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AWARD PRESENTATION



FEDERAL HIGHWAY PROJECT  
HOLLYWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENTAL

## ABSTRACT

Beginning in January 1997, the Hollywood Police Department began a comprehensive project to significantly reduce the level of prostitution along the Federal Highway corridor of the city. The area is described as approximately 2.5 miles in length, consisting of a number of "mom and pop" type motels, small businesses, and flanked by residential areas with active civic organizations. This project came about after complaints were received from neighborhood citizen groups and business organizations. A portion of this area was in the process of extensive re-development. Some complained the prostitution was affecting the re-development because new businesses were hesitant to invest in the area.

The first stage was scanning the prostitution problem. The problem was identified by members of the community and the police department. There had always been prostitution in this area, but during 1997, the level increased with significantly more complaints. The complaints substantiated what the officers working the area had already noticed. At any time of the day, one could not drive this stretch of highway without encountering one or more prostitutes. During the peak evening hours, and many as a dozen would be working the strip at the same time.

Next the problem was studied in depth. Why was prostitution so flagrant on Federal Highway, and almost non-existent in other areas of the city? What made this particular part of the city more attractive for prostitution? These questions and many others were studied extensively both within the department and the community to help bring a resolution to this issue.

A response was formulated to combat the prostitution problem. All available resources were used from the department, other city services, the media, and the community. The response began with educating the "mom and pop" motel owners where many of the prostitutes were either living or conducting their business. New legal avenues were explored, such as the mapping program. The mapping program would make it illegal for a prostitute to frequent the area in which she had been convicted of conducted prostitution. Reverse stings were conducted with high media attention. Letters were sent to the residences of the "Johns" arrested outlining the dangers of communicable diseases. A new city ordinance was drafted to hold the vehicles of suspected "Johns" in lieu of a \$500.00 fine.

Finally an assessment stage was conducted to determine if an impact had been made on the problem. The results were extremely favorable. The different types of responses were studied to determine the most effective. Results were measured by complaints and community contacts. Re-development continues at a rapid pace as many new businesses are choosing to locate in the area.

All of the four (4) stages of the project are outlined in depth in the following pages. By using community policing philosophies together with the SARA problem-solving model, a successful product resulted which greatly enhanced the quality of life issues along Federal Highway.

## SCANNING

The project the Hollywood Police Department will present is that of the "Federal Highway project." Federal Highway, {also known as Route One, North and South 18 Avenue,} is a main north/south artery in the eastern portion of Hollywood that cuts through the downtown area. Hollywood is an old city by South Florida standards, incorporating in 1925. Downtown Hollywood, located in the center of the Federal Highway corridor, was the shopping mecca in the area until the advent of shopping malls in the 1960's, which then spurred flight to the suburbs. Businesses were either vacant or would close before nightfall. The adjacent neighborhoods to the north and the south saw a similar decline. The residential area was and is a mixture of single family residences, hotels, and multi-unit apartments. The nature of the problem, was an ever increasing number of prostitutes working the Federal Highway corridor coupled with a visible homeless/vagrant problem. More drug dealers moved into the area to sell drugs to the prostitutes, in turn violent related crimes were more prevalent. Fear levels were high, with a perception that it was a dangerous place. These problems still exists today, although they have been significantly ameliorated. The situation was aggravated to a great deal by the environment (hotels, apartments, etc.), covered in depth later in the report.

The Hollywood Police Department was always aware of the drug/prostitution/vagrant problems, and aggressively dealt with the problem. Being a traditional police department, it dealt with the problem via typical means, namely arrest. On a daily basis,

tactical units arrested prostitutes and drug dealers on a daily basis. The Hollywood Police Department has always had a reputation for being a progressive leader in the South Florida law enforcement community. Although "Community Policing" is a relatively new concept to many police agencies, the Hollywood Police Department has been practicing Community Policing for over twenty years. This philosophy has been evolutionary and gradual, where in 1975 two officers were assigned a bicycle patrol "beat" at a large mall, where they worked closely with merchants to improve quality of life and combat crime in this relatively new concept of shopping.

Due to favorable reaction, officers were assigned bicycle patrol in the downtown area (1978), again to be responsive to merchants, but also get a handle on "vagrancy" type issues. The Community Policing Unit further evolved by assigning officers to the beach Broadwalk area due to its unique nature, and by the end of this year, we will have COP officers assigned to each of the city's twenty neighborhoods. This is in response to public demand and acceptance of community policing.

The prostitution along Federal Highway was identified by the COP Unit (Community Oriented Policing Unit) and the C.R.A. (Community Redevelopment Agency) beginning in January of 1997, as the core problem most visibly affecting the downtown area. The C.R.A. has been responsible for changing the type of businesses (pawn shops, furniture stores, restaurant,s) in downtown and making it a "destination" location, now home to many art galleries, pubs and bars, night clubs and theaters. The COP Unit worked closely

with the C.R.A., and many community meetings were held between police and merchants to discuss their concerns.

The Federal Highway project was selected as a response by the police department to large amounts of money being spent on redevelopment, both by the city i.e; new streetscapes, low interest loans, and private investors. The police department wanted to ensure that downtown Hollywood was perceived as a safe place for residents, merchants, and visitors. Community contacts with residents and merchants revealed that prostitution was by far the most visible crime affecting the area and demanded action. It is not a "victimless crime," as it was affecting an entire community.

Cognizant that the police department could not handle these complex social problems alone, in 1997 the COP Unit applied for, and was granted, a \$70,000.00 grant by the U.S. Department of Justice. The COP Unit has contracted with faculty from Florida Atlantic University who have been facilitating meetings with disparate stakeholders.

The baseline information used was perception of crime in the downtown area. This information was obtained by a survey conducted by the Community Redevelopment Agency. The "Crime Triangle" of location, victim and offender was incorporated into the analysis.

The target location is a 164 square block area. That area has been further subdivided into a north, central, and south area, to ascertain if crime is occurring in specific pockets or if the problem is more widespread.

Analysis also included; time of day these incidents were occurring, time of year (should we add resources during winter

months? etc.), Victims (are they residents, merchants, or visitors, what are their ages, etc.) and Offenders (where did they live, what was their educational level, did they have a substance abuse problem?).

One of the important aspects of this project has been the formation of partnerships between the police department and social service agencies (Broward Outreach, a Hollywood homeless shelter, St. John's Soup kitchen, West Lauderdale Baptist Church, and the Starting Place (drug rehabilitation center), all places offering assistance to prostitutes.

Initial diagnosis of the prostitutes themselves, revealed that approximately fifteen (15) women were the worst habitual violators. These are the ones who work the street constantly, and if arrested, return to Federal Highway immediately upon release. There were more than forty (40) different prostitutes identified who were active, but these fifteen (15) were responsible for a majority of the complaints. Almost all of the identified prostitutes had criminal histories which revealed narcotic and theft arrests. This confirmed what was suspected, that many other crimes were directly related to prostitution.

## ANALYSIS

The prostitution problem was analyzed by different methods. Observation was the easiest method. The COP officers working the area began to notice that the number of prostitutes working the street were increasing. Conversations with vice, intelligence, and narcotic (V.I.N.) detectives, and officers for the Community Action Team (a tactical group of officers assigned as the enforcement arm of COP,) and patrol officers revealed the same observations.

These same observations were echoed by members of the community at merchant and residential civic meetings. In turn, the COP Unit conducted a written survey in the affected area. The survey returned, as expected, that prostitution was perceived as increasing by the community as well. Prostitution was rated as the number two problem in the area, as vagrancy was number one. What stood out on the surveys was that many people felt compelled to write that the prostitution problem had increased to level never before seen by longtime residents.

The history of prostitution along Federal Highway has developed primarily over the last twenty-five (25) years. As mentioned above, Federal Highway is a heavily traveled north/south artery peppered with a number of "mom and pop" type motels. As time passed these motels began to deteriorate and became affordable and convenient to street level prostitutes. There is always traffic on the highway from which to attract potential "Johns," and the close proximity of the cheap motels offered a place to conduct

business or to live near their work. When crack cocaine hit the streets in the early 1980"s, prostitution increased as many women turned to prostitution to support their habit.

The prostitution problem involved the prostitutes themselves of which almost all were determined to be abusing narcotics, primarily crack cocaine. This attracted more drug dealers into the area. The cheap motels and apartments worked well for the drug dealers as well. Easy access for customers and the ability to move from location to location quickly to avoid attention and possible arrest.

The victims of the prostitution are the community as a whole. Property values began to fall as the area deteriorated and became known for it's prostitution. Residents were fearful to walk the streets during the night hours and did not want their children to venture near Federal Highway. Merchants stated that they were losing business because of crime perceptions and new businesses refused to invest in downtown, stating the crime problems which were plaguing the area.

Prostitution had always been addressed by traditional methods. Enforcement efforts would be increased and numerous arrests made. This would alleviate the problem as long as the increased efforts were being made or for a short period thereafter. These efforts included occasional prostitution reverses in which the "Johns" were arrested, but there was no follow-up actions to insure a residual effect. Some prostitution would actually be temporarily displaced to neighboring cities, (City of Hallendale to the south, or the City of Dania, to the north). But, as normal patrol and enforcement resumed, the prostitutes would return to

Federal Highway in Hollywood.

The analysis thus revealed that there were a number of contributing factors to the problem. The geographic layout of the area, the highway itself and close proximity of cheap motels and apartments. The economic decline of the neighborhood also attracted the criminal element and peripheral crimes which were associated with prostitution. Finally, the advent of crack cocaine and it's addictive nature.

While gathering information for this analysis, data from the police department was studied. Calls for service in relation to prostitution were studied for times and locations. The locations were spread the entire length of Federal Highway, with concentrations in close proximity to certain motels as expected. The most disturbing aspect of the analysis revealed that prostitution was not just a crime occurring at night, but has steadily increased during the daytime hours. Analysis of the crime again confirmed what had been suspected, that the prostitutes had become more brazen, working day and night. This was important because the problem now became more visible to the community.

Now that the problem was out in the open, residents and merchants had become more vocal at civic meetings which are all attended by COP officers. Citizens began to contact local politicians and the Chief of Police demanding something be done to alleviate the problem. Articles began to appear in the newspaper about the flagrant prostitution on Federal Highway.

Therefore, as a result of all the analysis a response plan was formed using traditional as well and non-traditional forms of problem solving.

## **RESPONSE**

Once the nature and extent of the problem were studied, a response plan was formulated. First a partnership was formed with the Broward Sheriff's Office who polices the jurisdiction to the north of Hollywood and was experiencing the similar type problems with prostitution. Commitment was obtained from command staff personnel who empowered their officers to work on the problem together with officers from Hollywood. It was hoped that by making a simultaneous effort, the prostitution problem would not be merely displaced back and forth between jurisdictions and that a real difference could be made.

The first action taken was to seek compliance with the motels and nearby multi-unit apartment complexes. The owners of these establishments were contacted and given a book of habitual prostitutes compiled by the COP Unit. The owners were urged to cooperate and not rent space to these individuals. Every prostitute in the book had a minimum of five (5) convictions for prostitution and most had more.

Because of a State Supreme Court decision, the nuisance abatement ordinance was left without any means to close down nuisance locations. Voluntary cooperation had to be maintained. Officers went to great lengths to properly explain the damage the prostitution was doing to the community including affecting real estate values. Almost all of the motel owners immediately complied and further contacted the police when these known prostitutes were seen loitering on or near their property. Trespassing affidavits were obtained and the properties were marked with "No Trespassing

and No Loitering," signs.

For owners who refused to cooperate, Code Enforcement Officers, Building Inspectors, and Fire Department Officials were used to insure that the property owners were maintaining complete compliance with all city ordinances and building codes. One of these motels was actually determined to be such a fire hazard that it had to be closed for several days until the owner could make the expensive repairs. Compliance was eventually obtained.

Next, reverse sting operations were routinely scheduled in which undercover female officers posed as prostitutes and arrested suspected "Johns." While this concept is far from new, additional twists were added. First, telephone calls were made to the suspect's residence to advise any concerned persons of the delay in the suspect's return and to advise them of the opportunity to respond to the scene and retrieve the vehicle in lieu of it being towed.

An obscure Florida traffic law (FSS. 322.26) was used in the process to deter prostitution activities. A very seldom used state statute provided a means of revocation against the "John's" convicted using their motor vehicle during the commission of an act involving prostitution.

To our knowledge this statute had never before been enforced in Broward County. A process had to be invented with the Clerk of the Court to ensure the ticket for the offense issued at the scene of the arrest was not enforced until an adjudication of guilt. Upon an adjudication of guilt, the ticket is forwarded to the

Department of Motor vehicles for an administrative hearing to determine compliance with the statute.

Another step included letters being sent to the residences of the suspects advising them of the dangers of communicable diseases and how prostitution affects the community. Enclosed with the letter was a pamphlet distributed by the local county health agency.

Controversial, the letters were able to generate some much needed publicity to the problem. The media in South Florida tends to be very liberal, so much of the publicity in reference to the letters and telephone calls were negative. No matter the "spin" put on the story, we felt any publicity was positive. We wanted a clear message sent to the public that prostitution activity in Hollywood would no longer be tolerated. Traditional enforcement had not worked and new methods had to be employed in order to solve the problem.

To further make our point, we attempted, as many other cities around the country have done, to have the names and photographs of suspected "Johns" arrested in reverse stings placed in the newspaper. When newspaper publishers refused, we attempted to buy the space but were told they did not want our business. We argued that they sell advertising space to scores of escort services, but they continued to refuse our business. Some interesting editorials were printed but that was the extent of that effort.

An attempt was then made to use the department's web site to post this information but, that to, was thwarted. City officials were afraid that prospective businesses considering a move to

Hollywood might be less than impressed if they retrieved this information while researching the city. Though this idea was discussed at civic meetings and met with their approval, the prostitution web-site has still not been accomplished.

At monthly civic meetings of businesses and residents, progress reports were given. We wanted the public to be aware of our successes and failures, and to ensure them that we were committed to solving the problem.

## ASSESSMENT

The primary result of the project was that fear of crime in the downtown area was reduced tremendously. A survey conducted by the Community Redevelopment Agency questioned people what they disliked the most about the area. In 1996, 29% of the people surveyed felt there was a bad element, in 1997, the response was 9%, and in 1998, the response had fallen to 2%. The survey was conducted by an independent company by telephone of people within a twelve (12) mile radius of the targeted area.

A reduction in the perception of crime is just as important as the reduction of crime statistics. Perception is everything. People from outside the police department were now getting involved and becoming a part of the problem-solving process. Progress was being made and there was exposure to the media. The residents and business owners had begun to notice a difference.

There are other systematic efforts still being made as a response to the problem. The first is a new city ordinance which has been drafted that would enable the police department to hold the vehicles of suspected "Johns" in lieu of a \$500.00 fine. The fine is based on the condition that there is found to be probable cause for an arrest for soliciting prostitution. Similar ordinances are used in other parts of the state, but Hollywood will soon be the first to use such an ordinance in Broward County. This is sure to create more media attention to the problem and make the public more aware of our enforcement efforts. The money from the fines will be used to fund the project, paying overtime and administration costs for enforcement efforts. This would provide

enough overtime to fund the reverse stings. Officers will no longer have to be re-assigned from their neighborhoods for the day to perform prostitution related duties.

The second is a mapping program currently being considered by the State Attorney's Office and the Broward County Judicial Circuit. This proposal was made jointly by the Broward Sherriff's Office and the Hollywood Police Department. Under this proposal, after prostitutes are convicted their movements would be restricted. As a condition of their probation they would not be allowed to walk the street in the area where they had been arrested. If found in that area, the police officer on scene would be able to violate the person's probation on the spot. The proposal was done in conjunction with the sherriff's office to map the prostitutes completely out of the area, not just nearby displacement.

The third response in the process of implementation is to televise the names and photographs of arrested "Johns" and prostitutes on the city cable access channel. This response has received approval and the first production is in progress. Again, we want to use the media to our full advantage and get our message to the public.

All responses used in this project, as well as the ones not yet implemented, will require a continuing effort to achieve our desired results. While prostitution is still present, the number of habitual offenders has decreased. The problem is no longer as visible to the public as the survey demonstrated. We realistically understand that wiping out the world's oldest profession isn't

going to happen overnight and will take time. We feel this will only happen by working together with the community, improving quality of life issues, and thus improving the standard of living.

## AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

This problem-solving initiative was begun with the Community Oriented Police Unit. It grew to include nearly the entire department. Resources from within the department included the Community Action Team, Vice, Intelligence, and Narcotics Unit, Patrol Division, Detention, records and secretarial personnel.

From outside the department we've used Code Enforcement, Fire Department, and Building Inspector personnel. Residential and merchant civic organizations were also involved. It was a team effort.

This project had little effect on the budget as a very minimal amount of overtime has been used. This was attributed to the combination of effort and changing the working hours of officers, when necessary, to accomplish the mission.

The first and mid-level supervisors involved in this project have received training in the SARA model of problem solving. This was part of a course entitled, "Supervising The Problem-Solving Process." This course was offered at a Community Policing Consortium. Course material was provided for supervisors to return to their respective departments and teach what they had learned. That's exactly what we did in Hollywood as all COP personnel were trained in the SARA model of problem-solving.

After the officers received this training they were instructed to use this model to apply to all problems, not only this project. There were no incentives for involvement, rather it was instructed as a change in philosophy from traditional style, to a community oriented, problem-solving style of policing.

In addition to the SARA model of problem solving, ideas implemented by other agencies were used as well. An excellent text was provided by St. Petersburg, FL. Information was also obtained from W. Palm Beach, FL, Lake Worth, FL, Kansas City, MO, and Portland, OR. Why re-invent the wheel? We wanted to try a combination of strategies developed by other agencies along with our own. We found it to be extremely successful and are currently using this strategy and the SARA problem-solving model on other projects in our city.

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