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IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND UTILIZATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Citizen involvement in crime prevention has grown enormously during the last ten years in the United States, primarily through programs designed to increase the surveillance that residents exercise in their own neighborhoods. Encouragement of surveillance is coupled with encouragement to contact the police whenever suspicious circumstances are detected. Along with instructions on how to surveil and report, residents are given tips on how to make their households more secure. The names of these programs vary: Crime Watch, Block Watch, Community Alert, for example. For simplicity, we refer to all of them with the most commonly used name, Neighborhood Watch.

It is not far-fetched to say that Neighborhood Watch is the "heart and soul" of community crime prevention in the United States. The basic imperatives of Neighborhood Watch are that residents should get to know each other and communicate with each other, be alert for suspicious activities and persons, and be willing to take some kind of action (usually limited to calling the police) when they detect something suspicious. Neighborhood Watch, at least in theory, is a vehicle for attaining a number of the major goals of community crime prevention: enhancing the "sense of community" among neighbors, raising the level of informal social control, overcoming feelings of powerlessness in the face of crime, decreasing opportunities for offenders to act undetected, and improving police-citizen relationships.

Neighborhood Watch also provides a starting point for more extensive crime prevention activities. The meetings and communication structures of Neighborhood Watch programs are channels through which individualized crime prevention techniques can be passed along: home security surveys, property engraving, "street-smart" behaviors, for example. Successful attainment of a Neighborhood Watch operation can engender the motivation and positive outlook necessary for citizens to take on more complex, time-consuming activities such as drug prevention programs, escort services, dispute resolution, and so forth.

There are thousands of Neighborhood Watch programs in the United States. They range from the most basic, informal "eyes-and-ears" programs to efforts sponsored by multipurpose neighborhood organizations which include citizen patrols and other crime prevention activities as well as a variety of community improvement projects not related directly to crime. Despite their frequency and their centrality to crime prevention, there is little systematic knowledge about how the programs operate and what problems they encounter. This is exactly the type of knowledge that is needed for improving Neighborhood Watch programs so that they have better chances of achieving their worthwhile goals.

This report presents the findings of a national study of Neighborhood Watch (abbreviated as NW in the remainder of the report). The study was funded by the National Institute of Justice and conducted by the Hindelang Criminal Justice Research Center (State University of New York at Albany), in conjunction with the National Sheriffs' Association and the National Crime Prevention Council.

The goals of the study have been to assess the "state of the art" in NW and to identify ways for improving existing NW programs and facilitating the development of new programs. The study was not designed to produce new data about the impacts of NW on levels of crime and the fear of crime. A meaningful evaluation of outcomes requires an in-depth examination of a small number of programs. Our study called for less detailed examinations of a larger number of programs in order to identify and explore issues and problems that are common in a variety of settings. In short, our study asks the question "What are you doing?" rather than "What have you accomplished?"

The research was implemented in three phases. First, a national survey gathered descriptive data about the structures and operations of a sample of NW programs. Second, site visits were made to ten programs with varying approaches to NW. Third, existing NW assessments and evaluations were examined to identify common themes and findings.

The three phases of the research have produced the bulk of the information on which this report is based. However, we draw on other sources as well. In addition to the formal site visits to ten programs, we have discussed in detail with program representatives the features and problems of at least a dozen other programs. At one point during the research we were given access to the data generated by a survey of all of a city's nearly 500 block captains. In one state, which has a statewide funding program for local community crime prevention efforts, we were permitted to review the grant applications submitted by local groups seeking funds for NW activities.

The remainder of this report consists of five chapters. Chapter 2 draws on existing evaluations to confront the issue of whether or not NW programs can reduce crime. Chapter 3 discusses the definitions used in this study and describes the methodology of the national survey. In Chapter 4, the national survey data are drawn upon to paint a descriptive portrait of NW. Administrative, operational, and contextual characteristics of the programs in the sample are analyzed and discussed. Chapter 5 discusses the common problems faced by NW programs; the approach is to raise issues that span many programs and to illustrate how different programs have chosen to deal with those issues. The final chapter presents our conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPACT OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

In trying to find ways to improve NW programs, we assume that the programs have ameliorative effects on crime, or at least that they have the potential for producing positive effects. NW is very popular and has been implemented, in some form, in virtually every part of the United States. Our research assumes that NW is not the "white elephant" of crime prevention.

Some information bearing on the outcomes of NW programs does exist, and a few rigorous evaluations have been conducted. In this chapter, we first examine rationales for NW outcomes -- why NW is expected to produce certain outcomes. Then, the shortcomings of the available information relating to whether or not NW achieves its desired outcomes are discussed.

The Logic of Neighborhood Watch

The essence of NW is: "observe and report". When NW is implemented, residents make a commitment to be more watchful during regular daily activities, through citizen patrols, or by both means. Participants are instructed about cues associated with suspicious situations. When they detect such cues, they are to note the details and notify the police immediately. In many programs, notification of the police is followed by notification of other program participants via a telephone chain. The existence of NW is announced by signs erected at strategic points in the area.

There are basically two mechanisms through which these kinds of activities are expected to reduce crime: opportunity reduction and deterrence.

Opportunity reduction, in this case, refers to decreasing the chances for offenders to operate undetected. By exercising more attentive, informed surveillance of their surroundings, residents can alert the police and/or each other while a crime is in its early stages (or even before the actual act is initiated) so that intervention can thwart the crime.

NW programs are also designed to deter offenders. Easily visible NW signs inform potential offenders that they face higher risks of detection in the neighborhood. In the long run, NW is supposed to establish a reputation that residents are vigilant and unwilling to tolerate crime.

Deterrence and opportunity reduction are also expected to derive from activities that are not part of the core definition of NW but that are virtually always used in conjunction with NW. For example, premise security surveys, to the extent that the participants follow their recommendations, should help to make homes more resistant to unlawful entry. This "target hardening" is a form of opportunity reduction. The engraving of property with identification numbers is generally followed by placing stickers on the windows and doors of participating homes, which is meant to deter offenders.

The rationale for NW runs deeper than the expected direct benefits of opportunity reduction and deterrence. Though often implicit, the full rationale for NW is based on a series of connected assumptions about crime

and community (see Rosenbaum, Lewis, and Grant, 1985; Feins, 1983; Kohfeld, Salert, and Schoenberg, 1983; DeJong and Goolkasian, 1982):

* Citizen involvement with their neighbors in informal social control functions has declined over the long term in the United States. Lack of involvement is associated with feelings of isolation, helplessness, and fear, all of which are conducive to crime because they allow offenders to act with impunity.

* NW is a vehicle for citizens to become involved, collectively, in helping to deal with the problem of crime in their neighborhoods. The processes of initiating and conducting NW will produce greater solidarity among residents, greater attachment to the neighborhood, an enhanced sense of self-responsibility for dealing with crime, and more positive feelings about the neighborhood's potential for the future.

* These changes will lead to crime reduction because the growth of concern and mutual responsibility will enhance the effectiveness of direct crime prevention efforts such as surveillance, reporting, and target hardening. The changes will also lead to reduction in the fear of crime, both by dispelling feelings of isolation and helplessness and by producing a decrease in actual and perceived levels of crime.

* Finally, success in preventing crime through NW is a stimulus for generating citizen action on other neighborhood issues.

NW is expected to reduce crime via surveillance, reporting, target hardening, and warnings to potential offenders. But NW is also expected to have a community-building effect, improving neighborhood's quality of life.

Impact of NW on Crime

The existing evidence concerning the impact of NW on crime is encouraging but far from conclusive. It suggests that NW can produce at least short-term declines in certain types of crime, particularly residential burglary. Other outcomes, such as reduced fear of crime and increased neighborhood cohesiveness, have rarely been examined. Most evaluations have not been very rigorous and are susceptible to several methodological/measurement problems.

1. Methodological/Measurement Problems

Lurigio and Rosenbaum (1986) uncovered more than 100 claims of NW success in reducing crime. Most of these claims are based on reported crime statistics before and after NW implementation. Sometimes change is not even examined; crime rate comparisons are made for areas with and without NW at one point in time. It is primarily these very simple types of comparisons that underlie reports of crime reduction running from 25 to 60 percent, or more. Such claims have undoubtedly helped to produce widespread public support for NW (McGarrell and Flanagan, 1985:182). One cannot simply ignore the large number of crime reductionclaims; at the same time, there are a few methodological/measurement issues that impinge on evaluations of NW.

Selection bias - We are unaware of any study comparing NW to non-NW areas in which the areas for each category were selected randomly from within a jurisdiction. In the absence of randomization, and especially when NW

areas are self-selected, it is reasonable to assume that there are pre-existing differences between areas that do and do not have NW programs.

Crime rate comparisons, at one point in time, between NW and non-NW areas are questionable because the areas' rates may have differed substantially before NW implementation. When areas are not selected randomly, an attempt can be made to match NW areas with comparison areas on factors such as population characteristics, housing types, and so forth. Still, some important factors may be overlooked, data may not be available for others, and the supply of comparison areas may limit the number of factors that can be taken into account simultaneously.

Regression toward the mean - In even the most stable geographic areas, social indicators, such as crime rates, are not perfectly "flat" over time; they fluctuate. The average level of an indicator over time can be viewed as the "normal" level. Substantial departures from the average level tend to be brief; the indicator quickly turns back toward the average level. Thus, whenever a substantial deviation (high or low) shows up, the best prediction is that, in subsequent time periods, the indicator will move back toward its average level (see Campbell and Stanley, 1963:10-12).

Regression toward the mean has long been an issue in evaluations of crime control programs (McCleary et al., 1979). Programs are often initiated because crime has reached an unusually high level. If the high level is part of the natural variation described above, rather than the result of some underlying change, a before-after evaluation can show a subsequent decrease in crime, even if the program has no actual effect on crime. Crime will regress to its mean during the post-test period, regardless of the program.

Matching each experimental area with a control area that has a similar crime level in the pre-test period does not deal with regression toward the mean adequately; crime may be at a high point of its natural variation in the experimental area but at a low or average point in the control area. It is best to examine crime trends over a reasonably long period before intervention to determine where the level of crime is in its cycle of variation. Few before-after evaluations of NW have pre-test periods that are sufficiently long to check for effects of regression toward the mean. But when data are presented, the tendency to implement NW in areas with unusual upward swings in crime is pronounced. We do not suggest that regression toward the mean accounts for all of the positive NW effects that have been reported, but it probably contributes to an overstatement of the size of this effect in a number of evaluations.

Displacement - Crime displacement can occur within a geographic area or from one area to another. The basic surveillance and reporting activities of NW should not produce within-area displacement; they should affect the entire area rather than individual targets within the area. On the other hand, displacement from one area to another (from a NW area to a nearby area without NW) can be interpreted as an indicator of NW success. While between-area displacement is an important issue (as discussed below), a NW program should not be deemed unsuccessful if it displaces some crime to non-NW areas.

The research literature on the between-area crime displacement effects of various programs has not uncovered major displacement effects (see Hakim and Rengert, 1981). The few NW evaluations that are relevant have ambiguous

results. An evaluation of Chicago programs by Rosenbaum and his colleagues (1985) did not uncover evidence of displacement, but neither did it find any effect of NW on crime rates. The evaluation of the Seattle Community Crime Prevention Program examined non-program census tracts adjacent to the census tracts in which the program was implemented. Residential burglary victimization declined by 36 percent in the program tracts and by 5 percent in the non-program tracts. While noting that the data "are not conclusive", the evaluators suggest that "displacement is not occurring" (Cirel et al., 1977:51). One could argue, however, that displacement had occurred, keeping the non-program tracts from experiencing as great a decline in burglary as they would have if the program had not been implemented. This ambiguity illustrates a problem in measuring displacement to non-program areas when program areas appear to be successful in dealing with crime. By definition, success in dealing with crime means that the program areas fared better than nearby control areas in terms of crime trends. But does one attribute the poorer performance of the nearby control areas to simply not having a program or to being located near areas that do have programs (or both)? A possible solution is to include additional control areas that are distant enough from the program areas to make displacement highly unlikely (see Maltz, 1972).

Displacement of crime as a result of NW has not been examined sufficiently, either in conceptual terms (what should happen and why) or in terms of actual outcomes, yet the question of displacement from one area to another is very relevant for NW. Other evidence indicates that NW is more difficult to organize in low income, deteriorated, heterogeneous neighborhoods with high residential turnover and high crime rates (Roehl and Cook, 1984; Henig, 1984; Silloway and McPherson, 1985; Greenberg, Rohe, and Williams, 1985). If NW tends to displace crime from more advantaged to less advantaged neighborhoods, then the issue of equity is pertinent. However, even if displacement occurs, it does not mean that NW should be abandoned. It does mean that additional steps should be taken to try to prevent the displacement.

Changes in citizen reporting - Victimization surveys show that many crimes go unreported. The emphasis that NW places on calling the police could result in an increased propensity for NW participants to report crimes. Since most NW evaluations use crimes known to the police as measures of the amount of crime, a NW program might show an increase in crime simply because a larger proportion of crimes are being reported to the police. This would make NW appear less effective than it really is.

Two quality evaluations of NW programs used victimization surveys, before and after implementation, in experimental and control areas. The Seattle evaluation found a slightly increased tendency to report burglaries, although the numbers of cases were very small (Cirel et al., 1977: 50-51). The Chicago evaluation found no evidence that NW produced greater propensity to report crimes to the police (Rosenbaum, Lewis, and Grant, 1985:141-144).

Encouragement to call the police in NW programs probably does not, in itself, have a major impact on the number of crimes known to the police. NW participants are encouraged to call at the first sign of suspicious activity. If the police respond to a call about a suspicious person, they may end up questioning and deterring the person, but they may not have the evidence necessary to make an arrest or even to record the occurrence of a crime. Also, completed burglaries are already reported to the police at a high rate.

2. What can we conclude?

The two most rigorous evaluations of NW came to conflicting conclusions. Cirel et al. (1977) found that census tracts in which the Seattle Community Crime Prevention Program operated had a 36 percent reduction in residential burglary from 1974 to 1975, while adjacent control tracts experienced only a 5 percent decline. They also found that, within the program census tracts, the decline in residential burglary was greater for households that participated in the program than for households that did not, though this finding was much weaker in a subsequent survey (Cirel et al., 1977:53-54).

In Chicago, Rosenbaum and his colleagues used two pairs of victimization surveys in 1984 and 1985 to evaluate programs in four neighborhoods. For each treatment area, they selected three comparison areas that had similar characteristics. Using panel data to examine victimization rate changes in the program areas relative to changes in the comparison areas, they found that three program areas had no change, while one had a significant increase in victimization. With independently drawn samples, no significant differences were found (Rosenbaum, Lewis, and Grant, 1985:106-115).

The Chicago researchers also examined results within one of the program areas. In this area, NW was implemented more vigorously than in the others, and the evaluators were able to compare treated blocks (organized into NW programs) with untreated blocks (not organized). The treated blocks showed slightly greater declines in victimization, but differences were not statistically significant (Rosenbaum, Lewis, and Grant, 1985:156-159).

Although the Seattle and Chicago evaluations are not completely comparable, the quandary is obvious: The two most rigorous evaluations disagree on whether NW is successful in reducing crime. Were it not for the large number of other studies claiming to show crime reductions from NW programs, the conflicting findings of the Seattle and Chicago studies would force us to conclude that NW has not demonstrated the capacity to reduce crime. Admittedly, almost all of the evaluations that report very positive outcomes have serious methodological flaws, and negative or "no difference" findings are less apt to be published and disseminated. Still, the sheer number of positive reports convinces us that NW programs are having some preventive effects on crime in some places, although the effects are probably not nearly as large as they are often touted to be.

We accept, as a working assumption, that NW has demonstrated some positive effects in preventing crime, particularly residential burglary and other common property crimes that occur around households. Given this assumption, our task is to address the question: How can NW be made more effective? Thus, we examine the problems that hinder and the solutions that facilitate the goal of getting NW programs to function in intended ways.

In some places in the United States, NW has stagnated; it has become a predetermined, fully outlined program that is implanted in neighborhoods without modification and with few changes over time. In other places, fresh approaches are being tried. The underlying purpose of our state-of-the-art assessment is to open up NW for reexamination and renewal by identifying problems and discussing options for dealing with them.

CHAPTER 3

DEFINITIONS AND METHODS

The design of this study was multi-faceted. It sought to combine the benefits of a structured questionnaire with the benefits of open-ended interviews and observations. Primary data collection was supplemented by drawing upon existing studies and evaluations.

A structured survey instrument, eliciting information on program, neighborhood, and respondent characteristics, was distributed to a national sample of NW programs. The sampled programs were also asked to supply written documents (e.g., program descriptions, evaluations). Based upon information derived from the survey and via contact with knowledgeable informants, a few programs were chosen for site visits.

This chapter discusses (1) the definition of NW used in the research, (2) the methodology of the national survey, and (3) the programs selected for site visits. Our full Final Report contains a more detailed treatment of the methodology and extended descriptions of the site visit programs.

Definition of "Neighborhood Watch" Program

We initially set three minimal criteria for determining whether or not programs fit within the category of "Neighborhood Watch":

> First, the primary participants in the programs live and/or work in the program area, and their participation in the activities of the program is not the primary aspect of their major activities; thus, local hiring of security guards does not constitute Neighborhood Watch. Second, the programs are collective, rather than individual, attempts at crime prevention; thus, the participants must be involved in some sort of systematic effort in which their activities are coordinated. Third, the programs are aimed at increasing the level of surveillance directed at criminal behaviors and suspicious behaviors that appear to be precursors of criminal behavior.

Early in the research, we modified the criteria slightly to require that there be at least some provision for continuing activity or organization. This was necessary to exclude the scenario in which an initial neighborhood meeting is held, but no later meetings are planned, no leaders are elected, and no provisions are made for subsequent communications. Claims that NW programs existed, based solely on one-time, informational meetings, were encountered. While not questioning the value of these meetings, it was decided that they did not constitute a "program" for this study.

The criteria are purposely broad so they can accommodate a variety of program approaches. While surveillance solely by paid guards has been excluded, a particular method of surveillance, such as actual patrol, was not demanded. In fact, most programs that utilize the NW label (or Block Watch, Community Watch, etc.) are "eyes and ears" programs: Surveillance is conducted by residents as they go about their normal daily activities in the neighborhood. Programs with actual citizen patrols are a definite minority.

As it turned out, the criteria were easy to apply when trying to determine whether or not a program was engaging in activities that fell under the rubric of NW. The biggest problem involved deciding what constituted a "program". The problem can be illustrated with a few examples. A common situation is one in which a police department encourages NW in all the city's neighborhoods or precincts. In order to distribute the leadership burden, block leaders (or captains) are designated to oversee activities in small areas. Some coordinating structure is established at the neighborhood level, and the police department's crime prevention unit is a common source of encouragement, assistance, information, and other services for all the organized neighborhoods and blocks. Does the city have hundreds of block-level programs, a dozen or so neighborhood programs, or one city-wide program?

Another situation is when organizations sponsor NW as one of a variety of functions. Neighborhood associations, for example, deal with issues ranging from trash collection to zoning, as well as crime prevention. When NW is sponsored by such an association, it often has a distinct leadership substructure in the association. When this occurs, is the "program" the neighborhood association, or is it the substructure responsible for NW?

These definitional issues became very important in the national survey when we tried to decide (a) who should be contacted for program information, and (b) what questions about structure and function would be relevant. Our solution was to focus on the organizational level nearest to the actual NW activities. However, one cannot ignore the role of a police crime prevention unit vis-a-vis the numerous block-level operations it sponsors or the effects of running NW within the context of a multi-purpose neighborhood association. Thus, while the national survey was directed toward the lowest organizational level, other research strategies (particularly the site visits) were sensitive to issues pertaining to all levels of organization.

The National Survey

Estimates of the number of NW programs in the United States run into the tens of thousands, so sampling was required. Three approaches were adopted for identifying samples of programs: (1) geographic sampling, (2) nominations, and (3) review of existing lists of crime prevention contacts.

The first approach was devised to generate a nationally representative sample of programs. All counties in the 48 contiguous states were weighted by population and random selections were made from Census Bureau divisions, with the constraint that every state be represented by at least one county. We sought to identify all NW programs within the 117 selected counties.

The second approach involved contacting people with extensive knowledge and experience in crime prevention. Nomination forms were mailed to approximately 500 individuals, asking them to identify (1) NW programs that were located within the sampled counties, and (2) programs that, while not within the sampled counties, would be of interest to the research because they had unique features, were particularly successful, or had been evaluated.

Program identification in the sampled counties was facilitated by a review of program lists maintained by the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Sheriffs' Association, and by contacts with law enforcement agencies in larger cities and towns within each county.

A survey packet was designed for distribution to contacts in each of the nearly 2700 NW programs that were identified. The packet contained a letter outlining the project's sponsors and intent, a questionnaire to be completed by an individual involved in the administration of the program, and a self-addressed stamped envelope to facilitate return of the completed packet.

The survey instrument had seven sections. In the first section, respondents were asked to indicate which crime prevention techniques and services were utilized by their programs. The second section covered various facets of administrative structure. The third section was designed for programs engaging in citizen patrols; items focused on patrol administration, nature of patrol activities, and characteristics of patrol participants. Characteristics of neighborhoods with NW were recorded in the fourth section: geographic setting, population demography, land use, and so forth. The final three sections elicited information on the existence and availability of printed materials describing or evaluating the program, characteristics of the person completing the survey, and respondent commentary on the survey.

Whenever possible, program personnel were contacted by telephone prior to questionnaire distribution to screen out inapplicable programs and to verify addresses. Survey packets were sent to 2300 programs in 39 states. This is a conservative estimate of the number of programs in the sampled counties, primarily because nearly 98 percent of the original contacts were umbrella organizations (e.g., police crime prevention units) that represent numerous NW groups. Several contacts, mostly in urban areas, indicated that they sponsor hundreds, even thousands, of programs. In these cases, we sought to subsample up to 25 programs, a process that proved very difficult and had a negative effect on response rates. Some umbrella organizations provided a listing of all program contacts in their jurisdictions so that we could contact respondents directly. Others would not or could not provide a list, so we were dependent on the umbrella organization to distribute packets and to urge people to reply. In a few cases, we later determined that packets were never distributed.

The final response rate was 26 percent. This low rate and the subsampling problems make us cautious about generalizing the survey results.

Site Visits

Survey research, by its nature, cannot fully reflect the dynamic processes of NW groups. To examine administrative and operational practices in depth, a series of site visits was conducted. Project staff identified several programs that had been particularly successful or had distinctive features. Site selection was based on a review of data generated from the national survey, program documents, recommendations offered by crime prevention practitioners, and the findings of other researchers. Between September 1985 and March 1986, site visits were conducted in 10 locations by senior research staff. In each site, the initial visit (generally two days) involved identifying key actors, conducting preliminary interviews, and locating relevant documents. Follow-up visits were scheduled when deemed necessary.

The NW programs selected for site visits included Alexandria, VA; Operation StreetSAFE in Boston, MA; Buncombe County, NC; Clifton, NJ; Detroit, MI; Greene County, MO; Norfolk, VA; Orlando, FL; San Diego, CA; and Operation SafeStreet in St. Louis, MO.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS: A NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Completed survey instruments were returned by 550 programs. The 26 percent response rate, while lower than desired, allows cautious statements about the administration, operations, and settings of NW programs.

Administrative Characteristics

1. Relationship with Law Enforcement

The role of the police in initiating NW programs is extensive. At start-up time, 98 percent of the programs received police assistance. The predominant forms of aid included the provision of speakers, liaison officers, local crime statistics, and crime prevention training. Equipment (CB radios, property engravers, etc.) was provided to approximately 44 percent of the groups. Both the survey and interviews with NW participants suggest that police assistance continues at about the same level over time.

2. Budgets and Staffing

The distribution of program budgets is highly skewed. The average annual budget was $7,272, but 71 percent of the programs reported having no formal budgets, while 7 percent reported annual budgets in excess of $25,000.

Staffing levels, like budgetary allocations, are widely variable due to program sizes, administrative structures, and organizational objectives. Paid staff, many of whom are local and county law enforcement employees, represent 19 percent of the total staffing levels reported in the national survey.

Volunteers contribute substantially to NW administration. On average, respondents noted an administrative staff of eight persons, almost three-fifths of whom were part-time volunteers. Full-time volunteers comprised the second largest source of administrative personnel, accounting for nearly a quarter of all staff. In total, 81 percent of NW administrators were unpaid.

3. Program Age

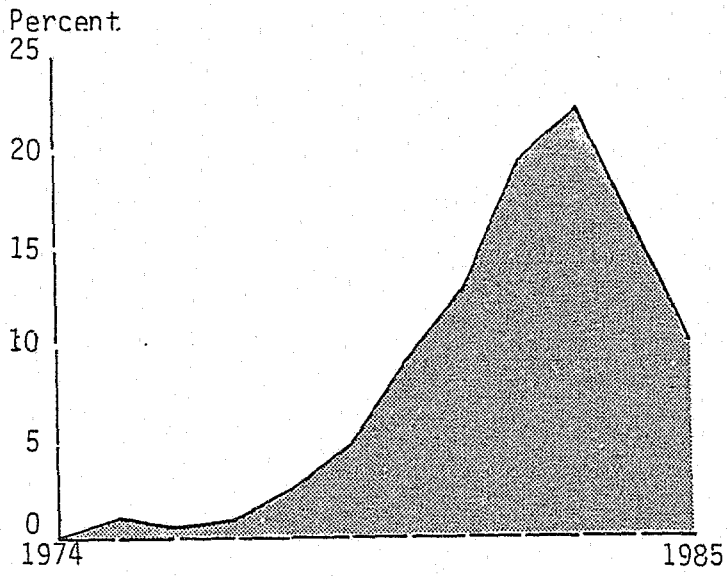
The programs represented in the survey ranged in age from a few months to 74 years, but the majority are relatively young. Nearly half of the programs were 2 years old or younger; more than 80 percent were 4 years or younger. Only five programs had been in existence longer than 10 years.

NW is a product of the past decade. As shown in Figure 1, the number of new programs fluctuated during the early 1970's. The increase in the number of programs in the 6-year period, 1978-1983, has been more consistent and dramatic. This surge may reflect the successes of various national projects to educate the public about crime prevention and to promote NW.

The abrupt downward trend in the number of programs formed after 1983 is not so easily explained. It may reflect resource reallocations within law enforcement agencies. While programs established in 1984 and 1985 comprise

Figure 1

Neighborhood Watch programs,
by year of inception



Year of inception	Number	Percent
1911	1	0.2
1966	2	0.4
1972	1	0.2
1973	0	0.0
1974	1	0.2
1975	6	1.2
1976	3	0.6
1977	5	1.0
1978	12	2.5
1979	22	4.5
1980	44	9.1
1981	60	12.4
1982	94	19.4
1983	107	22.1
1984	78	16.1
1985	50	10.3

26 percent of the total sample, they account for 48 percent of the programs that are not currently receiving some form of police assistance. A second explanation might be a reduction in the availability of start-up funds. The average 1985 budget for programs started in 1984 or 1985 was $2,227, less than one-fourth the mean budget ($9,086) reported for programs organized in earlier years. A third explanation is that the 1984-1985 figures are artificially deflated due to response bias. In several cases, incomplete survey packets were returned with the explanation that respondents could not adequately complete the questionnaire because of the newness of their programs. If others who shared this sentiment failed to respond in any manner, data for programs established in 1984 and 1985 would be disproportionately missing.

Operational Characteristics

By a margin of nearly 2 to 1, respondents indicated that NW was implemented to prevent crime rather than to combat an existing crime problem. Regardless of the rationale for initiation, a number of respondents identified specific criminal activities as current program foci. Elderly residents of a mobile home park voiced concern over an escalating rate of bicycle and golf cart thefts. In contrast, program participants in transitional urban areas have concentrated on the prevention of assaultive street violence. However, the predominant concern of NW groups is residential burglary.

1. Publicity and Information

The existence of NW is announced to area residents and outsiders in several ways. Outsiders are alerted by means of street signs or window stickers; 94 percent of the programs claimed to employ one or both of these visual cues. The utilization of street signs is dependent on several factors, two of which are cost and public acceptance. NW groups reported that, in many locations, signs are provided without cost by local or county law enforcement agencies. Other groups are required to purchase their own signs.

In at least two site visit locales, NW signs have been subjects of controversy. Management in one apartment complex balked at erecting signs, presumably because their presence suggested that the community was in the throes of a crime problem, which could deter potential tenants. At a second site, city officials expressed concern that the signs would detract from the aesthetics of the landscape. After a lengthy debate, the municipal planning committee approved the selective erection of smaller signs.

Residents learn about local group operations through newsletters or public meetings. Newsletters and meetings are employed by 54 percent and 61 percent of programs, respectively; 40 percent utilize both measures. Over two-fifths of the programs that publish newsletters do so on a weekly or monthly schedule; 78 percent distribute updates at least quarterly. Meetings are scheduled less frequently, with over half the programs with meetings observing an irregular, annual, or "as needed" schedule.

In communities where meetings are scheduled, respondents were asked about the nature of the meetings. On average, 39 residents attend, and regular police attendance was reported by over two-thirds of the groups. Of those with meetings, 84 percent noted that recent crime statistics were generally available for review; 79 percent observed that meeting agendas "always" included a discussion of crime prevention techniques.

Several factors are related to the use of newsletters and meetings. Of particular interest are program setting and program age. Although the relationship is not statistically significant, meetings are disproportionately scheduled by NW groups in suburban areas and in medium-sized cities (50,000-250,000 population). It is reasonable to suggest that racial and cultural homogeneity account, in part, for this finding. It may be that meetings are facilitated in areas where neighbors know each other and share common values and concerns.

This hypothesis is supported by the ancillary finding that meetings are least likely to be scheduled in large cities (populations of 250,000 and over). A crime prevention officer in one city noted frustration at his inability to persuade residents of a transitional neighborhood to attend a block meeting. Residents were hesitant to host a meeting, fearing that other attendees might "case" the home to determine its potential for burglary. Residents were also reluctant to attend a well publicized meeting at a neutral site (e.g., a community center), fearing that their homes might be burglarized during their absence. The officer resolved the issue by arranging to temporarily close the street to traffic and holding the meeting in the middle of the street.

The distribution of newsletters is a much more individualized and less threatening means of information dissemination. In view of the above statements it is not surprising that newsletters are disproportionately published by NW groups in large cities and their suburbs.

Newsletters and meetings are more prevalent in older programs. While 55 percent of the programs founded prior to 1982 use both newsletters and meetings, 31 percent of those founded during 1982-1985 use both. Similar trends emerge when newsletters and meetings are viewed independently. For each year since 1980 there has been a decrease in the percentage of newly established programs that publish newsletters; the 1985 figure is less than half the figure for 1980. Likewise, the percentage of programs that were initiated in 1981-85 and that schedule meetings is below the overall sample mean.

2. Related Activities

Only 9 percent of the programs reported informal surveillance to be their sole activity. On average, NW groups engage in at least two additional activities, and the range of activities is diverse. Some techniques are geared specifically toward crime prevention; others are best described as crime related or community oriented. The extent to which these program components are used is discussed below and summarized in Table 1.

Crime prevention activities - Operation Identification and home security surveys are commonly found in NW programs. Indeed, in some places, the idea of NW has been redefined to incorporate one or both of these activities.

As an extension to home security surveys, some programs provide and/or install residential security hardware. The number of survey respondents that listed this activity is probably a low estimate of its occurrence nationally. Our site visits found a number of groups that provide hardware, particularly to senior citizens who satisfy certain criteria, such as financial need, home ownership, or participation in NW.

Table 1

Activities engaged in by Neighborhood Watch groups, by type of activity

Activity	Number	Percent
Neighborhood Watch only	49	8.9
Crime Prevention Specific		
Project/Operation Identification	425	80.6
Home security surveys	357	67.9
Street lighting improvement	183	34.7
Block parenting	144	27.3
Organized surveillance	66	12.0
Traffic alteration	37	7.0
Emergency telephones	24	4.6
Project Whistle Stop	18	3.4
Specialized informal surveillance	18	3.4
Escort service	12	2.3
Hired guards	11	2.1
Environmental design	7	1.3
Lock provision/installation	4	0.7
Self defense/rape prevention	3	0.5
Crime Related		
Crime tip hotline	197	37.5
Victim/witness assistance	101	19.2
Court watch	17	3.2
Telephone chain	7	1.3
Child fingerprinting	2	0.4
Puppets on patrol	1	0.2
Community Oriented		
Physical environmental concerns	201	38.1
Insurance premium deduction survey	20	3.6
Quality of life measures	9	1.6
Medical emergency measures	4	0.7

The installation (as opposed to provision) of hardware is being dropped from some program agendas. Law enforcement officials remarked to us that they do not have the personnel to install security devices, cannot afford to hire others to perform this task, and are wary of liability should structural damage result from faulty or negligent workmanship.

Over a third of the respondents indicated that street lighting improvement was a focal program concern. Street lighting improvement is promoted in three ways: (1) replacement of malfunctioning lights, (2) increasing the quantity of lights, and (3) upgrading the quality of lights.

About 3 percent of the respondents indicated that their groups engage in special-occasion surveillance. Vacation Watch, Wedding Watch, and Funeral Watch stem from the realization that a significant number of burglaries occur while residents are temporarily and predictably away from home.

Twelve percent of the surveyed programs field actual citizen patrols. This topic is is discussed separately, later in the chapter.

Crime related activities - Many groups reported participation in crime related (not necessarily crime preventive) activities relating to offenders and victims. Two popular activities are victim/witness assistance and crime tip hotlines. One of every five respondents listed victim/witness assistance as a program component; more than one-third mentioned crime tip hotlines.

Community oriented activities - Community oriented activities contribute to neighborhood cohesion and the general well-being of the residents. Nearly 40 percent of the survey respondents indicated that their programs were concerned with environmental issues such as graffiti, litter, and abandoned vehicles. Other community oriented activities include medical emergency measures (e.g., Vial of Life program, CPR training), firearms safety, zoning, social service referrals, and insurance premium deduction surveys.

3. Program Comprehensiveness

Previous research has demonstrated that participation in collective crime prevention efforts is primarily a middle-class phenomenon (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Roehl and Cook, 1984; Greenberg, Rohe, and Williams, 1985). Such participation is said to be a function of income level, social homogeneity, and social integration. The difficulty of organizing low-income areas is attributed to interpersonal suspicion, the absence of consensual norms for public behavior, and inadequate resources. While these factors are apparently related to the existence of crime prevention efforts, do they also explain variability in the comprehensiveness of the collective efforts that do exist?

In this discussion, program comprehensiveness is defined as the number of activities engaged in by NW programs in addition to traditional "eyes and ears" surveillance. The variable is a simple summation of the responses to a survey item asking about a variety of techniques and services offered by NW programs (block parenting, hired guards, escort service, Project Whistle Stop, home security surveys, crime tip hotline, victim/witness assistance, court watch, street lighting improvement, and so forth).

Only 9 percent of the surveyed groups engage exclusively in informal surveillance, and they are disproportionately situated in small towns and

rural settings. In general, serviced areas are racially homogeneous, and White in particular. There is a high degree of home ownership; on average, an estimated 90 percent of residents are non-renters (compared to 79 percent in the overall sample). The mean extent of commercialization (8 percent) is lower than that found for groups in general (13 percent). Not surprisingly, the single-focus programs disproportionately serve relatively small populations and operate with minimal budgets (less than $500) or with no budgets.

At the other end of the spectrum, comprehensive NW groups (engaging in five or more additional activities) tend to be located in urban settings where home ownership is significantly lower. Clearly, some of the additional activities (such as block parenting, street lighting improvement) are not compatible with the greater dispersion of rural residences. Other activities (such as victim/witness assistance, court watch, crime tip hotline) are designed for environs with crime rates that are sufficiently high to warrant these functions.

Other research has documented the prevalence of collective crime prevention efforts in racially homogeneous areas. Our survey data reveal that NW groups participating only in informal surveillance activities are disproportionately located in settings with greater racial homogeneity. Regardless of comprehensiveness, most NW programs are found in racially homogeneous areas, but a disproportionate number of the most comprehensive programs operate in heterogeneous neighborhoods. Participation in five or more additional activities, was reported by 33 percent of the programs in heterogeneous neighborhoods and only 21 percent of the programs in homogeneous areas. The relationship is not statistically significant and may simply be a methodological artifact. Nevertheless, the data suggest that the existence and breadth of crime prevention efforts may be distinct phenomena warranting separate attention.

Environmental Characteristics

1. Geographic Setting

The basic NW model -- informal surveillance and the reporting of suspicious situations to the police -- has been adopted by city and farm dwellers alike. Among the programs responding to the survey, 42 percent are located in urban areas, 31 percent in suburban, and 27 percent in small-town or rural areas. This parallels the findings of the Victimization Risk Survey, administered to over 11,000 households nationwide in 1984. The VRS found that households in metropolitan areas (especially those in central cities rather than suburban settings) were more likely than their non-metropolitan counterparts to report the existence of NW in their neighborhoods (Whitaker, 1986).

Respondents in our survey were asked to characterize the geographic area serviced by their NW programs. A few specified city-wide boundaries. The vast majority (68 percent) described their programs as providing neighborhood coverage; 17 percent indicated that their programs had been organized at the block level; 15 percent observed that NW had been adopted in an enclosed community such as an apartment complex, a high-rise building, or a mobile home park.

Respondents describe their program milieus in terms suggesting neighborhood stability. Table 2 shows that NW areas tend to be non-commercial, with a high proportion of single-family homes, most of which are owner-occupied. Nearly three-fourths of the programs are located in communities with no commercial establishments. Where commercialization is present, respondents estimated an average of only 13 percent commercial land use. The types of businesses most frequently noted are shopping malls, fast-food restaurants, and bars.

No respondents indicated that area merchants were opposed to their NW activities. One-fourth noted that the relationship between the NW group and businesses was one of nonintrusive coexistence: The businesses neither supported nor impeded group functions. Ninety-three of the programs in areas with some commercialization described local businesses as being generally supportive.

Merchants support NW in a variety of ways. Foremost is the provision of support services such as printing and postage. Forty-two percent of the programs that have working relationships with local businesses cited this form of assistance. Funding and meeting space were each provided to a third of these programs. Merchants also supply refreshments, moral support, equipment, and operating space.

Communities with NW programs are not very heterogeneous in terms of housing structures. Fewer than 4 percent of the respondents characterized their areas as having no predominant form of housing. Single-family dwellings were cited as predominating 13 times as frequently as apartments, townhouses/condominiums, or mobile homes. On average, 79 percent of the homes in the serviced areas were believed to be owner occupied, well above the 1980 national rate of 64 percent.

2. Population Demography

The national survey depicts the population of NW communities as racially homogeneous and disproportionately upper-income; most residents have lived in the community for at least 5 years (Table 2). When a predominant racial group was noted, it was most often White. Fewer than 4 percent of the respondents estimated average annual household incomes below $10,000; responses were evenly divided between the $10,000-29,999 and the $30,000 or more brackets.

These findings are consistent with previous research on the relationship between neighborhood characteristics and community organization. Indeed, Greenberg, Rohe, and Williams, in reanalyzing data from a number of paired neighborhoods, concluded that "...community crime prevention programs that require frequent contact and cooperation among neighbors, such as neighborhood watch, were less likely to be found in racially or economically heterogeneous areas" (1985:22).

One explanation is that transient populations are reluctant to become involved in organized efforts to confront long-standing community concerns. This may stem from a sense that conditions, however aversive, are tolerable because exposure is to be short-term.

Table 2

Characteristics of areas and residents of areas serviced by Neighborhood Watch programs

Characteristic of areas	Percent
Predominant housing	
Apartments	5.8
Single family homes	79.2
Townhouses/condominiums	5.4
Mobile home park	5.8
No predominance	3.9
Occupancy status	
Owners	79.3
Renters	20.7
Commercialization	
Some commercial establishments	26.8
No commercial establishments	73.2
Characteristic of residents	
Predominant racial composition	
White	75.1
Black	4.4
Hispanic	3.5
No predominance	17.0
Predominant income level	
Under $10,000	3.7
$10,000 to $29,999	38.5
$30,000 and over	40.1
No predominance	17.7
Average length of residence	
1 to 2 years	8.1
3 to 5 years	23.1
5 years and longer	68.8

Citizen Patrol

The survey identified 66 patrol programs within the sampled counties. The characteristics of patrol programs differ in several respects from those of more traditional NW programs. Survey data reveal broad diversity in the administration and operation of patrol programs. Highlights of the data are presented below; a more comprehensive analysis appears in our Final Report.

1. Administrative Characteristics

Programs with patrols have more formalized structures and specialized needs than do NW programs in general, so it was surprising to find that patrol programs have smaller budgets than nonpatrol programs. The average annual budget for 1985 was $2,082 -- less than one-third the figure for all NW groups.

Like all NW programs, the vast majority (91 percent) of citizen patrols received start-up assistance from police agencies. Of patrol groups that continue to receive police assistance, seven out of ten cited county rather than city agencies as the suppliers, which is nearly the reverse of what is found for NW programs in general. This dramatic difference reflects the nature of the geographic settings in which the programs are situated. While NW programs are predominately found in urban areas, patrol programs are disproportionately located in rural, small-town, and suburban environs.

2. Operational Characteristics

Programs with citizen patrols are more likely to promote their existence and operations than are programs without patrols. Survey data show that all patrolled areas (compared to 94 percent of the total sample) employ identifying signs and/or window decals to advertise their group's presence. Larger percentages of patrol groups also hold regular meetings (68 vs. 61 percent) and publish newsletters (65 vs. 54 percent). Because of a continuing reliance on active resident participation, these forums are needed to promote volunteerism and to assist with administrative tasks such as scheduling.

Fifty-six percent of the responding patrol groups indicated that they operate 7 days per week; over three-fourths of the respondents schedule patrols a minimum of 5 days per week. As expected, weekends are the most popular for coverage. Nearly all of the groups patrol on Friday and Saturday nights. The least frequently patrolled day is Sunday.

Citizen groups patrol both on foot (6 percent) and by vehicle (94 percent). Although the primary mode of transportation is an automobile, several groups use bicycles, motor scooters, or golf carts.

Just over one-fifth of the respondents described their group's patrol pattern as regular, i.e., predetermined and repetitive. Most groups prefer irregular coverage for two reasons: (a) irregularity (unpredictability) of surveillance is believed to be a more effective deterrent to crime, and (b) it helps to counteract monotony

While on patrol, citizens engage in diverse activities, the quintessence of which is simple observation. In addition to surveillance, 56 percent of the patrols report malfunctioning street lights. Nearly half also monitor

household security by making repeated passes by a home that is known to be unoccupied or by physically testing residential hardware.

There is some question as to whether individuals on patrol should be visibly identifiable. One position is that there is greater deterrent potential if the existence of the patrol is highly publicized but if the frequency and pattern of surveillance activities remain unknown. Under this model, the deterrent effect is assumed to carry over to times and areas when no patrol is operating. The competing model is that high visibility is a more effective deterrent to crime, with the additional benefit that residents who observe the patrol may feel safer in their homes.

In total, 74 percent of the mobile patrols employ some form of vehicle identification. In addition, 10 groups require their membership to carry identification cards, and 4 mandate identifiable clothing.

The strength of patrol memberships, as reported by surveyed programs, varies from 2 to 700 persons. Nearly half of the groups have 50 or fewer active participants. In contrast, nine programs estimate their membership rolls to be in excess of 200 persons; among these is one program in a mobile home park where all 700 adult residents are said to be active patrollers.

Patrol members are predominantly White, male, and have annual household incomes of $10,000-29,999. This profile parallels the demographic profile of all residents (regardless of patrol membership) of patrolled areas, suggesting that people who volunteer for patrols are representative of their communities.

3. Environmental Characteristics

As noted, patrols are disproportionately situated in nonurban settings. Large and medium cities account for 12 percent of patrol groups, compared to 42 percent of all NW groups. Despite this geographic difference, the physical characteristics of patrolled areas parallel those of NW areas in general. The extent of commercialization and the level of home ownership are both similar. There is, however, a difference in the types of available housing. Single-family homes are less prevalent, though still predominant, in patrolled settings; townhouses/condominiums and mobile homes are more highly represented.

The persons residing in areas serviced by patrols are predominantly long-term, middle-class homeowners. The neighborhoods tend to be more racially homogeneous than NW neighborhoods in general, a fact that is related to their geographic situation in nonurban settings. Fewer than 10 percent of the respondents indicated that their areas had no predominant racial groups. Where a racial predominance was indicated, White was specified most often (by 95 percent of the responding patrol groups).

Income levels in all NW areas were evenly distributed between the $10,000-29,999 and the $30,000 or more income categories. In patrolled areas, more than half of the residents were estimated to be middle-income ($10,000-29,000), with only 26 percent in the upper-income bracket.

CHAPTER 5

ISSUES IN THE OPERATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

The basic idea of NW is simple: citizens protect their own communities by becoming more sensitive to suspicious activities, increasing the surveillance of their environments, and calling the police when they detect anything suspicious. But complex issues arise when the idea is put into practice.

The purpose of this research is to examine issues bearing on the smooth and successful operation of NW. All of the relevant issues could not be known at the outset, when the survey questionnaire was designed. Therefore, this chapter draws heavily on the site visits, which occurred throughout the study. During site visits, we had opportunities to observe and to conduct wide-ranging interviews with people who were involved with NW activities.

Role of the Police

As the survey findings indicated, it is difficult to find NW programs in which local police departments are not involved. However, the site visits revealed that the nature of police involvement takes many different forms.

1. Program Initiation

Crime prevention officers play major roles in program initiation. In some places the role is reactive: officers use pamphlets, posters, and public service advertising to sell the idea of NW, then make themselves available to address groups which express an interest in NW. In other places, the role is proactive: officers go door-to-door trying to organize programs, and they seek invitations to address groups that do not have crime prevention agendas.

Defenders of the reactive approach claim that "going door-to-door" tends to be futile. NW cannot be forced on residents; unless residents take the initiative, the program is destined to fail. In contrast, adherents of a proactive approach view it as necessary to overcome inertia and to dispel the feeling that citizens can do little about crime. People are disinclined to get involved; they are reluctant to take leadership roles. Only by challenging and cajoling, while demonstrating a commitment by the police department, can people be motivated to organize and run NW programs.

Our site visit interviews suggest that both approaches are valid under certain circumstances. A reactive approach may be preferable for stable, relatively low-crime neighborhoods. A common scenario is that an unusual number of crimes occurs during a brief period in a normally quiet area. The residents become concerned, and a few contact the police. The crime prevention officer works with these few residents to plan and publicize an initial NW meeting, which often results in the creation of a NW program.

Residents of neighborhoods where barriers to collective action are not prevalent can usually be counted on to contact the police (or other appropriate agency) when they feel that they need or want NW. The capacity and inclination to take collective action, which are strong in middle-class and stable working-class neighborhoods, make a proactive police role unnecessary.

It is possible that proactive attempts to stimulate NW in relatively placid areas can produce unintended results. There is some evidence that NW initiation can lead to increases in the fear of crime (Rosenbaum, Lewis, and Grant, 1985; Black Federation of San Diego, 1981). We suspect that this effect is more likely when residents in low-crime areas are given a "hard sell" about NW. The pitch includes an effort to convince the residents that the threat of crime in their area is greater than they think -- that they, in fact, have a problem in need of a solution.

However, there are neighborhoods in which a proactive approach may be needed. Crime is already such a recognized problem that pointing it out is unlikely to increase fear. The neighborhood has a variety of problems in addition to crime, and the residents have so few resources that they view the prospects for effective citizen action as bleak. In such neighborhoods, a proactive approach is more likely to be appropriate, and crime prevention officers need community organizing skills (see Lavrakas, 1985:103-105).

Whether reactive or proactive, police involvement is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for initiation of NW, but the absence of police involvement is uncommon. Police departments are the organizations most active in trying to get NW going, so their involvement in most programs is not surprising. But there is another reason: NW participants generally view police involvement as desirable. While community crime prevention emphasizes citizen responsibility, the problem being addressed is crime, and people generally associate the police with any attempt to deal with crime. The police are the on-scene representatives of the state's authority, and citizens are reluctant to engage the issue of crime without police support.

Active police involvement in the initiation of NW carries an implicit promise that the police will continue to assist the programs. Many crime prevention officers describe NW as a partnership between citizens and police. Citizens who respond to this message and become involved in NW expect that the police will reciprocate and be more responsive to their neighborhood concerns. Thus, some form of on-going involvement with NW programs is almost a necessity for police departments that encourage their formation.

2. On-going Operations

Immediately after the formation of a NW group, crime prevention officers often have extensive contact with participants. The contact usually consists of technical assistance relating to home security measures, engraving of property, and provision of NW signs. In some departments, this technical assistance, followed by occasional, informal contact with NW participants, is viewed as sufficient. But most departments seem to feel that on-going involvement is necessary to prevent a waning of citizen interest.

The most common way of mafntaining police involvement with NW is the establishment of communication channels. Often, a newsletter is published. Newsletters may be mimeographed or type-set; distributed quarterly, monthly, or bi-weekly; mailed to all NW participants or just to block captains. Despite this variability, newsletters have strikingly similar content: primarily motivational messages and crime prevention tips. Motivational messages announce the formation of new NW groups, publicize awards, and exhort people to try harder. Crime prevention tips deal with specific types of crime or present reminders to take special care during vacations or on holidays.

The NW participants we interviewed during visits to police-sponsored programs wanted to be kept informed by the police. Newsletters are popular, but participants also expressed a desire for personalized communication; they wanted to hear from and see "their officer". In fact, some NW groups appear to persist because of rapport with specific crime prevention officers rather than because of any formal communication structure. This kind of personalization works when dynamic officers are freed from other duties and allowed to work intensively with residents of reasonably sized areas. Establishing rapport takes time, energy, organizing skills, and a particular temperament. Under the right conditions, some crime prevention officers can stimulate innovative programs with enthusiastic citizen participation. The disadvantage of relying on the dynamism of specific officers is that personalized networks can disintegrate when these officers are replaced by others.

Hierarchical organizational structures and standard-setting also facilitate on-going police involvement with NW groups. A hierarchical structure of leadership roles (block captains, area coordinators) allows crime prevention officers to meet regularly with a small number of active participants. Then, information should passed down the pyramid to other participants.

Standard-setting involves establishing criteria for residents to meet before they are recognized officially as a NW group. In some jurisdictions, the "standards" are the subjective judgments of crime prevention officers. Other jurisdictions have formal, written criteria. The process of being assessed vis-a-vis the criteria is called certification. The certification issue was not recognized as important when our survey was designed. However, based on site visits and contact with other programs, our view is that formal certification is used in a growing minority of programs.

Certification is only meaningful when the police have things to offer certified NW groups or to withhold from non-certified groups. The primary "carrot" in certification is the permission to erect NW signs. Other benefits contingent on certification include the rights to receive newsletters, participate in meetings with other NW groups, and be considered for awards.

Certification criteria vary somewhat among jurisdictions, but all of them are meant as indicators of commitment to NW. One of our field sites, for example, requires that 40 percent of the area's households participate by (a) attending two initial meetings, (b) having home security surveys conducted, and (c) being listed on the group's telephone contact chain.

Initial certification implies the possibility of later decertification. Most places that use initial certification also provide for periodic (usually annual) recertification of NW groups. As a rule, recertification requires the NW group to hold a meeting and demonstrate that participation levels are being maintained. In theory, if recertification criteria are not met, the group may be decertified, have its NW sign(s) removed, and stop receiving newsletters. In practice, recertification guidelines are rarely enforced; most jurisdictions prefer trying to revitalize faltering NW groups.

Compromise is not the stance of all jurisdictions. One city we contacted takes a hard line on decertification. If a NW group fails to meet recertification standards, the crime prevention unit removes the group's signs and waits for someone to notice -- "if no one notices, the group couldn't have been doing very much watching."

Certification/recertification can serve three purposes: (1) provide incentives for residents to join NW and remain active, (2) give NW groups a stamp of legitimacy, and (3) bring a degree of standardization to the structures and functions of NW groups. Balanced against these purposes are the dangers that rigorous (re)certification processes might: (1) decrease the likelihood that NW groups will form or be maintained in highly disorganized neighborhoods, which may find it more difficult to meet the criteria, and (2) decrease the opportunities for innovation by NW groups.

Maintaining involvement with NW groups is important, but the nature of the police role must be clearly stated to program participants. A department that encourages participation in NW but is not responsive to the NW groups after they have formed risks a rapid deterioration of citizen interest. On the other hand, a department cannot promise, or imply a promise of, more than it can deliver. This can create a backlash of distrust.

As an example, several police departments told us that they encouraged NW participants to identify themselves as such when calling the police to report something. Some departments even assigned code numbers to be used when calling. The numbers were supposed to help the departments track the volume of calls from NW participants. At least two departments stopped this practice because it was leading some NW participants to expect priority treatment for their calls. Crime prevention officers had not promised priority treatment and, of course, dispatches continued to be based on the relative seriousness of calls and the availability of patrol units. After finding some dissatisfaction about a lack of change in response to calls, crime prevention officers began to make it clear that NW groups could not expect priority treatment because of the nature of the dispatch process. While police departments may give special attention to NW groups, the nature of such attention should be made explicit at the outset.

3. The Crime Prevention Role Within Police Departments

Virtually every police agency in the United States has taken on a community crime prevention role. But even in departments that take the role seriously, it generally remains a side-line rather than an integrated part of the department's primary functions. Crime prevention units are often staffed minimally and have low priorities for resources. There is a perception in police ranks that community crime prevention is not "real police work." Crime prevention units that are "add-ons" may be among the first units cut back or eliminated when the department faces resource cuts. Because of this uncertainty, NW groups should not become completely dependent on the police for their identities.

The organizational placement of crime prevention units varies across departments. A basic issue is whether crime prevention reports directly to headquarters or follows the same chain of command as regular patrol and investigative functions. The demand for routine police services is so pressing, particularly in urban areas, that placement of crime prevention in the same command line as routine services creates a temptation to divert crime prevention officers to other tasks. But, crime prevention units should not be completely isolated. Isolation makes the units vulnerable to cut-backs and hampers their ability to respond to the needs of citizen groups, which expect the crime prevention officer to be their liaison to the department.

Examples of a situation in which crime prevention officer effectiveness can be enhanced by an ability to marshall traditional police functions came up in several site visits. Some neighborhoods contain one or two well known, chronic (though often petty) lawbreakers who intimidate other residents. In such situations, many residents are reluctant to participate in NW.

During one site visit, a woman who had tried to organize NW attributed her lack of success to a specific neighborhood family. Other residents, she reported, were afraid to be identified with crime prevention. She described several occasions on which the son in this family and his friends had slashed tires and broken windows belonging to people who had reported their misdeeds. In her words, the attitude of many residents was: "Why should I stick my neck out? The police won't do anything when we need them."

Another site visit jurisdictions addresses the problem of neighborhood intimidation with two task forces that help NW groups get started. The task forces spend much of their time going door-to-door, soliciting involvement in NW, but they also have surveillance capabilities. During their community organizing efforts, the officers determine the identities of local trouble-makers. They then place an identified individual under covert surveillance until they catch him for an arrestable offense. The police view the task forces as a marriage between community crime prevention and "old-time law enforcement." As one task force officer noted, people "want crime prevention, but they also want the thugs out of their neighborhoods."

In sum, an effective crime prevention unit cannot be isolated from traditional police functions. When citizens respond to police requests and form NW goups, they expect reciprocation. They want to be kept informed, and they want the police to respond to the special needs of their neighborhoods.

4. Potential Liability as a Constraint

There appears to be a growing tendency for the police to shy away from some NW-related activities because of concerns about civil liability. The hesitancy that we detected is most evident with respect to citizen patrols. Site visits uncovered concerns about departmental liability for the actions of citizen patrols which had received police approval. Another affected activity is helping residents to upgrade home security. A number of departments have provided assistance to residents who purchase improved locks or other devices or who want to engrave their property with ID numbers. Because of the risk of property damage during installation or engraving, some departments have ceased offering such assistance.

Police department concerns about incurring civil liability through their crime prevention efforts is undoubtedly a reflection of the more general and growing liability problems being faced by municipalities. The constraints of legal liability will only become clear as court cases are decided and as remedial legislation dealing with municipal liability is enacted.

Before proceeding, we note that many of the issues raised under this discussion of the police role pertain equally to programs that are sponsored and managed by private or public organizations other than the police.

Starting a Neighborhood Watch

From among the variety of issues that pertain to the initial development of a NW program, we have chosen two that are important and recurring: (1) the extent to which program initiation is easier in some neighborhoods than in others, and (2) the effects of initial organizing meetings.

1. Differential Neighborhood Receptiveness

Some neighborhoods seem to form NW groups spontaneously; others seem to be immune to organizing efforts. Receptivity to NW is enhanced by mutual trust and common interests among residents. The question in heterogeneous neighborhoods is whether crime prevention can become a unifying issue that transcends local conflicts. NW encourages residents to increase the social control they exercise. If there are serious divisions among residents about what constitutes acceptable behavior, NW will be difficult to implement.

Neighborhoods with deep-seated conflicts among sizable proportions of their residents are extreme cases. But the problem of organizing NW in low-income, heterogeneous neighborhoods appears to be more general. In one city, Silloway and McPherson (1985:30) found that "low socio-economic status, more heterogeneous neighborhoods where crime-related problems are the greatest" had less success in initiating NW, despite greater efforts by organizers.

A common interest in crime prevention may be insufficient, by itself, to overcome other barriers to community action. A more wide-ranging approach to community problem-solving may be required. In short, the development of some minimal level of attachment to the neighborhood and agreement about goals may be necessary before NW can be implemented successfully.

NW organizers recognize that crime can be too narrow an issue to generate response in some neighborhoods. During site visits, we found that very active organizers (police and civilians) try to deal, as best they can, with a variety of residents' concerns. They offer referral, and sometimes advocacy, in helping with problems such as trash pick-up and street repair.

In other jurisdictions, NW is sponsored by organizations that address a range of community issues. This was the case in several of the sites we visited, and combining crime prevention with wider community concerns has been described by others (see DeJong and Goolkasian, 1982).

Receptivity to NW is a continuum. Placement of areas along this continuum appears to depend on a variety of factors (e.g., income, racial/ethnic mix, home ownership) which converge to produce certain levels of trust or distrust among residents and attachment of residents to the neighborhood. The common, police-sponsored, jurisdiction-wide approach to NW, which does not emphasize proactive organizing, is most appropriate in relatively stable, homogeneous neighborhoods that are not plagued by numerous problems.

Where barriers to NW exist, organizers must address other neighborhood problems. To some extent, this can be done by dedicated crime prevention officers. But police departments are not structured to deal with deep-seated problems such as unemployment. Thus, non-police organizations with the capabilities of addressing a broad range of problems will probably have the most success in neighborhoods that are highly resistant to NW development.

2. Effects of Initial Meetings

We observed initial organizing meetings, interviewed NW participants about their experiences in the meetings, and reviewed dozens of agendas and handbooks pertaining the meetings. The similarities are striking. After being introduced, outsiders (usually crime prevention officers) try to raise attendees' consciousness about crime with statistics and anecdotes. After arousing interest, they explain that citizens and police must work as partners. Then, NW and its related components are presented, and the procedures for starting a program are described. Residents enroll in NW and select block captains at the initial meeting or at a follow-up meeting.

In trying to raise consciousness about crime, dramatic messages are often used. This can increase levels of fear and distrust, making residents less sanguine about chances for improvement. NW organizers are not unaware that their presentations may not be objective, balanced descriptions of crime in an area. But their role is to motivate people, and dramatic messages are viewed as better short-term motivators than are more balanced presentations.

Initial meetings can also foster unrealistic expectations. The desire to sell the idea of NW can tempt organizers to describe the program in ways that lead residents to over-estimate its potential for reducing crime.

Organization and Sponsorship

The typical NW structure involves a variation of one or more of the following: a jurisdiction-wide sponsoring agency, neighborhoods with NW operations, and individually organized blocks within the neighborhoods.

1. Jurisdiction-wide Sponsorship

Organizations that provide jurisdiction-wide sponsorship for NW are usually police departments, but the functions may be lodged in other local government agencies or in private agencies. There are pluses and minuses associated with placing jurisdiction-wide sponsorship in non-police agencies. The agencies can generally give more focused attention to NW than can police crime prevention units. They can recruit staff based on the skills and temperament needed for community organizing, rather than on other qualities required of good police officers. Peers within the agency can be expected to be supportive of community organizing while, as mentioned earlier, fellow police officers often view crime prevention as not being "real police work." But the agencies lack the aura of authority possessed by the police. This may be a benefit in some neighborhoods where distrust of the police runs deep, but most NW groups appear to want visible support from the police.

2. Sub-Jurisdictional Sponsorship

In large cities, NW is often sponsored by private organizations that service sizable segments of a city. Examples include Boston's Operation StreetSAFE and the Midwood Kings Highway Development Corporation in Brooklyn, described by DeJong and Goolkasian (1982). This kind of sponsorship has advantages. The organizations are close to and familiar with the serviced neighborhoods, and they usually have experience with a variety of community improvement projects. On the other hand, these organizations are not governmental agencies, so they have to work out relationships with the police.

At a more limited geographical level, one finds a plethora of local organizations: neighborhood associations, homeowners' associations, block clubs. They are voluntary membership organizations that address issues of immediate local interest, such as zoning and traffic. These neighborhood-level or block-level groups are natural homes for NW. The most concerned, active residents already belong, and the groups have established identities. Getting an existing group to take on NW as an additional function can be much easier than starting from scratch. Our site visits confirmed the findings of others about the central role of local associations in sponsoring crime prevention (Lavrakas and Herz, 1982; Podolefsky and DuBow, 1981).

3. Linkages with Other Organizations

Linkages of NW to other organizations, institutions, and agencies can occur at all of the levels just discussed. For example, police crime prevention units often work with the media and local businesses to elicit support for NW. They also maintain a network of contacts with other agencies so they can help NW groups that need help in dealing with problems other than crime. Such linkages and networks add substantially to NW effectiveness.

4. The NW Hierarchy

The typical NW program is based on organized blocks. Each block has a captain who is responsible for making sure that information exchanged by participants is updated, introducing new arrivals to the program, and so forth. A set of blocks has a neighborhood coordinator. In some places, there is an additional level of the hierarchy between the neighborhoods and the sponsoring agency.

There is a rationale for the hierarchical structure. Organization is most easily accomplished at the block level. The number of residents on a block is small enough for people to know each other, and the territory is amenable to surveillance by residents. But individual block groups cannot deal with crime problems that span blocks, so a structure to coordinate activities and share information is needed. Coordination and dissemination of information is facilitated when a few individuals are not saddled with the responsibility of communicating with a large number of others. Thus, a sponsoring agency can communicate with a small number of district representatives, who communicate with area coordinators, who communicate with block captains, who only have to communicate with participants on their own blocks.

Participation and Survival

Because NW involves neighbors watching out for each other, it is logical to assume that the higher the proportion of residents who participate, the more effective NW will be. Participation, then, is a key issue for NW.

1. Characteristics Associated with Participation

A recent supplement to the National Crime Survey (NCS) asked about NW (Whitaker, 1986). Consistent with our findings, households with NW programs in their areas tend to have higher incomes, be owner-occupied, be single-unit structures, and be located in metropolitan areas. In neighborhoods that do have NW programs, the survey found that participation is more likely for households with higher family incomes than for less affluent households, for

homeowners compared to renters, and for households in nonmetropolitan areas than for central city households (with suburban households falling in between).

In contrast to the NCS findings, a survey of Chicago and its suburbs (Lavrakas and Herz, 1982) indicated that areas with NW-type programs had lower median incomes, higher population densities, greater proportions of non-whites, and higher crime rates than did non-program areas. Within program areas, Blacks and people with higher levels of education were overrepresented as participators. Others, however, have found that participation is lower in poor, deteriorated, heterogeneous areas (Silloway and McPherson, 1985; Roehl and Cook, 1984), which is consistent with our observations.

The general literature on participation in local community organizations has found participation to be higher for homeowners, people with children in the home, higher income residents, those with more education, and Blacks (after controlling for socioeconomic status). Participants are more likely to be concerned about problems in their areas (but not more fearful), have a stronger sense of territoriality, and feel more attached to their communities (Greenberg et al., 1985; Podolefsky and DuBow, 1981).

The temptation is to interpret the above findings as indicating that participation in NW is most difficult to generate in areas where it is most needed. But this interpretation presumes that NW would be as effective in these areas as it is in more stable, lower-crime areas. It is perhaps more likely that the typical NW program would have little effect vis-a-vis the countervailing factors generating crime in these areas. The low receptivity to NW probably reflects underlying problems that NW cannot solve.

2. What is "Participation"

Participation in NW may simply mean attending one meeting and writing one's name on a NW sign-up sheet. In jurisdictions with certification criteria, participation may mean attending a meeting, being listed on a telephone contact chain, and having a home security survey conducted. We may infer that people who attend meetings and so forth are more likely than others to engage in surveillance behaviors, but the inference is not certain.

The most extensive analysis of behavioral changes induced by NW is in the Chicago evaluation mentioned earlier. Pre-test to post-test changes in program areas were not significantly different from changes in comparison areas for: percentage of victimizations reported to police, asking neighbors to watch one's home while away, frequency of chatting with neighbors, and number of block residents known by name. Differences between treated and untreated blocks within a single program area were only slightly more positive (Rosenbaum et al., 1985:141-144, 155-160).

In site visit interviews, NW participants invariably said that they had become more sensitive to crime-related cues in their environments. They felt that safety in their areas had been enhanced and that they could count on their neighbors for help. At the same time, we heard about overt crimes that had gone undetected by NW, and block captains frequently expressed frustration with trying to keep people interested and involved. Thus, translating participation in meetings and telephone chains into participation in effective social control behaviors appears to be a problematic issue for NW.

3. How Much Participation is Needed?

While we accept the notion that greater participation is better, there is no evidence upon which to to judge the minimum amount of participation needed to make NW effective. However, the minimum probably varies. For example, more ambitious programs (in terms of dealing with a range of community issues) need more participation. Citizen patrols appear to demand more depth than breadth of participation; they can operate with a small number of highly motivated residents. Finally, the physical layouts of some areas make them amenable to surveillance; others have numerous "blind spots" that require many eyes and ears.

4. Maintaining Participation

As a collective endeavor, NW survival depends on maintaining the participation of residents. Highly disorganized, high-crime areas need assistance with a whole range of problems. NW, by itself, is unlikely to make major inroads on these problems, so residents can become discouraged quickly.

In relatively crime-free areas, NW organizers, block leaders, and participants repeatedly told us that their biggest problem was the waning of interest (or growth of complacency) among residents. In many places, NW does not give participants enough to do because (a) crime is already infrequent, (b) NW has succeeded in reducing crime, or (c) the program was stimulated initially by an unusual spurt in crime which eventually ran its course. An obvious remedy is to provide other meaningful participatory roles.

At the neighborhood or block level, organizing NW under the auspices of a multi-purpose association appears to help in maintaining participation in low-crime areas. These groups provide a continuity of structure and leadership that does not depend on crime remaining a salient issue. When interest in crime is low, members can devote their energies to other local issues. The regular meetings of the organization keep members aware of NW. If crime does resurface as a salient issue, NW does not have to be reborn.

Some NW programs that are not connected to multi-purpose associations have created other incentives for continued participation. Sponsors use a number of approaches: providing attractive, entertaining newsletters; diversifying the crime prevention techniques they offer; giving awards and other forms of public recognition; organizing social events around crime prevention themes, often with the support of local businesses.

Thus, the key to maintaining involvement in NW appears to be a willingness and ability to go beyond a narrow focus on NW. This is the case in high-crime, disorganized neighborhoods, where NW alone is not sufficient to deal with the multitude of existing problems, and in more average, relatively low-crime neighborhoods, where inactivity can lead to a waning of interest.

Tools of the Trade

This section notes a miscellany of activities and enhancements developed by NW programs. There is a general NW model, but each place tries unique things. Because all programs are designed to attain common goals, every program can benefit by learning more about the experiences of others.

1. Internal Communications

Internal communications alert people to emergencies and pass along routine information and motivational messages. Earlier, we touched on a variety of devices that facilitate communications: the hierarchical structure in which participants are only responsible for contacting a relatively small number of others, telephone chains, periodic meetings, and newsletters.

Use of a hierarchical structure is only effective if people at each level follow-through with the communications. This may not be a problem for brief messages (e.g., notifying participants about a meeting), but it can be problematic for more extensive messages. For example, some jurisdictions distribute newsletters only to block captains and depend on them to keep others informed. A survey of one city's block captains revealed that only about 60 percent routinely pass the information along. However, a subset of block captains, whose groups met at least monthly, conveyed the information at nearly a 100 percent rate. In each case where this occurred, NW was organized within a multi-purpose neighborhood association, which provided a regular forum for block captains.

The telephone chain is a predetermined sequence of contacts: one participant calls another, who calls another, and so forth, until all participants have been contacted. When a NW participant spots something suspicious, he/she calls the police first and then initiates the telephone chain. In one site visit jurisdiction, several participants complained that others were utilizing the calling sequence for non-emergencies (e.g., to notify people about a NW meeting) or even for social communications. In another site, the telephone chains on some blocks were being used to initiate action that went beyond surveillance; this will be discussed later.

2. NW Signs

Signs announcing the existence of NW are no longer oddities. The design and size of NW signs are fairly standard, but jurisdictions vary in determining when signs should be erected or removed, where they should be placed, and who should pay for them.

Jurisdictions that use certification have specific guidelines for deciding when signs should be posted. However, even in these places, crime prevention officers (or civilian program managers) often exercise great discretion in bestowing the NW emblem. In many places, an initial meeting with a reasonable turn-out is enough to gain permission to erect signs.

Determining where to place signs has raised issues in some places. One NW group in an apartment complex met resistance from the owners toward erecting signs on the grounds. In neighborhoods of single-family, owner-occupied homes, some people are dissatisfied with the idea of having signs placed in front of their houses. Fortunately, there is not much room for disagreement about where to place signs in most areas. If NW is organized at the block level, signs are posted at the corners where cross-streets define the block. If NW exists in a housing development, signs are posted at the access roads to the development and at the most heavily traveled intersections within it.

Jurisdictions also have mixed answers to the question of who pays for NW signs. Most localities provide some public subsidy, if only for the poorest neighborhoods. A widespread view is that, whenever financially feasible, residents should bear some of the cost as an indication of commitment to NW.

3. Enhancing Surveillance

A number of jurisdictions have tried techniques meant to enhance the effectiveness and amount of citizen surveillance associated with NW.

One approach is the improvement of external lighting. Our national survey found street lighting to be a concern in many of the responding programs. Other measures to improve the visibility of suspicious persons and activities include trimming or removing shrubbery in common areas, banning on-street parking, and distributing descriptions of residents' vehicles. Surveillance can also be enhanced by increasing the number of eyes and ears devoted to it. To this end, attempts have been made to involve non-residents. In increasing numbers, mail carriers and utility workers are being instructed in observational techniques.

4. Facilitating Police Response

NW members who detect suspicious activities are directed to call the police immediately. The effectiveness of police response to such calls can be improved by giving the police as much useful information as possible. Accordingly, NW programs teach participants about what information to note. Programs commonly provide booklets with pictorial depictions of hypothetical suspects and vehicles, indicating what characteristics should be noted. Some jurisdictions also emphasize making addresses clearly visible, hoping to avoid situations in which police have difficulty locating street addresses.

5. Beyond Watching and Reporting

The basic role of NW is to "observe and report", but some groups have extended this role by taking further action. The most natural extension of surveillance by residents is to make their presence known to offenders. In a few groups, after notifying the police, the participants turn on their front lights and come outside. We also found two instances in which groups had purchased cameras that rotated among the members. When they go outside in response to a call on the telephone chain, the participants with cameras take pictures of suspicious activities, vehicles, or persons.

Clearly, any activity beyond passive watching and calling the police raises the likelihood that NW participants will get involved in conflict situations. Police departments have been very firm in their instructions to NW groups: don't get involved; that is our job. While recognizing the risks associated with more direct involvement, our research suggests that there may be some relatively safe ways to make surveillance more aggressive.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents our conclusions and recommendations. The approach is conservative; the conclusions and recommendations are ones that derive rather unambiguously from our study and from the work of others. The Final Report also contains a set of suggestions about future research that can facilitate implementation of the recommendations we make.

Conclusions

1. NW Effectiveness

NW, under certain circumstances, has had some success in reducing property crime, especially household burglary. However, claims about the crime reduction efficacy of NW are often overstated because many attempts to evaluate NW have had methodological flaws that tend to inflate positive findings.

NW is apparently more likely to affect crime in neighborhoods that are not already afflicted with high crime rates, instability, and deterioration. This conclusion is not derived from NW evaluations; it is inferred from evidence indicating that initiation and maintenance of NW are less likely to succeed in neighborhoods with high crime, instability, and deterioration.

While there are reasons for optimism about the potential for NW to reduce crime, there is little evidence that NW increases neighborhood attachment or sense of community. We conclude that these more general effects are not common because NW, as usually implemented, is a relatively mild intervention. NW "treatment" often consists of only a few meetings and an increased sensitivity of residents to crime prevention. Community-building effects have been observed in programs with dynamic leadership, the commitment of significant resources, and innovative approaches that link NW with other community concerns.

2. Maintaining Participation

The major concern today among NW programs is <u>maintaining</u> participation. In neighborhoods with relatively stable populations and low crime rates, the problem is that residents simply lose interest. Programs that are most successful in maintaining participation are ones that are organized within existing multi-purpose organizations or ones that expand their activities to encompass a range of crime-related, quality of life concerns.

3. Jurisdiction-wide Sponsorship

We cannot conclude that sponsorship by the police is superior to sponsorship by a civilian agency, or vice-versa. The police provide the aura of state authority which many NW participants want to have linked to their programs. But civilian agencies have a more focused mission; their commitment to community crime prevention is not secondary to other established and important functions.

In urban areas, jurisdiction-wide sponsorship of NW co-exists with independent, sub-jurisdictional programs. Some city areas have well established voluntary organizations, attuned to the areas' unique concerns. Trying to bring them under a jurisdiction-wide program could be counter-productive.

There is a tendency for jurisdiction-wide sponsorship to impose uniformity on programs. While the agencies can efficiently coordinate routine details, they also tend to develop a single model of NW that is applied to all neighborhoods. Many jurisdiction-wide agencies have creative, innovative programs. But the creativity and innovation flows from personal dedication of staffs, not from anything inherent in the organizational structures.

The tendency to set standards that apply uninformly to all programs is not a positive development. It closes off some possibilities for official recognition of innovative approaches and the tailoring of activities to the needs of specific neighborhoods. Revitalization of NW requires flexibility and innovation, in addition to dynamic leadership.

Recommendations

1. Flexibility

Our most general recommendation is: Give the people who organize, lead, and participate in NW programs as much latitude as possible. Most of the remaining recommendations relate to ways of enhancing this flexibility.

Before proceeding, we note that there can be tension between exercising leadership, which is important to NW, and encouraging flexibility. Leadership can be exercised in ways that constrain the innovative potential of the people and programs being led. The most successful examples of leadership we observed are exercised with enough clarity of direction to motivate others, but also with an openness to new ideas, a willingness to share leadership and credit, and an ability to stimulate creativity in others.

2. Standard-Setting

To encourage flexibility, we recommend that formal standards, primarily (re)certification criteria, be deemphasized or, at least, that program managers exercise discretion in applying them. The greater the number and specificity of standards, the more they define a single version of NW. The model defined by the standards may not be the best model for every neighborhood.

3. Tailoring Programs to Neighborhoods

In line with Recommendation #2, we suggest that NW organizers make greater efforts to tailor programs to the needs of specific neighborhoods. We know that many organizers are quite willing to do this, but they lack information relevant to making programs neighborhood-specific. This report has presented some pertinent findings, but additional research is needed.

4. Local Voluntary Associations

When local associations exist at the neighborhood or block level, NW functions should be lodged within them. This is a recommendation that is already being widely practiced. However, we want to emphasize the value of

linking NW with local associations and encourage NW organizers to seek out and consult them. The associations have the structure, leadership, and range of interests that can help ensure stable participation in NW; they can also help organizers tailor NW programs to the needs of particular areas.

When NW groups form in the absence of a local multi-issue association, the formation process has the potential for stimulating the creation of such an association. We have reports of this occurring, but only rarely. When an association is absent, we recommend that NW organizers explain the benefits of one to the nascent NW group and encourage the group to broaden its focus.

5. Extending the Surveillance Function

In Chapter 5, we noted examples of NW groups extending the surveillance function to more active roles. We recognize the concerns that NW sponsors, particularly the police, have about the potential development of vigilantism. This leads sponsors to stress non-intervention so strongly that participants are encouraged to keep a very low profile. Consistent with prior research (Yin et al., 1977), we found little inclination among participants to become vigilantees. Thus, we recommend that NW sponsors soften their stances against non-intervention. This can be done by explaining the dangers involved in confronting suspicious people (including the problem of confronting people who have every right to be doing what they are doing), but by balancing the explanation with examples of limited extensions of surveillance.

6. The Police

We recommend the organizational strengthening of police crime prevention units and a greater recognition by departments of the importance of community crime prevention within the police role. Crime prevention units should have a core staff of motivated officers who have already established themselves within the department. Other officers should come from among new recruits and the existing patrol force. Bringing new recruits directly into crime prevention encourages the development of a cadre of officers who are committed to crime prevention. Rotating regular patrol officers into the unit for temporary, but significant, tours gives them the opportunity to learn the importance of working with citizen groups. In the long run, rotation of regular patrol officers into crime prevention units should increase the understanding and cooperation between officers in traditional police roles and those in crime prevention.

Departments should also recognize that organizing and maintaining community groups is time consuming. A small crime prevention unit cannot be expected to devote sufficient time to community organizing if it is continually assigned other tasks (e.g., security seminars for businesses, drug prevention lectures, general public relations functions) without increases in staff.

There is a well developed body of knowledge about community organizing techniques, but few departments provide, or are capable of providing, training in these techniques. Departments are encouraged to seek outside assistance. The New York City Police Department, for example, uses the services of a non-profit organization that works with neighborhood groups throughout the city.

There are qualities of good community crime prevention officers that are not transferable skills but matters of attitude and temperament. Some officers are not suited for work with community groups, which involves things such as public speaking, restraint in the exercise of authority, and motivating others to assume responsibility. Thus, departments should consider attitudes and temperament in their selection of crime prevention officers, although we recognize the need for research to develop specific selection criteria.

Finally, we recommend that crime prevention units recognize the importance of fostering independent, self-sustaining organizational structures and indigenous leadership in the community groups with which they work. The support of police departments for crime prevention is tenuous in many places, so community groups need to be able to operate independently of police leadership.

7. Revitalizing NW

A primary concern among NW leaders is that interest, participation, and activity among participants are weakening. Many programs seem to need a "shot in the arm". The responses to flagging interest that we have observed consist primarily of exhortations about laxity, tightening up the certification process, and trying to motivate people with media coverage, awards, and special events.

We recommend that sponsors treat declines in interest and participation as indicators of program weakness rather than as evidence that citizens are lackadaisical. In high-crime, unstable neighborhoods, the inability of the basic NW model to affect deeply rooted problems can be frustrating and discouraging. In neighborhoods consisting primarily of rental units with high tenant turnover, the basic model may not ensure continuity. In low-crime, middle-class neighborhoods of homeowners, the model may not give participants enough to do. We suggest that efforts to revitalize NW concentrate on creating flexible programs, tailored to the needs and concerns of specific areas.

8. Information Exchange

This report has discussed differing ways that jurisdictions deal with NW issues and innovations that make each approach to NW somewhat unique. Implementation of our suggestions would be facilitated if NW organizers and managers could be kept informed about each others' activities. To some extent, our research served this purpose, but an on-going process is needed.

Two possibilities are suggested. First, newsletters could be used. Many NW programs have them; some statewide crime prevention units publish them; the National Crime Prevention Council has a nationally distributed newsletter. Thus, the basis for a network of newsletters exists. What is needed is a clearinghouse to which NW programs can report new developments and which would ensure routine distribution of this information to the rest of the network. A second possibility is to build NW information exchanges into national, regional, and statewide crime prevention meetings. As with newsletters, regular meetings already occur, and the need is to interrelate them.

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