so, how often?

Park Users

In formulating interventions, police and park staff need detailed information about who is and isn't using the park. The ability to give a number rather than saying "some" or "many" is critical for program design. If possible, you should gather the information in active collaboration with the park management and other interested stakeholders.

You should obtain the information through interviews, focus groups, or surveys. You should also try to include offenders in the interviews.[16] Since the park is a public space intended to be accessible to all, identified offenders should always be welcome back if they are going to behave appropriately and be considerate of others. In one park CABE studied, by involving youths in the

park's redesign and renovation, they committed less vandalism, they contained (legal) graffiti to designated areas, and less conflict occurred between them and the older users, since each group now had its own distinct activity area.[17]

In conducting an on-site survey of park users,[§] here are some key points to remember:

[§]See guides such as *Conducting Community Surveys: A Practical Guide for Law Enforcement Agencies* (Weisel 1999), or *Surveying Communities: A Resource for Community Justice Planners* (Paik 1995) for suggestions.

(1) A survey should take only 10 to 12 minutes, at the most. Pretest the survey to be sure it works within this time frame. At first, the interviewers may take 15 minutes to finish administering the survey, but after several days, they should take only 10 to 12 minutes. If not, then revise the survey.

(2) Begin with demographics.

Interviewers may be tempted to fill in many demographic points, such as age, race, and disability, but for accurate record keeping, they should ask respondents to provide this information. They will need to ask respondents where they live.

(3) Each survey should contain only a few questions related to a key theme.

Typical safety questions include the following:

- What are your favorite areas of the park?
- Are there places you don't feel comfortable going to, and if so, why?
- Does the park have any special meaning to you?
- Has the park changed since you first started going there?
- Would you like to change anything about the park?

(4) Do exit rather than entrance surveys.

As they leave, people may be willing to reflect on what they did, and you can ascertain both what they were planning when they came to the park, and then their feedback about what they actually did. Ask them where they went, and have them point out the locations on a precoded map.

(5) Ask everyone what they did at least three times to determine the full array of their activities.

When interviewees tell you what they did, ask, "What else did you do?" Be sure to probe, especially so you hear about so-called passive uses. To "I played ball," ask, "What else did you do?" and you might hear, "Well, I took a walk."

(6) Look at local versus regional use.

People who live near a park use it the most. They are used to the park, and have a sense of which areas are safe and how to handle themselves. So when they hear that a bad incident happened in the park, they tend to think of it as unusual rather than routine, and they keep going there. People who live farther away aren't as familiar with the park, and vote with their feet by not going there after its safety is put into question.

(7) Consider asking people how they find out about park activities. From fliers? From posters? From the media?

The responses will help you gear your communication strategies to the appropriate audience(s).

About 35 percent of the interviewees in a 1995 New York City Central Park survey had such deep, positive feelings about the park that they said they were willing to volunteer for it, and gave the interviewer their name, address, and phone number.[18] Such motivated people will become the core of the community involvement necessary for long-term park safety.

Planning and Evaluating the Response

In terms of the SARA model, this guide emphasizes the scanning (collecting information) and analysis process. The response and the assessment (evaluation) of the response will be unique to each park and local community.

The detailed audit and the interviews, focus groups, or surveys obtain valuable information that you should provide to the local community, potential offenders, and other stakeholders. If information is power, then targeted communication is the key to crime reduction in urban parks. Law enforcement is just one tool police use to let potential offenders know that police will no longer ignore or tolerate certain targeted behaviors. The three-part goal is to:

- Reduce or eliminate crime and antisocial behavior in park
- Encourage everyone to use parks legally and to respect other users' rights
- Encourage the local community to take ownership of the park, to provide natural guardians to manage conflicts, and to involve formal controls, when appropriate.

The evaluation needs to assess all three dimensions. A reduction in recorded criminal and antisocial incidents is only one part of the evaluation. Is there also evidence of a change in the way people are using the park, so that legitimate use is dominant? Is there evidence of increased optional and social use of the park? Is there evidence that the local community is actively ensuring that there is less crime and disorder in the park?

Direct observation and interviews, focus groups, and community surveys should provide documentation of the community change. Appendix A lists key questions that will help in the evaluation and that may also suggest future activities to maintain the improvements.

Appendix A: Park Problem-Oriented Policing: Checklist of 10 Key Questions

Trying to answer the following questions will help you determine whether you understand the park and its problems and have a realistic intervention plan.

1. **Where is the park in its four-stage criminal career?** What evidence do you have for that judgment?

2. **What is the park's purpose?** Does the original design still meet current needs?

3. **Can you describe the park as a whole?** Do you have the necessary information from maps, pictures, etc.? Is the information sufficiently comprehensive, accurate, and timely? Are you clear about the park's location in terms of the wider environment?

4. **Can you identify the physical environment's risk and protective features?** Can you link the park design to identified hot spots? Can you see ways to change the design to reduce crime and disorder? Have you done a detailed safety audit?

5. **Do you have accurate information about the park's current and potential users?** Do you have information on intergroup conflicts and potential offenders and victims? Are you maintaining ongoing communications with all the groups, including the community, offenders, and victims? Do you have a media strategy?

6. **Have you sufficiently involved the local community in collecting data, selecting and planning tactics, and implementing and evaluating interventions?** Are you operating within the community's perspective? Are you dealing with the concrete issues that are important to and in the self-interest of the community? Do you have the community's trust and support?

7. **Have you been working in partnership with the local government, park management, and allied professionals such as urban planners so that (1) interorganizational and interprofessional conflicts are contained; and (2) outcomes are SMART (*s*pecific, *m*easurable, *a*greed, *r*ealistic, and *t*imely)?** Have you identified adequate resources (physical, financial, and human) and allocated them to the park and its crime and disorder problems?

8. **Is the partnership committed to experimenting with different tactics until it finds the ones that are effective, efficient, humane, and just, and that also fit the community?** The best measures of whether there has been a successful taking back of the park are (1) a decrease in reported crime and disorder, and 2) an increase in legitimate visitors' park usage?

9. **Have you identified, recruited, trained, and supported a critical number of natural guardians from the local community?** Is long-term support in place? Can they trust you for the long term?

10. **Is there political commitment for the long term, with the necessary resource allocation to allow police and park management to identify and intervene at the early stages of crime and disorder in the future?** Do all the interested parties sufficiently understand that keeping the park safe is an ongoing, long-term process?

Appendix B: Urban Parks—Problem-Oriented Policing Projects (summaries of submissions for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, prepared by Joshua Henze)

Anaheim (California) Police Department—Parolee-Free Parks (1998)

Parole-Free Zones was an initiative to deal with crime and disorder problems in three of Anaheim, California's, worst parks: La Palma, Pearson, and Twila Reid. Police sent letters to convicts with narcotics violations in Anaheim. Police informed them that, as a new condition of their parole, police would immediately arrest and incarcerate the convicts if they found them in parks. Calls for service for all three parks fell 72 percent within the first year. Displacement proved minimal. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1998/98-02.pdf

Appleton (Wisconsin) Police Department—The Park Rescue Project (2001)

Wisconsin's Appleton Police Department developed the Park Rescue Project in partnership with local residents, politicians, and government agencies to deal with citizen complaints regarding drunken transients in the city's parks. First, they enacted a local city ordinance to restrict park alcohol use. Second, they initiated a multiagency transient eviction program. Third, social services agencies collaborated with the police and park services to exchange information on transients regularly. Finally, they implemented CPTED principles by changing the park's natural surveillance and territorial reinforcement. In the affected parks, alcohol-related calls decreased 89 percent, and general police calls for service dropped 38 percent. The project improved safety and quality of life in the parks, as the community regained its sense of ownership, and the parks became safe places to visit and enjoy. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2001/01-01.pdf

Baltimore County (Maryland) Police Department—Patterson Park Outreach Program (1997)

The Baltimore County Police Department's Patterson Park Outreach Program involved the creation of a community-police board and public forums to deal with problems in a local community park. Local residents, the police, the city attorney's office, and other city agencies worked together on specific problem issues/areas in Patterson Park and surrounding neighborhoods. Those involved used traditional and nontraditional methods, including law enforcement, nuisance abatement, and active citizen participation, to address problem tenants, litter, and drug trafficking. The project resulted in increased confidence and optimism among neighborhood residents. In the following year, burglaries decreased 35 percent, robberies decreased 17 percent, and larcenies decreased 15 percent. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1998/98-06.pdf

Broward County (Florida) Sheriff's Office—Sheriff's Targeted Anticrime Response Team (2000)

The Broward County Sheriff's Office developed the Sheriff's Targeted Anticrime Response Team (START) project in response to an extreme quality-of-life deterioration and an increase in crime and drug trafficking in an urban park and surrounding neighborhoods of Dania Beach, Florida. START encompassed a four-phase, multidimensional approach that involved the police, local residents, community leaders, and state and federal task forces. Phase 1 consisted of an initiative to build trust and support through residential surveys and informal interviews, environmental assessments using CPTED strategies, and establishment of a community-based information-sharing network. Phases 2 and 3 involved traditional policing through criminal investigation and multiagency enforcement operations. Phase 4 encompassed program assessment and maintenance through a community-based advisory group. Along with large-scale arrests and asset forfeitures, the initiative had a positive impact within the community. Dania Beach's overall crime rate dropped 24.7 percent, and the overall clearance rates increased 46 percent. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2002/02-04.pdf

Bryan (Texas) Police Department—Summer Sundays at Sadie Thomas Park (2003)

Summer Sundays at Sadie Thomas Park began as a result of citizen feedback received through a mail-in community survey and informal door-to-door police visits regarding 15 years of youth-related crime and disorder in a Bryan, Texas, local park. Conventional policing through uniformed patrols and presence hadn't reduced homicides, assaults, illegal drug sales and use, littering, loud noise, and traffic congestion. To resolve the problem, the police held meetings with local residents, community leaders, and city officials. They subsequently developed a two-step, community-based response. Step 1 consisted of police collaboration with the park service and transportation department to improve lighting, obtain trash cans, and post signs that stated, in part, **no glass containers and no alcoholic beverages**. Step 2 consisted of police collaboration with 15 local churches, community volunteers, and local media. The effort resulted in the creation of a rotational Sunday church-service initiative centered on worship and community events. Recreational use by families, senior citizens, and youth sports teams increased. Police calls for service significantly decreased. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2003/03-03.pdf

Chicago (Illinois) Police Department—Gill Park Project (1997)

Gill Park, located on Chicago's north side, had been plagued by gang activity, drug dealing, shootings, and prostitution for generations. Parents had stopped letting their children play there. The park was revitalized through a multiagency and community partnership, and the application of Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy. Residents of the affected beat cooperated with the police and neighborhood groups to develop potential solutions. They concluded that the park's layout invited crime, and the principal response was to modify the layout using funds from public and private donations and volunteer labor assistance. People trimmed foliage to improve natural surveillance and installed high-quality lighting in the park's isolated areas. A new baseball diamond replaced secluded areas and a problem concrete pool. Police

officers started to conduct foot patrols of the park at strategic times to enforce city curfew and loitering ordinances. Gang-related crime and disorder in the park decreased, while parents' and children's usage increased. Reported offenses during peak warm-weather months dropped from 928 to 802 between 1995 and 1996, a 14 percent decrease. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1997/97-08.pdf

Colorado Springs (Colorado) Police Department—Acacia Park Police Service Center (2003)

Colorado's Acacia Park is located in the heart of downtown Colorado Springs. The park had a 40-year history of being a crime magnet and staging area in the downtown and surrounding vicinities. This inhibited city-based redevelopment initiatives, impacted local businesses, and made the place undesirable for parents and children. Traditional policing methods of patrol and undercover operations achieved only short-term improvements. To make a longer-term impact, interested parties adopted a variety of traditional and nontraditional approaches. These included new ordinances, business-based partnerships, a CPTED survey, and the creation of a park police service center. Police calls for service inside the park decreased 55.25 percent, and calls in the surrounding area decreased 14.17 percent. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2003/03-08.pdf

Delray Beach (Florida) Police Department—Merritt Park Neighborhood (1997)

Florida developers laid out Merritt Park in the early 1960s to provide neighborhood recreation for children living in the immediate area. Subsequently, the surrounding neighborhood began to deteriorate, with a resulting increase in crime. Conventional police attempts to combat the rising crime through special enforcement teams, drug sweeps, and surveillance met with limited, short-term successes. The police then led a three-prong initiative that consisted of redesigning the park, collaborating with a local homeowners' association and a men's advocacy group, and creating

a police park task force. One year later, there was an 87 percent decline in police calls for service to the park. Neighborhood parents and children now freely use Merritt Park. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1997/97-11.pdf

El Paso (Texas) Police Department—San Jacinto Park Renovation Action Plan (1996)

Beginning in the 1980s, El Paso's San Jacinto Park transformed from a desirable, historical Texas site to visit, to a place plagued with continual crime and disorder. Citizens began to avoid the park at all times. During the 1990s, the situation intensified to the point that the city, commercial businesses, and police came together to resolve the crime and disorder problems. The measures included renovating restrooms and recruiting a citizen advisory board, citizen volunteer patrols, and liaison police area representatives. A community reassessment survey the next year indicated that fear of crime had substantially declined. Area crime decreased 63 percent, while park use and tourism increased. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1996/96-11.pdf

Georgetown (Texas) Police Services Division—Blue Hole Park Project (1995)

Blue Hole Park is a historical site in the heart of Georgetown, Texas. What was once a place of special memories for citizens and tourists had been ruined by alcohol-related crime, accidents, litter, and other problems when summer tourists used the park. An analysis revealed that a mix of alcohol, park geography, and out-of-town residents accounted for most of the problems. In a joint intervention, the police, community organizations, city council, parks department, and city attorney's office implemented a zero-tolerance policy reinforced by signs and new city ordinances that addressed parking and traffic congestion. As a result, the park again became family-oriented. Police service calls, litter accumulation, accidents, and traffic congestion significantly decreased. Pedestrians could safely walk, fish, swim, and enjoy the natural beauty of the park's landscape without fear. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1995/95-24(W).pdf

Hamilton (Ontario) Police Service—Van Wagner's Beach Plan (2004)

Hamilton's Van Wagner's Beach, also known as "The Beach Strip," is a popular recreational area situated along the coast of Lake Ontario. Over time, youths took over parking lots and roads on the beach strip for drag racing, drinking, and using drugs. This increased local residents' and other lawful users' level of fear. After an unruly mob swarmed a police squad car, the police coordinated a response among city agencies, community-based groups, and local businesses. Recommendations implemented included using private security guards; CPTED measures to redesign parking lots, walkways, lighting, and access routes; and zero-tolerance enforcement of all criminal and provincial statutes. The Van Wagner's Beach Plan resulted in an overall 26 percent decrease in service calls, and the beach became family-friendly once again. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2004/04-14.pdf

Los Angeles County (California) Sheriff's Department—Operation Outreach (1996)

In 1995, there were an estimated 200 to 500 transients in West Hollywood, California. After years of providing free services, city officials and community activists began to experience "compassion fatigue." The gradual elimination of social service programs left only a 45-bed rehabilitation center, and hundreds of transients who loitered, slept, and drank alcohol in full view soon inundated parks and other public places. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department established a special unit, Operation Outreach, to develop a community-based response to the transient-related crime and disorder. First, the unit started trading information with city government agencies and various community-based social advocacy groups. Second, government social workers rode along with deputies responding to transient-related calls. When no crime had occurred, police offered transients new options of shelter and social assistance. Third, deputies responded to loitering complaints by obtaining a "Letter of Agency," which authorized them to arrest trespassers without the owner being present to sign a citizen arrest form. Homeless shelter workers soon reported increased transient participation in social service programs designed to get

them off the streets. Citizen complaints decreased, and county personnel removed 377 abandoned shopping carts from the streets. Operation Outreach was an effective, nontraditional initiative that addressed transient-related crime and disorder in community parks and other public places. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1996/96-26.pdf

Los Angeles (California) Police Department—Barry White Project: Newton Crime Surveillance Team (2006)

Barry White Park, situated in Los Angeles' South Central area, had been neglected, and gangs and drug dealers overran it. The local response to the problem consisted of the creation of a police surveillance team and the installation of five surveillance cameras to record park images. One officer would monitor the camera system for crime and then coordinate with other police officers to arrest the offender(s) and locate any further evidence of the crime. Direct communication with the district attorney's office and a new open line of communication between police officers, park maintenance crews, and recreation staff was established. The project resulted in a 25 percent reduction of overall crime in the park and its surrounding perimeter, a 27 percent reduction of calls for service, a 45 percent increase in arrests, and positive feedback from the surrounding community. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2006/06-28.pdf

Los Angeles (California) Police Department—MacArthur Park Revitalization Project (1996)

Thirty-two acre MacArthur Park lies in the heart of one of Los Angeles' most criminally active areas. Crime and disorder, gang activity, transient encampments, and pervasive blight plagued the park. Faced with this situation, the Los Angeles Police Department implemented a community policing project targeting quality of life in the park in partnership with local agencies and community members. The police used foot, bicycle, and vehicle patrols in the area, while developing rapport and trust with local residents, park visitors, and area merchants. Various city agencies worked to remove graffiti, improve the environmental design, and mitigate narcotics and gang activity. A public education campaign was also a key

element in the revitalization process. Gang- and narcotics-related problems decreased significantly. Overall, the target-area crime has decreased 24 percent. The true indicator of the project's success has been children's and families' increasing park use. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1998/98-38.pdf

Mesa (Arizona) Police Department—South Grand and Rotary Park Project (1999)

Rotary Park is a small community site located in an older, lower-income Hispanic neighborhood in Mesa, Arizona. Over the years, it transformed into a location for drug dealing, a meeting place for local gangs, and an encampment for more than 100 transients. Local residents no longer entered the park, even during the day. In October 1996, the Mesa Police Department initiated a revitalization project in the South Grand and Rotary Park area. They collaborated with other government agencies and social organizations, as well as concerned citizens. Citizens formed a neighborhood committee, as well as a block-watch and citizen-patrol group. A nonprofit organization removed or renovated older homes. Citizens organized neighborhood cleanups, and the local Boys & Girls Club initiated a neighbor-helping-neighbor program. The police established a prosecution project with the city attorney's office to deal with repeat offenders. Police targeted drug dealers and criminal transients through traditional policing and a gang intervention initiative. Due to this coordinated and multifaceted response, calls for service significantly decreased, and Rotary Park was returned to local residents. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1999/99-39.pdf

Montreal (Quebec) Urban Community Police Service—Carré St-Louis (1995)

Carré St-Louis is a public park in a downtown Montreal residential area. For some time, the park had been occupied by "troublemakers," who got drunk, sold drugs, urinated in public, and engaged in a variety of other crimes and misbehaviors. The police had responded cyclically and conventionally. Media pressure and police meetings with interest groups resulted in increased police presence and large-scale sweep-up operations. Once the police withdrew, the problems

would reemerge. In a new approach, the police met with city officials to explore specific park problems. They also held public forums with local residents to draft an action plan comprising diverse strategies to address each park problem separately. Police received training in problem-solving and community policing; social service agencies provided free medical and health assistance; city maintenance workers addressed neglect and decay; police held citation mediations with perpetrators; and residents regularly held community-based events in the park to encourage visitors and solidarity. A survey revealed that 90 percent of local residents were pleased with the initiative, and Carré St-Louis was transformed into a safe place for workers, families, and senior citizens to visit.
www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1995/95-48.pdf

Newport Beach (California) Police Department—Talbert Regional Park (2000)

California's cities of Newport Beach and Costa Mesa had experienced recurring transient-related crime in Talbert Regional Park, a 97-acre undeveloped preserve. Jurisdictional issues arose each time police agencies responded to service calls because the park was located between two municipalities and owned by county government. The Newport Beach Police Department decided to respond to citizen complaints about a specific group of homeless people trespassing on private property and using unsecured restrooms. Collaborative meetings with the three primary police agencies, social services, and community-based groups resulted in the implementation of short- and long-term plans. Park security improvements consisted of putting new locks on restroom doors. The police agencies formally established a call-for-service protocol agreement. They strategically relocated transients to shelters through three phases: notice, citation, and physical removal. Once they relocated the homeless, a massive cleanup effort ensued. A follow-up study showed that from mid-October 1999 to mid-March 2000, there was only one call for service in the park area.
www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2000/00-23.pdf

Ontario Provincial Police—Project: Yogi Bear (1995)

Project: Yogi Bear was developed to reduce problems for visitors to Ontario's Bronte Creek Provincial Park. Random bicycle patrols had significantly reduced antisocial behavior during the park's busy summer, but calls for services and car thefts increased during the winter, when Project: Yogi Bear wasn't in effect. In response, the police, community members, and Canada's Ministry of Natural Resources expanded Project: Yogi Bear from a seasonal initiative to a year-round crime prevention program. It included a community-oriented police service center in the park, a structured community volunteer program, police bicycle patrols, and the development of "Community Park Watch." The program reduced the problems and contributed to all visitors' enjoyment of the park. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1995/95-57.pdf

Plano (Texas) Police Department—Taking Back Friday Nights at Haggard Park (2006)

For six tumultuous years, a semi-organized group of gothic Texas teens created crime and disorder on Friday nights in Plano's downtown Haggard Park. Consequently, local residents avoided the park on weekends. After traditional policing and church-based initiatives failed to solve the problem, the police took several steps to make the park an undesirable place for the teens to hang out. With the aid of local government and the parks department, the police closed Haggard Park for six months for renovation. At the same time, the police gained legal authority to issue criminal trespass warrants in the park. The teens held their Friday night meetings at another city location and subsequently moved their activities out of town. Today, some teenagers still pass through the park; however, they don't loiter and commit crime. Citizen complaints and police calls for service have decreased, and local residents now feel safe to use Haggard Park on Friday nights. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2006/06-37.pdf

Redondo Beach (California) Police Department—Redondo Beach Gang Project (1996)

In late 1995, local residents began to complain about intimidation, gunfire, drug dealing, and drunken gatherings at all hours of the night in and around Redondo Beach's Perry Park, in California. It became clear that the park was serving as an informal headquarters for the North Side Redondo (NSR) gang, many of whose members lived in adjacent dwellings. A preliminary legal injunction was granted and upheld through (1) police collaboration with the city council and city attorney's office, (2) hundreds of sworn testimonies and documented incidents of NSR-related crime and disorder in the park from police and local residents, and (3) the support of local citizens, media, and county, state, and federal authorities. The police legally prohibited NSR members from conducting specific activities in Perry Park and the surrounding 24-block area. As a result, the area has experienced a 38.58 percent decrease in gang-related activities. More importantly, local residents' perceptions of safety in the community have increased. Citizens now freely use the park for recreational activities. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1996/96-42(F).pdf

San Diego (California) Police Department—Lewd Conduct at San Elijo Lagoon and I-5 Viewpoint (1996)

Beginning in 1994, the San Diego police received many complaints from local residents, motorists, and county park rangers about illicit sexual activity around the San Elijo Lagoon and I-5 viewpoint. Gay men were having sex in public and leaving used condoms, soiled toilet paper, and matted grass in the area. The police decided to address the problems strategically and collaboratively. First, with the cooperation of the district attorney's office, undercover sex stings successfully netted offenders for solicitation, along with traffic, weapons, and controlled-substance violations. Second, with the help of mainstream and alternative media, the police tried to gain the general public's and the gay community's support. Local newspapers and television networks ran stories about illicit sexual activity and about police undercover operations. Local gay and lesbian associations supported police efforts through

public declarations and publication of health-risk material intended to discourage the gay community from using the sites for sexual activity. Third, the state transportation department and park personnel collaborated with the police to transform the environment by trimming vegetation, removing litter, and installing new lights, signs, and fences. Service calls and complaints decreased, but the police continue to monitor the area to prevent a resurgence of illegal activities. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1996/96-51.pdf

San Diego (California) Police Department—Marian Bear Park (1994)

San Diego police initiated the Marian Bear Park project due to a long history of complaints about lewd sexual activity in there. It had once been a nature preserve for picnicking, hiking, and bicycling, but over time, it evolved into a location for illicit sex as a result of its secluded bushes and restrooms, its lack of electricity, and its official listing as a "cruising spot" in national gay publications. A combination of traditional and nontraditional police responses, along with the help of the city attorney, park committee, local residents, and gay community, reduced lewd sexual conduct in the park. First, the police videotaped everyone entering and leaving the park to eliminate the sense of anonymity the illegitimate park users enjoyed. Second, one of the two main gay publications stopped listing the park as a "cruising spot" upon receiving a written request from the police. Third, police posted signs around the park to discourage lewd sexual acts. Fourth, undercover police implemented solicitation sting operations to effect arrests and discourage illegitimate activities. As a result, illicit sexual activity decreased 80 percent, while families and youth groups have increased their park usage. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/1994/94-15(F).pdf

Santa Ana (California) Police Department—Santiago Park Project (2001)

California's Santiago Park encompasses 23 acres of heavy bushes, trees, and recreational facilities. For 20 years, local residents knew that gays were using the park's restrooms, trails, parking lots, and playgrounds for homosexual solicitation and illicit sex. Traditional policing tactics had failed as long-term solutions to the problem and, in response to political pressure, the police developed a strategic plan that combined conventional policing and problem-solving. Those involved in the initiative included the district attorney's office, community organizations, and the park and recreation department. Deterrence and reform tactics consisted of undercover stings, uniformed patrols, a hidden video camera, "stay-away" orders for convicted perpetrators, environmental modifications within the park, changes in the park's operating hours, and written communication on a solicitation internet website to announce police enforcement efforts. Since the initiative's implementation, police patrolling the park have noted a significant decrease in illicit sexual behavior. A community survey revealed a 78 percent decrease in lewd activity. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2001/01-64.pdf

Vancouver (British Columbia) Police Department—Showdown at the Playground (2000)

Vancouver, British Columbia's, Grandview Park is in an area that drug use and dealing had plagued. Few children used the park's playground, and local residents walked around the park, not through it. Intelligence reports to the Grandview-Woodland Community Policing Center indicated a substantial increase in hard-drug sales and drug use in the park. As a result, the center declared a state of emergency in the park. To restore the park for community use, the police adopted an array of traditional and nontraditional responses with the assistance of local residents, an animal shelter, and community groups. Revitalization tactics

consisted of police undercover stings, police surveillance operations, animal enforcement, the establishment of a volunteer citizen patrol program, and a community-based initiative that focused on restorative justice. After the response, the drug trafficking fell, police service calls decreased 80 percent, parents began bringing their children to the playground, and area residents returned to the park. www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein/2000/00-32(F).pdf

Appendix C: Recommended Web Sites

American Planning Association: www.planning.org

Center for Problem-Oriented Policing: www.popcenter.org

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE): www.cabe.org.uk

Design Trust for Public Space: www.designtrust.org

ENCAMS Environmental Campaigns: www.encams.org

Geography and Public Safety: www.cops.usdoj.gov

New Yorkers for Parks: www.ny4p.org

Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org

Resources for Urban Design Information: www.rudi.net

Smart Growth: www.smartgrowth.org

Trust for Public Land: www.tpl.org

Endnotes

[1]Burgess (1994).

[2]Clarke and Eck (2005).

[3]Carmona et al. (2003).

[4]Cresswell (2004).

[5]See Project for Public Spaces (2000).

[6]American Planning Association (2003).

[7]Clarke and Eck (2007).

[8]See McCord and Ratcliffe (2007); McCord and Groff (2008).

[9]See Pendleton and Thompson (2000).

[10]See Heart of the City, ksgaccman.harvard.edu/hotc.

[11]www.franklinparkcoalition.org/park-safety.

[12]See resources at www.partnershipsforparks.org.

[13]See Town, Davey, and Wootton (2003); Colquhoun (2004); Schneider and Kitchen (2007); Zahm (2007).

[14]City of Nottingham, Design Guide for Community Safety in Residential Areas (1998), www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk

[15]See Allen (2006); Christiansen (1983); ENCAMS (n.d.a); ENCAMS (n.d.b).

[16]See Decker (2005).

[17]See CABE Space (2005).

[18]www.pps.org/parks_plazas_squares/info/parkuse.

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Jim Hilborn is the founder of the Baltic Crime Prevention Practitioners Association. He is based in Tallinn, Estonia, where he promotes evidence-based policy and practice in the Baltic Region. His recent projects include *Harm Minimization in the Night-Time Economy: Reduction of the Opportunity for Alcohol Related Harm* (2006) for the Cheltenham CADA Partnership in the United Kingdom, and a review of crime prevention approaches for the Estonian Ministry of Justice (2007). He is co-author with Dr. Robert Ross of *Rehabilitating Rehabilitation: Neurocriminology for Treatment of Antisocial Behaviour* (2008). He is now working on an integration of situational prevention with the healthy prison model. He is also preparing an alcohol treatment manual for the Estonian Ministry of Justice. He has a master's of environmental studies from the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, Canada.

Other Problem-Oriented Guides for Police

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21. **Check and Card Fraud.** Graeme R. Newman. 2003. ISBN: 1-932582-27-4
22. **Stalking.** The National Center for Victims of Crime. 2004. ISBN: 1-932582-30-4
23. **Gun Violence Among Serious Young Offenders.** Anthony A. Braga. 2004. ISBN: 1-932582-31-2
24. **Prescription Fraud.** Julie Wartell and Nancy G. La Vigne. 2004. ISBN: 1-932582-33-9
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29. **Cruising.** Kenneth J. Peak and Ronald W. Glensor. 2004. ISBN: 1-932582-43-6
30. **Disorder at Budget Motels**. Karin Schmerler. 2005. ISBN: 1-932582-41-X
31. **Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets.** Alex Harocopos and Mike Hough. 2005. ISBN: 1-932582-45-2
32. **Bomb Threats in Schools.** Graeme R. Newman. 2005. ISBN: 1-932582-46-0
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9. **Dealing With Crime and Disorder in Urban Parks.** Jim Hilborn. 2009. ISBN: 1-932582-92-4

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5. **Partnering with Businesses to Address Public Safety Problems.** Sharon Chamard. 2006. ISBN: 1-932582-62-2

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