

**The Evolution of the Stamp's
Place Safety Committee**

A Community Safety Case Study

**A report to the
Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation**

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NOTE: DISPONIBLE AUSSI EN FRANÇAIS SOUS LE TITRE:

L'ÉVOLUTION DU COMITÉ DE SÉCURITÉ DE STAMP'S PLACE

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SUMMARY

This report documents the history and development of the Stamp's Place Safety Committee. The report also looks at how the Committee, over time and through a number of actions, particularly the Safety Fair, has attempted to address crime issues by increasing community cohesion. The Committee is involved in a process which seeks to build a safer community through short, medium and long term initiatives, all of which recognize social organization as the primary factor.

The first section of the report describes Stamp's Place and the surrounding neighbourhood. Although the Stamp's Place Safety Committee was and is the pivotal force in this initiative, the Committee recognized that the public housing complex is not an island unto itself - it is part of a community and all sectors of the community must be involved in the process.

The second section details the structure of the committee, the principles and how the committee defined short, medium and long range goals. It also draws out some of the challenges the Committee has had to face, some of which will be common to any community development process, some unique to public housing. The report looks at the delicate balance which must be maintained between the process of community empowerment, and working toward a partnership with powerful institutions such as the police and the housing authority.

The Safety Fair - The Idea and the Evaluation. The Fair was not seen as an end in itself - but as a vehicle to encourage more residents, local organizations, politicians and institutions to become involved in activities which promote

safety. The Fair involved about 600 local residents in activities ranging from needle exchange information to face painting!

The Safety Committee is planning an expanded version of the Safety Fair in 1994 which will include many of the 1993 presentations but also confronts longer term safety issues such as parenting, anger management and racism. The Committee itself is expanding to ensure on-going community support, control and participation. BC Housing and Management Commission is also involving the residents in the re-designing of Stamp's Place - with safety as a major consideration.

As the report points out, much has been accomplished, and much remains to be done. Institutional and community change is an incremental, sometimes painfully slow process. That's the reason the Safety Fair is such an important event - it promotes inclusion, it is concrete, visible evidence that something is happening, it brings institutions and local community-based organizations together - expectations are relatively low and results in terms of expanding partnerships and identification with the issue have been significant.

It also takes us one step closer to the real issues - affordable, appropriate housing, accessible daycare, educational upgrading, employment training and employment opportunities all of which are critical to realizing our goal of a safer community. This is the very essence of the Stamp's Place Safety Committee.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE STAMP'S PLACE SAFETY COMMITTEE:

A Community Safety Case Study

Introduction

Stamp's Place is a large 453 unit, seniors and family, public housing complex, situated in postal code V6A, the poorest postal code in Canada in both the 1988 and 1991 census. Stamp's Place is situated on the corner of Hastings Street and Campbell Avenue in the heart of Vancouver's inner city.

Stamp's Place is part of a complex and diverse social arena. The characteristics of the housing complex and the neighbourhood are similar as those in large American cities described first in the 1940's and 1950's referred to as 'transition zones' - high rates of delinquency, immigration and intractable social problems. (Graham, 1990)

These conditions are intensified by high percentages of single parent families, unemployment, ineffective parenting, school failure and issues around neighbourhood transition. (Understanding and Preventing Violence).

The area around Stamp's is what sociologists describe as urban blight. It is a "tenderloin area". Sex trade workers ply their trade in the streets and alleys around Stamp's Place. Condoms litter the playground, the parking lots, and even the breezeways connecting the apartments. It is easy to watch the sex trade workers at any time of the morning, day, or night. Equally true for the area is the high rates of addictions to alcohol and narcotics. Everyday the Needle Exchange program exchanges 2,500 needles. This amounts to 17,500 needles a week. Needles not exchanged are commonly found on stairways, doorways, bushes, and

playgrounds. A majority of the residents in postal code V6A are single unemployed males who live in run down sleeping rooms. The unemployment rate is one of the highest in Canada. Child poverty, at 10% nationally, according to a recent UNICEF report, far exceeds national and provincial averages.

Crime is a fact of life in this area. The homicide rate for males (225/100,000) and females (35/100,000), aggregated data 1986-88, in the Downtown/Eastside/Strathcona area was nine times and 6 times higher, respectively than the Vancouver rate. For 'crimes against the person' the risk of being a victim was 4.7 times higher in this area than in Vancouver. (Tollefson, 1990). Crime reporting as a rule is low, and the level of crime appears to far exceed reported rates. Mistrust of the police is endemic, residents fear retribution from offenders, acclimate to the prostitution, the violence, and the robberies. The Downtown Eastside Residents Survey in 1987 reports that "a lack of public safety" was seen by non-profit live alones as the primary negative aspect of living in the area. Market residents ranked the issue of safety as second only to "too many dope addicts and drunks and too many drug dealers".

The area is multicultural. A high percentage of the community are refugees, immigrants, and impoverished inter-provincial migrants. Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Spanish are as commonly heard and spoken as English. Many residents do not speak either of Canada's official languages. Many are experiencing culture shock and desperately seek to build a new life in a new country with no knowledge of the laws, usually unemployed, and are seeking entry level jobs.

Over the years, both the area and Stamp's Place have experienced a shift in the cultural heritage of the residents. Once Stamp's was largely occupied by urban Aboriginals, Italian, and Portuguese immigrants. Today Stamp's Place tenants are

from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Uganda, Somalia, and Eastern Europe.

While Stamp's Place is not representative of public housing everywhere, fear of victimization seems consistent with the concerns expressed by tenants of public housing in a 1988 evaluation conducted by CMHC. 49% of residents reported that one or more types of crime was a major problem. Concerns were highest in family projects located in population centres over 100,000.

(Source: CMHC)

The Precipitating Incident:

A journey starts with one step. The events which led up to the residents forming the safety committee, taking that first step, were dramatic enough to act as a catalyst to community action. In the late winter and early spring of 1991, on two separate occasions, dead bodies were discovered in the hallways of the seniors high rise. In both instances the bodies were murder victims. The seniors who had become inured to much of the crime that took place in the area were now frightened. They wanted action and protection. Fear is a powerful catalyst.

The attempts by the seniors to seek information from the Police had proved futile. Frustration, fear, and powerlessness was the prevailing mood in the seniors' high rise. Other residents in the three floor walk ups and townhouses had heard of these events and were equally disturbed.

Individual efforts to reach the Police for an explanation went unanswered. The Tenants Association was equally frustrated in their attempts to deal with the Police on this issue. The concerns were passed on to the Seniors Worker at the

Community Centre, which was built for the complex and adjoins Stamp's Place. One of the long time resident's of the high rise, was also the President of the Community Centre's Community Association Board and a member of the Senior's Society at the Centre.

The President and the Seniors' Worker made the issue known at a meeting of the Board of the Community Association. At this meeting it was decided to attempt to mobilize the local agencies, the residents, the British Columbia Housing Management Corporation (BCHMC), interested government ministries, and the business community . This was the genesis of the Stamp's Place Safety Committee.

The First Planning Meeting

The first planning meeting occurred in April of 1991. The Community Centre Co-ordinator, the Seniors Worker, the President, a Volunteer Community Worker, and five concerned tenants met to plan the first meeting of residents and developed a plan to form a safety committee.

This group decided to involve all concerned residents, the B.C. Coalition for Safer Communities, Solicitor General Canada, the Tenant's Association, the management from the BCHMC, the Police, the Community Association, local agencies, and the business community. Invitations were extended to everyone involved to attend a meeting in the seniors' high rise.

The Manager of the project for BCHMC and the supervisor along with the caretakers were all invited. Invitations to the Vancouver Police Department included: the Native Liaison Team, The Strathcona Police Team, and the Crime

Prevention Officer. A local agency which provided services for street people, sex trade workers, and needle addicted people was included in the invitation. Members from the Community Association Board and the original planning team participated in the first Safety Committee meeting, set for an evening in the seniors' lounge of the high rise.

The agenda was to simply receive information from the Police, listen to tenant concerns, and begin the process of developing short, medium, and long range plans for a safer and more secure environment.

The meeting room filled with over 150 residents, invited guests, and the planning committee. The tension was high, the tenants anxious for answers and action. The meeting was called to order and the residents questions and concerns were heard. There was obvious hostility towards the caretakers, BCHMC management, and the Police. It was a passionate, intense, and provoking meeting. The frustrations of the tenants were vented. The sheer numbers, concerns, and energy of this meeting motivated BCHMC and Police to work with the committee in addressing the issues.

The Structural Features of the Safety Committee

"Attempts to reduce crime in such unstable neighbourhoods require not just the mobilization of community members, but also a re-assessment of how existing resources are allocated and managed. In some instances, particularly at the beginning of an initiative, additional outside resources may be required".
(Graham, 1990)

The critical under-pinning of the Stamp's Place Safety Committee was the coalition of people, agencies, and support within the committee. It is essential to recognize

The key actors were:

1. The Community Centre Co-ordinator
2. The Solicitor General Staff Member
3. The Community Worker Volunteer
4. The Seniors' Worker
5. The President of the Community Association (and long time resident).

The listing of the key actors in no way abrogates the essential role the residents played on the Safety Committee. It was the combination of the key Actors and residents which made the Committee successful. The Police felt the presence of the Solicitor General's staff, the political pressure from the Community Association and the Co-ordinator, and the organizational impact of the Seniors' Worker. The Community Worker volunteer liaised not only with these groups but also with the B.C. Coalition for Safer Communities. This assisted in the development of a comprehensive strategy which helped to steer the Committee.

Without the support of these key actors who did much of the organizing, phoning, developing agenda's, holding planning meetings before each Committee meeting, and putting pressure on the police and BCHMC the Committee would have been in danger of disintegrating into a war of words and finger pointing.

The tenants and the caretakers were openly hostile. Each of these groups blamed each other for the deteriorating state of Stamp's Place. The Police fell back on a standard line of: We can't disclose anything due to the investigation currently in progress. This response helps to explain the relationship between the police and the community. The community was looking for reassurance and support from the police - within a community context -- what they received was a legalistic,

technical response which further fuelled the antagonism and fear between the two groups.

In this climate the key actors were critical and maintained the organization and involvement of the residents, while developing a strategic, long range plan they were able to keep the impetus of the committee moving and progressing towards the goal of a safer more secure community.

The Strategic Planning of the Committee

At the first meeting an Executive Council of the Safety Committee was appointed by the tenants present at the meeting. The Executive Council comprised the Community Centre Co-ordinator, The President of the Community Association and long time tenant of Stamp's Place, The Community Volunteer, A Parent, the Police, the BC Coalition for Safer Communities, the management of BCHMC, the Seniors Worker, a youth representative and two seniors members. The Executive Council met once a month before the Safety Committee meetings, and the Safety Committee met the following week.

The Executive Council's strategic plan centred on a number of fundamental principles. These principles became the base for the strategic plan. The principles are that actions:

1. are neighbourhood based
2. empower the tenants
3. attack the root causes and not just the symptoms
4. involve the youth in the area
5. are multicultural

6. are non-professional and community driven
7. involve police as equal partners
8. provide short, medium, and long range goals
9. embody the notion of high tolerance and high responsibility

These principles were forged into the very structure of the Safety Committee. The Executive Council developed the agendas; ensured minutes were kept of each meeting, sent out notices in advance, and ensured that key actors were present at each meeting.

A review of the interpretation of each of the principles is provided below.

1. Neighbourhood Based

This principle embodies the concept that each neighbourhood is unique. Each neighbourhood has its own strengths and weaknesses. There is no one solution which can be universally applied. The neighbourhood has its own resources and unique solutions to its own issues.

2. Empower the Tenants

This principle addresses the need for people to be empowered. The need for communities to feel they have impact and control on their own environment; to not have professional solutions imported and imposed in a neighbourhood; and to use the community to answer its own issues.

3. Attack the Root Causes and Not Just the Symptoms

This principle seeks to address the underlying issues which contribute to crime. The underlying causes are what is paramount: not limiting the response to increased enforcement, jailing, and shifting the symptom to another area or neighbourhood.

4. Involve the Youth

This principle involved perceiving youth as part of the solution and not part of the problem. The local Community Centre Youth Council and area youth were expected to be a part of the Committee and to participate in helping formulate plans.

5. Multicultural

The area is multicultural and the meetings always had interpreters so all residents could participate. Invitations were translated into Chinese and Spanish. All people regardless of culture or language were made comfortable at the meetings.

6. Non-professional and Community Driven

The area residents have long been subjected to programs and plans developed by paid professionals who did not live in the community. These solutions often resulted in costly, ineffectual programs, based outside the neighbourhood.

7. Police Involvement

The Police were necessary to the Committee. The Police were invited to participate as equal partners not as the "solution". Traditional Police programs and services had proved to be ineffective up to this point in the area. The Committee did not want a sudden flurry of Police intervention and then a return to "business as usual" in the neighbourhood. Block Watch and Block Parents had all been started and had disintegrated in the past. Community Policing had long been an issue. A new model of Police involvement was being sought where the Police were part of a long term community driven plan.

8. The Strategy

The Executive Committee recognized that there had to be short, medium, and long range goals. The development of the goals would ensure a sense of progress, keep everyone involved, and develop long term solutions to long-standing and entrenched problems.

9. High Tolerance and High Responsibility

A fundamental principle was "high tolerance and high responsibility". The Committee knew that they would not end the sex trade or the drug trade in the area. They also believed that with tolerance on the part of community members and responsibility on the part of the sex trade and drug addicts that peaceful co-existence was possible.

The Stamp's Place Safety Committee Plan

The Executive Council, in consultation with the full membership of the Safety Committee devised a strategic action plan. The strategy encompassed all the tenants concerns. What were the concerns? They are listed below:

1. increased building security to prevent the repetition of the "dead bodies"
2. increased environmental safety
3. more involvement from BCHMC and their caretakers
4. closing the Western Sports Bar
5. more accountability from certain "Hotels" in the area
6. more accountability from the sex trade workers
7. more accountability from needle addicted people
8. regular maintenance and upgrading of the building
9. more accountability in the parking lots
10. increased Police participation through Community Policing
11. BCHMC to stop housing pedophiles at Stamp's Place
12. the termination of renters who continually violated the law
13. a safety plan for the seniors
14. increased opportunity reduction for crime
15. increased safety for children
16. more accountability and control over teens.

These complaints/concerns of the tenants formed the basis of the strategy; the Executive Committee sought to design a plan of action which would fashion the concerns into an effective, long term, and systemic process.

In theory -- the plan was simple. It simply took the concerns and divided them into short, medium, and long term goals. The strategy identified key players to address each of the goals and then planned to bring the "player" to a full Safety Committee meeting and have them commit to addressing the goal. In reality -- this is a highly complex undertaking. Although the definition of short, medium and long term goals is a useful exercise and helps with planning -- the committee soon realized they were not completely in control of events. In addition to some of the issues raised earlier, the Committee recognized that many of the goals are reliant on the co-operation of institutions who are not always accustomed to working in a community context. Flexibility, patience and tenacity are required.

The Short Term Goals

The essence of the short terms goals revolved around actual differences in the environment that could be achieved through the Police and BCHMC. The Police conducted a CPTED study. The study confirmed that lighting was not only inadequate but that much of the lighting was in need of replacement and was "burnt out". Indeed, the amount of "burnt out" lighting was so great that a special order from the manufacturer was needed to replace all of the bulbs. This particular issue was useful in raising some key issues around the relationship between the tenants, caretakers and BCHMC. The outdoor lighting, particularly in the quadrangle area, known as the "no accountability zone", was non-existent due to damage and burn-outs. In fact the repair bill for the lighting, according the BCHMC was \$15,000.00. For the Committee it raised the issue of 'entitlement' - why didn't the caretakers provide the appropriate resources for the tenants when it is clearly their responsibility - why didn't the tenants complain to the housing authority - does the 'parent-child' relationship engendered by the current structure

work? Are there other more effective models and could they apply to social housing? These are long term issues.

The CPTED provided other insights into the environmental quality of Stamp's Place. Recommendations to prune shrubs, lower fences, remove darkened areas where people could, shoot drugs or perform sex acts, did much to improve the sense of safety and security. The recommendation for mirrors, new lighting, and replacing lighting, made the environment feel much safer and more secure. According to tenants, lighting reduced the number of 'incidents' which took place in the immediate area. This is consistent with results in the United Kingdom where, in 1988, the Safe Neighbourhood Unit undertook research into lighting provisions on three housing estates. The study found that poor lighting had a pronounced effect on fear of crime levels. A separate study referred to in the report found that lighting combined with social interventions can 'physically alter and improve an area and the incidence of crime in that setting'. (Crime Prevention on Council Estates, SNU, 1993) While this may seem obvious, it raises the issue of increasing vulnerability to crime by creating a 'false sense of security' when only environmental factors are altered.

At this point the BCHMC manager of Stamp's Place resigned and was replaced by a new manager who had grown up as a resident in a public housing project. The first-hand experience brought by the new manager stimulated action on a number of issues. The new manager became a critical part of the Executive Council.

The residents had requested more security in terms of an intercom which "shut off" at 9:00 pm so residents had to personally admit guests. One issue had been that the murdered bodies had actually been dragged from a nearby hotel and residents had unwittingly just opened the door through their intercom buzzer.

This request in the end was not easy to operationalize but thanks to the new manager a new intercom system was installed. The tenants had equally wanted alarms on the fire doors and common room doors so that people could not leave them open for the "street and criminal element" to gain access to their building. This was also implemented by the new manager.

In fact the short term goals which included resident only parking, the intercom, and a more immediate caretaker response were all accomplished within four months of that "first tense meeting". The parking system, intercom, alarms, and compliance with the CPTED had been achieved. Residents felt more secure, safer, and empowered in their homes. The main spin-off to this new confidence, in addition to a reduction in fear levels, was the continued enthusiasm of tenants and community-based organizations involved in the process.

The Medium Range Goals

The medium range goals focused more on social issues and relationships with groups. However, environmental change was still an issue. The social/environmental issues that formed the goals were to confront the owners of a licensed betting club close to Stamp's Place over the sex trade, intoxicated customers; and "fencing" of stolen property, confront two hotel operators about their clientele's involvement with children and the children continually being in the rooms of these predatory adults.

The social issues were focused on establishing a deeper more preventative role with Police. The area had a Police Officer who had developed a deep bond of trust with the youth in the area who, due to a rotation policy, was transferred. The youth had written letters to the Inspector, the Chief of Police, and the Mayor, all

to no avail. Other goals for the Police are to have regular hours with the area Police Team, use of the Bicycle Unit, and a more community oriented, preventative style of policing in the area and specifically for Stamp's Place.

The Safety Committee Members were willing to work with the Police and compromise on some of the requests made by the Police. In fact the Police were asking that the traditional Police programs that had failed in the past be tried again. This included Block Watch and Block Parent programs. The Committee members agreed to these programs being tried again but still wanted the Officer re-assigned and regular hours one day a week by the Area Team Police Officers.

The Safety Committee wanted to work with one agency who had rapport with many of the sex trade workers to have the parking lot and hall ways respected as a "no go zone for sexual activities". Signs and maps were made and posted with this request. The agency used meetings and their staff to promote the "no go zone". Unlike other areas which used local residents to "shame the Johns" and intimidate the sex trade workers this idea recognized that sex trade would not end, and to arrive at a high-tolerance, high-responsibility solution might allow for peaceful co-existence. However, the parking lots were littered with condoms, sexual activity was visible to children, and doorways and alleys were overrun with the sex trade. Something had to be done to end this situation.

The Safety Committee also wanted a relationship with BCHMC management and caretakers that was more co-operative, consultative, and agreeable, especially over residents who were involved in criminal activities and using area youth in these activities. The fear of retribution by these tenants was very real. Caretakers were also a concern. Tenants complained that they left doors open, turned off the

recently installed alarms, and did not answer calls. These were long standing and highly charged issues for the residents.

To give concrete form to some of the issues the final medium range goal became the hosting of a Safety Fair in the area. The idea of the Safety Fair was to involve more residents than just the Stamp's Place tenants; and to promote activities, and values, as well as provide information to area residents on building a safer community.

The Long Range Goals

A long range goal is to develop a pedophile policy which would deny residency to any person convicted of sexual offences against children. This issue continues to be very important to the Safety Committee members. There have been numerous incidents over the years where adult residents in the complex have sexually abused children and it was found out that these residents had prior arrests for sexual offences.

Another long range goal is to have Community Policing for the area. Crime reporting is very low in this area, even though the rates of actual crime are very high. Trust in an effective Police response is very low. The desire for a relationship with the police is very high. The tenants want a Police presence before crime is committed not just after victimization. This is similar to the experience of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Anti-Crime Program (1985), which found police involvement to be central to the success of its initiative. Residents felt police involvement was an indication that the authorities were taking the problem seriously, increasing the demands for a police presence. (Graham, 1990). The members of the Safety Committee hold the

opinion that the Police would deeply benefit from developing trust, rapport, and a relationship with the community. These benefits include having residents volunteer information, making arrest and convictions more possible, and saving investigation time.

The residents, on the other hand, would be able to rely on the Police and know that the Police were a real part of the community. The Committee members' trust is to a particular Police Officer or group of Officers, not to the uniform. Many residents have filed complaints over abuse by the Police. Police often harass and arrested the wrong people and, in general, are out of touch with "who is who" in the neighbourhood.

The one Officer assigned to the youths had build up trust with the area youths, which resulted in many of the youths disclosing rapes, abuse, traumatic events that they would not have reported to anyone else. Stamp's Place is willing to facilitate the relationship by providing free office space for the Police.

This space could be used as a reporting centre, staffed by residents. Much police work now revolves around filling out incident reports, robberies, auto accidents, and other types of crime. The Committee members could reduce the amount of time Police spend on "after victimization" paper work tasks and provide residents with a safe environment to report crime. The Community Volunteer Program sponsored by the Ministry of Social Services would pay for the training and provide honorariums for the trained tenants to take the reports. Everyone felt this would help to build a different relationship with the Police, save money, and provide the Police with more time for Community Policing activities.

We know what doesn't work in policing - rotating officers, police car patrols, assigning officers on basis of reported crime only. The Committee's goal combines some of the one dimensional approaches to so-called community policing - such as limiting citizen involvement to providing clerical back-up to area police - by attempting to create a community relationship with a particular reliance on a team of officers assigned to the area for a long term. A housing estate in the United Kingdom - Pepys Estate, Deptford - showed significant crime reductions, a 50% reduction in burglary and a 60% reduction in auto crime and a reduction in racial harassment - following the introduction of a 'neighbourhood policing' scheme, coupled with social interventions, similar to that proposed by the Safety Committee. (Crime Prevention on Council Estates, 1993)

The number of needle addicted people and the threat they pose to a community from their behaviour but also through the whole dangerous climate of drug selling, violence, theft, and discarded needles is a real concern to tenants. Fear of AIDS from discarded needles, recruitment of children to carry drugs for money, theft to support the habit all contribute to the urban blight around Stamp's Place. The needle exchange program is one step in the right direction.

In addition, what is needed is a community response supported by the institutions in the area. Programs such as mobile detoxification programs run by area residents, work programs to end the poverty, and adequate child care to help the children of these street involved families.

The final long term goal was to involve the area youth in crime prevention and the safety committee. The youth in the area are vulnerable to predatory adults.

Criminal activities are high by area youth. The purpose was to involve youth as part of the solution not alienate and blame them as the problem.

What Worked and What Did Not Work - Highlights

What worked was ensuring inclusion through translators and notices in three languages. What worked was developing a plan from the concerns of the tenants. What worked was having tenants in the power positions on the Committee. What worked was having support for the tenants by caring involved people on the Executive Council to develop the strategy.

What worked was having large meetings with many tenants to ensure a police presence and involvement with the plan. What worked was keeping BCHMC involved and helping with the physical up keep and improved environmental design of Stamp's Place. What worked was having the Community Centre Association as a balance and moving force and co-sponsor for the Safety Committee. The Community Centre presence on the Committee provided resources, support, and a broader Community perspective than just a given housing project. The administrative support from the Seniors Worker and Co-ordinator were invaluable and the Committee would have floundered without their support.

Keeping the Police involved. The tenacity which was required by the Committee to keep the Police on the Committee took skill and patience. Phone calls, faxes, invitations, follow up calls, were all necessary. Some meetings had a great police presence, at other meetings there was none.

What worked was enforcing municipal by-laws. The Committee successfully addressed the issue of the Sports Betting Bar and the two hotels in co-operation

with the Police through municipal by-law enforcement. The sports bar was closed permanently and lost its license. The two hotel operators complied with police request to "clean up their act". The impact on the neighbourhood was astounding. Enforcing the criminal code is a costly, lengthy, and often frustrating experience. The enforcement of municipal by-laws in co-operation with community members is expedient, efficient, and inexpensive and can reduce time, investigations, victimization, and incarceration.

In examining crime prevention strategies, municipal by-laws may be a key area to study. One need not wait for Ottawa to enact legislation on Gun Control. Any municipality can enact municipal by-laws on gun control. If communities are to be empowered, if crime prevention is to be community driven, if communities are unique, then municipal by-laws are as important as federal statutes. Each community can work at the local level to create the climate it wants, address issues unique to them in creative and community endorsed ways.

At the outset, some members of the Committee suggested that a survey be conducted to determine actual levels of fear and victimization. This suggestion was not supported by the tenants nor the local community organizations. The community was looking for action, and expressed the fear that they would be used, as they had countless times in the past, for a research project destined to sit on the shelf. In the end, a survey was designed and tenants participated by responding to questions at a safety committee meeting.

Although this method of collecting information was not as reliable as the survey which had been proposed, it provided anecdotal confirmation about fear levels - public spaces at night were all thought to be unsafe. Fear levels were higher than victimization. Tenants wanted immediate action to control gangs, drugs,

alcoholism and prostitution followed by theft, vandalism, assault and "hanging around".

A more important consideration around the survey was that of decision making. The tenants made the decision about whether or not it would be conducted.

The Committee also requested demographic information from BCHMC - information about length of residency, ages of children and youth in the complex, number of seniors, number of single parents, would have been useful to the development of programs. Unfortunately, the BCHMC did not have computerized records of this information, and was unable to provide detailed information.

The Safety Fair: The Idea and The Evaluation

The Safety Fair was one of the medium term goals of the Safety Committee. The Safety Fair, which was called "Stay Safe, Play Fair", was designed to educate, involve, and include more residents in building a safer community.

The idea for the Safety Fair came from the Executive Council of the Safety Committee. The whole Safety Committee endorsed the idea. A Safety Fair planning Committee was formed. The membership included the Community Centre Co-ordinator, a Health Nurse, a Police Officer, a Co-ordinator from a Community Centre five blocks away, the Community Volunteer, the Stamp's Place Manager, the President of the Safety Committee, the Seniors Worker, the B.C. Coalition for Safer Communities and a representative from the Needle Exchange Program.

The goals were to involve 500 people in the Safety Fair, "take back the streets and parks for one day", educate the community on safety and health issues, and provide a venue for increased community involvement.

The Safety Committee received funding from both CMHC and BCHMC to organize, plan, and put on the safety fair. The total budget was \$4,000.00. Food was purchased for 500 people (fried chicken and cold slaw) as well as snacks for the children, a public address system rented for the day, prizes (bicycle helmets, safety wear for high visibility, knee protector for roller blades, etc.) for children purchased, safety passports printed, advertising, youth honorariums, costume rentals, balloons, entertainment.

The main thrust of the fair was safety that could be fun, and that the whole neighbourhood could be involved in. In total, three parks, two community centres,

and two housing projects and a number of institutions and organizations participated in the event.

The main event was held at McLean Park situated almost in the middle of the three parks, directly between the two community centres, and housing projects. At this park the lunch was served, speeches delivered and the booths located.

Exhibitions, games, and booths were spread over the three parks in the heart of the inner city. The Police were major contributors and organizers for the event. The Police exhibitions included:

1. The Police Dog Squad
2. The Police Horse Squad
3. The Police Antique Car
4. The Police Motor Cycle Squad
5. A Police "Paddy" Wagon.

These Police displays were all exhibited at one park. Interaction with the Police occurred at this park between 10:30am and 1:30pm. At this same park other exhibitions were:

1. The Vancouver Fire Boat
2. A Coast Guard Display
3. The Fire Department's Burning House Display

In short, all of the formal institutional responses to safety issues and emergencies were located at this park. A shuttle bus service from the other two parks was used for participants to travel between the parks.

The Speakers List included:

1. The President of the Safety Committee
2. A Message from the Prime Ministers Office
3. A Message from the Premiers Office
4. An Address from the NDP Justice Critic
5. An Address from the area's Member of Parliament
6. An Address from a City Councillor
7. An Address from the President of the Board of Parks and Recreation.

The speeches took place at 1:30 along with the serving of lunch.

The booths on McLean Park included:

1. A Vancouver Health Department Booth
2. The Child Identification Program
3. The Deyas Needle Exchange Van
4. Tea Cup Reading
5. The People's Law School
6. The Asia Pacific Justice Liaison Society
7. A Seniors Personal Alarm Display.

Entertainment included face painting, handing out balloons, passport stamping at each booth, clowns, and super heroes walking around giving prizes to children (with stamped passports) and raffle prizes.

At the third park a specially developed game of "Safety Snakes and Ladders" was run by the Ray Cam teen council, pedal cars with safety instructions, the Police

Bicycle Squad, and food balloons and prizes handed out by teens in costumes. Snacks and drinks were given out in this park.

What was the Attendance?

It was estimated by the counters that over 600 people came to the Safety Fair.

What were the most successful events?

The child ID program was well received and utilized from the moment it opened until the close of the Fair. The Police Dog display was a big hit. Of course free food was well received and not a scrap was left!

The children loved being in the Police Cars, being hand cuffed, turning on the lights and sirens in the Police Cars, and interacting with the Police Officers! The passport prizes and raffles were certainly enjoyed. The children loved the pedal cars (some teens were seen participating in this event) and many wanted to pedal the cars for hours which the line up would not permit.

The Tea Cup Reading (by the President of the Safety Committee) had a line up all day by the adults and seniors! The Safety Snakes and Ladders game, developed by local youth, was enjoyed by the younger children, as was face painting.

The Safety Fair Committee met to evaluate the success of the Fair. One evaluation suggested was that we consider whether there was less crime that day!

Overall everyone was pleased with the turn out of over 600 people. What would be done differently next year? The main criticism was that the Fair should have been held in only one park. Spreading the Fair over the three parks diffused the

impact of the displays and the intention of the Fair. Next year the Fair will be held in McLean Park.

The second criticism was the date the Fair took place on. The date of August 26th, and a week day is a less than ideal time for the Fair: summer holidays for some, competition for displays with the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE); and a week day, when many parents are working, is not the best time to host a family event. Next year's Safety Fair will take place in early summer, just after school closes for the summer, on a Saturday or Sunday. The area schools will be used to distribute information and to advertise the Fair.

The centralization of the Fair on McLean Park will also facilitate the development of a theme for the Fair. One idea suggested was to turn the Park into a giant "Board Game" where each exhibit is part of the overall game. The theme could be "child safety for summer", and yet insure inclusion for all age groups.

Another short coming of the Fair was not including "ethnic" displays and inclusion of the multicultural community more in the Fair. The possibility of different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood preparing food from their culture, martial arts displays, Chinese Dancing, Latin American Music, Vietnamese cultural activities need to form a part of the day to involve and build the acceptance and integration of the community into a spirit of neighbourhood, acceptance, and belonging.

The Fair could have used more interactive displays, such as Interactive Theatre, Power Plays, Self Defense Instruction, and Educational Games. Themes for these games could include bullying, anger management, parenting, street proofing, seniors security, safety issues, and racism. Targeting activities into age groups such as tots, children, teenagers, parents, and seniors and ensuring activities for

all groups in interactive booths and displays would increase the value of the day for all.

The planning committee for the 1994 Fair will expand to include area groups such as:

1. Parent School Consultative Committees
2. Day Care Parents Groups
3. Teen Councils
4. Cultural Groups
5. The Business Associations
6. Residents Associations
7. Alcohol and Drug Associations.

This will provide and promote more community support, more direct community control, and ensure community participation.

Evaluation of the Safety Committee

Perhaps the easiest way to evaluate the effectiveness of the Safety Committee is to use a measure of simplicity: Were the Goals Achieved?

The short term goals were all achieved. The intercom has been installed, the doors alarmed, the shrubs and fences altered, the lighting replaced and in some cases new lighting installed. There is an identification system for cars in the parking lot and unauthorized cars are now towed away, in some cases too fast. But regardless, the use of automobile for the sex and drug trade has been reduced. The short term goals were all basically opportunity reduction through environment

design. These goals were relatively easy to obtain with the co-operation of BCHMC.

The medium range goals were not as easily accomplished, yet many of these goals were reached. The Western Sports Bar was closed and lost it's license at a "show cause hearing" at City Hall. The hotel operators became "highly responsible". The relationship with the Police improved.

Improvement within the existing policing structure is positive but insufficient for the community's relationship with the police. We are working toward a change in philosophy. Achievements have been: the one Officer assigned to work with the youth in the area who was transferred out, was transferred back! Another Officer committed himself to coming to the Community Centre every Tuesday for two hours to develop rapport with the residents and tenants.

However, the Office space allotted by Stamp's Place has not been used, and the tenants have not been invited to take information or reports to date.

The police have initiated a Block Watch program. The test of this program will be whether it can be tailored to meet the conditions of the area.

The sex trade "no go zone" continues to be an issue. When the community is active and vigilant, the "no go zone" works. When the community becomes lax, like a vacuum, the sex trade workers fill the parking lots and playgrounds, door ways and breeze ways. Longer term solutions of detoxification programs, child care, and employment training and opportunities for sex trade workers is paramount if there is to be a reduction in the sex trade itself.

"No go zones" and shifting sex trade workers to new areas is not a solution, neither is jailing or fines. Broad based programs to re-involve these women into society is what is required. Isolation, addiction, abuse, under education, and poverty are the underpinnings to the sex trade workers in this end of town. The community is realizing this and setting positive goals for programs to involve the women.

Residents concerns about caretakers persist. The Committee will continue to look at ways of building a more positive relationship with caretakers. The Dutch, in their Delft Housing Project, implemented a caretaker program as one of five measures to reduce crime. The caretakers were responsible to "intensify supervision, to give information, advice and warnings and to keep the building clean". The initiative reduced crime, and the role of the caretakers is seen as significant. (Willemse, 1992) However, in striving toward a community driven, community empowerment model - using caretakers exclusively, rather than residents to build and sustain social controls is an issue that should be looked at more closely.

The Safety Fair will become an annual event.

The long term goals are being worked on at every meeting and between meetings. A presentation to the Oppal Inquiry of Policing was made by the Youth Council and Community Worker Volunteer. Pressure is being kept on the Police to open a store front and use local residents to assist in reports and information.

The needle problem, like the sex trade problem needs a comprehensive community intervention. The root causes of narcotic addiction have to be addressed by the whole community. Comprehensive programs of withdrawal, treatment, education,

job training, employment, day care and affordable housing must be addressed to end this issue.

The pedophile issue has become a national concern. However local by-laws and policy amendments may be more effective than national legislation. The tenants have sought research assistance and have presented their findings to BCHMC.

The youth were involved in the Safety Fair as well as being represented on the committee. There is now a Youth Action Association and in the winter representatives of this group will attend the Safety Committee meetings.

The Future

The Safety Committee has served as an excellent vehicle for community mobilization, involvement, and building. The fear of crime is a concern for these residents. Attacking the symptoms, on emergency/after victimization has occurred does address the concerns of these tenants.

Meetings of the Safety Committee average over 100 residents, many had up to 200 people present to discuss building a safer and more secure neighbourhood. One remarkable fact is that the tenants and residents could have not made the progress they did without the Safety Committee.

The future of the neighbourhood rests on the Safety Committee expanding it's membership and involving all the residents in designing interventions to promote a safer community.

We have all learned that the root cause of crime and violence need to be addressed through comprehensive community based and driven services. More police, longer jail sentences, and add on programs will not address these underlying factors.

What does the future hold? It holds a much safer community if the Safety Committee continues with it's strategy. The future would look less bright if there wasn't a Safety Committee!

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Effectively tackling crime and fear of crime in social housing will require the involvement of all levels of government, and all sectors. These recommendations are written with the acknowledgement that there are distinctive provincial and federal responsibilities which must be respected. The recommendations are also purposefully general. CMHC should be the facilitator or catalyst which will provide communities in public housing with information, ideas, research findings and other forms of support to guide them toward building on their own unique strengths.

1. That CMHC incorporate the notion of community safety into its mandate and develops policies and programs which support safety and can be implemented at the local level.
2. That CMHC conduct an in-depth Canadian and international survey and evaluation of models of intervention in social housing. Consideration should be given to conducting this project in co-operation with the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime.
3. That CMHC examine the current co-operative and public housing models, both nationally and internationally, to determine the elements which promote safer communities.
4. That CMHC assess the issue of crime, crime reporting and violence in public housing in Canada. This assessment should include a survey of unemployment, income, school drop-out rates and other social indicators.

5. That CMHC develop information which explains links between social factors, including housing and crime for policy makers, planners, housing authorities and residents' associations. This information could include strategies for using existing resources to build social cohesion.

6. That CHMC encourage local resident involvement by providing information and acting as a medium for information exchange.

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