



## LEGISLATIVE ANALYST REPORT

**To:** Members of the Board of Supervisors  
**From:** Gabe Cabrera, Office of the Legislative Analyst (OLA)  
**Date:** October 21, 2005  
**Re:** **Community Policing Practices** (BOS File No. 050130) (OLA No. 009-05)

### SUMMARY OF REQUESTED ACTION

Motion requesting the OLA to prepare an analysis of community policing practices in other jurisdictions; identify the necessary factors to strengthen community policing in San Francisco; and inform the Board of Supervisors of what best practices in community policing should be legislated.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community policing is a relatively new approach to law enforcement designed to reduce and prevent crime by increasing interaction and cooperation between police and the community they serve. The overarching goal of community policing is to create bonds of trust and reliance between police and the public. It balances aspects of traditional policing (i.e., reactive responses to calls for service) with pro-active community-based problem solving to reduce and prevent crime.

The OLA reviewed the research literature on community policing, and learned that there are many different ways of carrying it out. Some of the practices typically associated with community policing include: 1) training in community policing for both new recruits and “in-service” officers; 2) foot/bicycle beats; 3) officer assignments by specific geographic areas or “sectors”; 4) problem-solving models; 5) systematic citizen input and feedback; 6) public access to crime data; 7) crime mapping; and 8) formal written community policing plans. These practices are described in the Background section of this report.

The OLA examined law enforcement agencies with successful community policing programs throughout the world, with special emphasis on those in Los Angeles (CA), San Jose (CA), Chicago (IL), London (England) and São Paulo (Brazil). Each of these agencies is described in the Other Jurisdictions section of this report.

Community policing already exists in San Francisco. The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) began its program of community policing called “Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving” (COPPS) in 1989. As shown in Table 1 below, COPPS employs many of the practices typically associated with community policing and used in successful programs in other jurisdictions.

**Table 1: Community Policing Programs Compared**

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Foot &amp; bicycle beats</i>	<i>Specific geo-graphic areas</i>	<i>Problem-solving model</i>	<i>Citizen input &amp; feedback</i>	<i>Public access to crime data</i>	<i>Crime maps</i>	<i>Agency plans</i>
• San Francisco Police	Yes	Some	Yes	Yes	Some	Some	Yes	Yes
• LA County Sheriff	Yes	Some	Some	Yes	No	Some	No	Yes
• San Jose Police	Yes	No	No	No	No	Some	No	Yes
• Chicago Police	Yes	Some	Yes	Yes	Some	Some	Some	Yes
• The “Met” (London)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Some	Some	Yes
• Military Police of São Paulo (Brazil)	Yes	Some	No	Yes	Some	No	No	No

As discussed in the Current Law and Practices section of this report, the City’s current program provides more training in community policing for both new recruits and in-service officers than the state’s Commission on Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) program requires. It uses a popular problem-solving model and a well-developed crime mapping system, and has had a formal written community policing plan since the early 1990’s. However, there are other areas where the SFPD can improve community policing in San Francisco. For instance:

- To increase police and community interaction, it could increase the number of foot/bicycle beats at each district station. The Department estimates that there are currently fifty-seven foot/bicycle beats per day across the ten district stations.
- To better assess police performance, especially community policing efforts, it could begin to formally solicit input and feedback from residents at least once per year, as is the case in other jurisdictions. The Department has conducted informal citizen surveys in the past, but only on a limited basis.
- To help prioritize crime problems in conjunction with the community, it could begin to share crime information with the public via radio, television and newspaper announcements. The Department currently provides public access to crime data primarily via the Internet.

Whether the Board of Supervisors should urge/require the SFPD to adopt these measures is a policy decision. Other issues to consider regarding community policing in San Francisco include community interest, departmental leadership, employing the right practices at each district station, police performance evaluations based on community policing goals and the danger of short-lived efforts.

### **BACKGROUND**

Community policing is part of a movement to shift the focus of law enforcement from reactive policing (i.e., responding to calls for service), which leaves little or no time to investigate or handle problems that need long-term solutions, to pro-active policing (i.e., preventing crime before it occurs), which requires increased interaction and cooperation between police and the community. It began in the 1980’s and is growing in popularity. About 40% of the nation’s larger police departments have adopted community policing.<sup>1</sup> While there are many different

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, *Implementation Challenges in Community Policing*, Sadd & Grinc, February 1996.

ways of carrying it out, some of the practices typically associated with community policing include the following:

**Training in community policing.** Training helps officers to develop community policing skills, such as problem solving, SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) and community partnerships. Forty-one percent of all police departments in the U.S. trained (8 hours or more) all of their new recruits in community policing. Twenty-eight percent trained all of their in-service officers.<sup>2</sup>

**Foot/bicycle beats.** Routine foot/bicycle patrols or “beats” are a commonly used means to increase interaction between police and the community. Sixty-three percent of departments used one or both of these patrol types on a routine basis.

**Geographic patrol assignment.** Assigning patrol officers to specific geographic areas or “sectors” is thought to increase the level of officer attachment to an area and its residents. It is also thought to facilitate the development of citizen and business contacts and the formation of problem-solving partnerships. Forty-two percent of departments gave their patrol officers responsibility for sectors.

**Problem-solving model.** A central component of community policing is the process of identifying and responding to community problems. This process is often put into operation using the SARA problem-solving model.

**Citizen input and feedback.** Some level of citizen input and feedback is thought to be essential to assess police performance, and systematic citizen input and feedback is preferred. Twenty-seven percent of departments surveyed citizens to gather information on public satisfaction with police services, public perceptions of crime and personal experiences with crime.

**Public access to crime data.** To identify and prioritize local problems, the police and citizens need to share information. At a minimum, citizens need to have some access to local crime information. Seventy-three percent of departments provided citizens with routine access to crime data. Most provided access in-person and by telephone or written requests. Others provided it via radio, television, newspapers and the Internet.

**Crime mapping.** Technological tools, such as computerized crime mapping, assist agencies in identifying and analyzing problems, developing long-term solutions and evaluating their problem-solving efforts. Thirty-two percent of departments used computers for crime mapping purposes.

**Agency plans.** Police departments with formal written community policing plans were more likely to have implemented specific community policing strategies, such as training in community policing, foot/bicycle patrols and officer assignments by beats/sectors, than those with only informal plans or no plans at all.

### CURRENT LAW AND PRACTICE

As of October 2005, the SFPD has 2,146 sworn officers. It is divided into four bureaus: Administration, Airport, Investigations and Field Operations. The Field Operations Bureau (FOB) manages the Patrol Division, which is separated into two divisions: Metro and Golden Gate Divisions. Together they oversee the ten district stations as well as the Department’s Traffic and Crime Prevention companies.

---

<sup>2</sup> All the statistics in this section are from the U.S. Department of Justice’s 2001 study “*Community Policing in Local Police Departments, 1997 and 1999.*”

The Department unveiled its community policing program called COPPS by initiating a small pilot program at its Mission Station in 1989. The pilot program's purpose was to re-introduce the walking police officer in the Mission's various neighborhoods. Several officers were assigned to specific geographic areas and trained to use a SARA-type problem-solving model in the community. Initially, some non-COPPS officers were critical of the COPPS program. A 2005 document "Best Practices of Community Policing Research Summary" prepared by SFPD Lieutenant Con Johnson (one of the original COPPS officers) revealed that some non-COPPS officers felt that the program was designed for "slugs" that did not want to do "real" police work. The SFPD points out that this document was not adopted or approved by the Department. As such, its findings represent those of its author only.

In the 1990's, then Police Chief Fred Lau steered community policing away from a select group of trained officers to an "all inclusive" approach where community policing became every officer's responsibility. The Police Academy began training all new recruits and in-service officers in community policing. Today that training consists of twenty hours for new recruits and two hours every two years for in-service officers. This is more training than the state's Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) program requires. For new recruits, POST requires at least twelve hours of training in community policing, and for in-service officers, it requires at least twenty-four hours of "Continuing Professional Training" (CPT). Recommended CPT topics include new laws, recent court decisions and others, but not community policing.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the Department's early commitment to community policing and its training program that exceeds state standards, community policing remains a foreign concept to some officers. According to at least one officer in the above-noted document, some officers still view their traditional police duties, such as responding to calls for service, as incompatible with community policing, and have developed negative connotations with the concept of being a community policing officer.

### ***Options for Improving Community Policing in San Francisco***

To improve community policing in San Francisco, the Board may want to consider the following options:

The SFPD workday is divided into three shifts. District captains may deploy their officers on either foot/bicycle beats or radio car patrols in specific geographic areas or "sectors" during each shift at their discretion.<sup>4</sup> The SFPD estimates that there are approximately fifty-seven foot/bicycle beats within defined radio car sectors for all shifts across the ten district stations.<sup>5</sup> According to the Department, when periodic staffing shortfalls reduce the number of available

---

<sup>3</sup> POST Administrative Manual, Section D-Training Procedures, Commission Procedure D-2, *Continuing Professional Training and Perishable Skills*, pages D15-D17.

<sup>4</sup> In February 2005, the Department's Field Operations Bureau issued a General Order that requires all officers assigned to vehicle patrol to leave their cars and go on foot patrol for a minimum of one block at least once during their shifts.

<sup>5</sup> In addition, four out of thirty-two "Operation Outreach" officers dedicated to addressing homelessness problems perform their duties while on bicycle patrol.

foot/bicycle officers, their beats are covered by radio car sector patrols (of which there are approximately fifty-three per shift or one-hundred fifty-nine per day).

*Option 1: Whether this is a sufficient amount of foot/bicycle beats is beyond the scope of this analysis. More research and analysis is necessary prior to making a determination. Issues to consider include neighborhood needs as well as officer staffing levels at each district station. The SFPD advised the OLA that the Department's greatest barrier to deploying additional foot/bicycle beats, despite its strong support for such beats, has been the declining number of sworn police officers within its ranks since late 2002, which may worsen if anticipated attrition is unmet.*

The SFPD does not formally survey residents to gather input and feedback regarding police performance. Instead it engages in other activities designed to solicit that information, including holding monthly district community forums (i.e., meetings between police and the community), maintaining district station email addresses and providing routine access to district captains' contact information. The Department has conducted informal citizen surveys in the past, but only on a limited basis.

*Option 2: To better assess police performance, especially community policing efforts, it could begin to formally solicit input and feedback from residents at least once per year, as is the case in other jurisdictions. The SFPD advised the OLA that it is currently developing a "questionnaire/survey" for use throughout the district stations, but its specific use has not been determined.*

The Department provides public access to crime data primarily via the Internet. It maintains a Website that allows residents to create maps of crime by type, location and date.<sup>6</sup> This site is part of the SFPD's larger "CrimeMaps" system that allows officers to conduct crime analysis. Since its inception in June 2004, the site has had 73,217 visitors or approximately 166 visitors per day. By way of comparison, in-person, telephone and written/fax requests for crime data were relatively low in FY 04-05 (respectively 94, 12 and 4).

*Option 3: To help prioritize crime problems in conjunction with the community, the Department could begin to share information via local radio, television and newspaper announcements.*

The SFPD advised the OLA that over time it recognized that COPPS could not solve the City's crime problems alone, and began collaborating with other local, state and federal agencies to address environmental conditions that invite crime (i.e., graffiti and abandoned vehicles/buildings); increase patrols in high crime areas; and coordinate certain criminal prosecutions. These agencies include Public Works, Public Health, District Attorney, Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, California Highway Patrol, U.S. Department of Justice and several others.

*Option 4: While these collaborations may be yielding positive results, neither the SFPD nor any of its partner agencies have measured their effectiveness. The Board may wish to ask the SFPD to study outcomes of these government-to-government partnerships and report its findings back to the Board.*

---

<sup>6</sup> See <[http://www.sfgov.org/site/police\\_index.asp?id=23813](http://www.sfgov.org/site/police_index.asp?id=23813)>

### ***Community Connect and CitySafe***

On August 5, 2005, the Mayor and Police Chief Fong introduced a new community policing approach called “Community Connect”. It is part of the City’s larger initiative to reduce crime and violence, called “CitySafe”, by focusing City and community resources into five broad categories: youth services, job creation, community development, criminal justice and safer streets.<sup>7</sup> Under Community Connect, the SFPD assigned two lieutenants at each district station to oversee community policing efforts in their respective districts, and to work with a member of the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services (MONS) and a community organizer to access existing City and community resources.

*Option 5: The OLA believes that such resources may need to be expanded in some communities and created in others for Community Connect to work. Otherwise there is the danger that Community Connect will raise expectations and involvement of police and the community to a level it cannot sustain.*

### **OTHER JURISDICTIONS**

Based upon a review of the community policing research literature, the OLA identified the following law enforcement agencies with successful community policing programs.

#### ***Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD)***

The LASD is the largest sheriff’s department in the nation, with 8,438 sworn officers. It started community policing in 1998. The Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Bureau, which consists of 350 deputies and sergeants, conducts the department’s community policing activities. COPS Bureau deputies work in one of three teams: Special Prevention and Intervention (SPI), High Impact Target Area and regular COPS. SPI teams typically work in bicycle patrols, allowing officers to get to know residents. The High Impact Target Area teams operate at specific stations and work within targeted areas for short-periods of time (approximately four to nine months). Any mission that is not completed by the High Impact teams is turned over to the regular COPS teams which continue to work toward solving the problem.

All COPS Bureau deputies are selected from the cadre of patrol deputies assigned to a specific station. As openings occur, any station deputy can rotate out of patrol into the COPS Bureau. The basic difference between the two roles is that, unlike COPS Bureau deputies, patrol deputies answer calls for service and do not have time to investigate or handle problems that require long-term solutions. As deputies rotate, LASD expects that eventually every member of the patrol force will serve within the COPS Bureau and will know how to address more complex and varied community problems.

Successes and Challenges - The COPS program has decreased crime and the residents’ perception of crime. Initially, deputies were critical of the COPS program. Some saw it as “fluff” work not worthy of a deputy who wanted to do “true police work”. Because the program

---

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Mayor, Press Release, *Mayor Newsom and Community Leaders Unveil CitySafe*, August 5, 2005.

has been so successful, the COPS Bureau has been inundated with service requests, and LASD is finding it difficult to continue at that pace. The department is currently attempting to address this issue.

### ***San Jose Police Department***

Community policing is every police officer's responsibility in San Jose. There are no specialized community policing officers. The San Jose Police Department has 1,408 sworn officers. The department started community policing in 1991. San Jose is divided into four patrol divisions, each overseen by a captain. Patrol captains have 24-hour problem-solving responsibility within their divisions. Every six months, the department has a "shift change" in which patrol officers can bid for their next assignment based on seniority. Even so, many officers remain in a specific area for longer than a single shift. The department wants to implement one-year shift changes for greater consistency in the community. This is a labor/management issue, and contract negotiations have not resulted in a change.

In 1997, the department admitted that its community policing efforts had lost momentum. A number of focus groups revealed that a comprehensive program to address leadership development and the creation of a consistent vision for community policing were needed to invigorate the department's efforts. The department received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to pursue training for lieutenants and captains on how to create and sustain community policing and a professional development course for sergeants that included community policing skills. Although the curriculum has been developed, the course has not been implemented.

Successes and Challenges - Community policing has become more institutionalized as part of the department's culture. The department has opened three of four planned "Community Policing Centers", which have given it a valuable presence throughout the city. Initially, the DOJ grant met with resistance from individuals who felt that community policing training and activities were merely a "fad" to be tolerated. The department took longer than it intended to create the curriculum for the professional development course, which slowed the momentum to deliver the course.

### ***Chicago Police Department***

The Chicago Police Department has 13,466 sworn officers. Chicago is divided into twenty-five police districts, which are further divided into 279 police beats or small geographic areas to which police officers are assigned. The department's community policing philosophy is called CAPS or "Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy". Implemented in April 1993, it was rolled-out in five police districts, and employs a number of crime-fighting strategies, including neighborhood based beat officers, regular "Beat Community Meetings" involving police and residents, training for both police and the community and new technology to target crime hot spots.

Implementation of CAPS in the other twenty police districts began in 1994, and the strategy is now operational in all of Chicago's neighborhoods. Under CAPS, a team of eight to nine beat officers is assigned to each of the City's police beats. Beat officers patrol the same beat on the

same watch for at least one year. This allows beat officers and community members to get to know one another. Beat teams patrol primarily in their squad cars, but sometimes on foot as well.

Successes and Challenges - In all five prototype districts, CAPS decreased crime and the residents' perception of crime. Researchers did not find similar trends in the control neighborhoods where CAPS had not been implemented. The average beat meeting attracts twenty-five participants. For the future, the goal is to have fifty. The Department intends to focus on outreach and education efforts on certain communities where participation has not been as high, including Hispanics, youth and young parents.

### ***Metropolitan Police Service (the "Met")***

The Met is the largest of the police services that operate in Greater London (the others include the City of London Police and the British Transport Police).<sup>8</sup> The Met employs 30,235 sworn officers. It covers 624 wards that collectively make up London's thirty-two boroughs. The Met's community policing strategy is called "Safer Neighborhoods". Every Safer Neighborhoods team consists of a minimum of six uniformed officers – a sergeant, two constables (a police officer of the lowest rank) and three police community support officers (PCSOs). PCSOs focus on preventing crime and on protection by having a presence in the community.

The role of Safer Neighborhoods teams is to work with the community and local authorities to reduce crime and disorder and deal with the local issues that most affect people's quality of life, such as graffiti, abandoned cars, noisy neighbors, drunks and vandalism. The rest of the Met's officers carry on with their regular policing duties. There are currently 100 Safer Neighborhood teams in existence across Greater London, approximately three per borough. Teams are assigned, in most cases, based on the boundaries of each ward. Sometimes teams are based at local police stations. Others work from kiosks, partnership offices, schools, hospitals, and places of worship.

Successes and Challenges - Overall crime fell in London by two percent in 2003 compared with 2002. This was largely attributed to the Safer Neighborhoods program. London's mayor and the Greater London Authority, which oversees the Met, intend to roll out the program across the entire city over the next few years.

### ***The Military Police of São Paulo (PMESP)***

In São Paulo, the "military police" or the PMESP is responsible for maintaining public order.<sup>9</sup> The city is divided into seven area policing commands. These commands are separated into twenty-five PMESP battalions, including four traffic police battalions and one guard police battalion. Community policing is just one job a police officer in the PMESP can have. Other jobs include those of traffic officer, patrol officer, firefighter, school officer, policing on horse, prison police, administrator, and special operations. Community policing uses about one-fifth of the PMESP's manpower.

---

<sup>8</sup> The area of Greater London combines the City of London and thirty-one other London boroughs.

<sup>9</sup> The City of São Paulo is the capital of São Paulo State in southeastern Brazil.



To make the police more accessible to the community, the PMESP created movable police stands to bring the police into the communities and a telephone line solely for receiving citizen complaints and suggestions. All PMESP officers carry wallet-sized cards, which include the PMESP's community policing principles. The main differences between community policing officers and non-community policing officers is that community policing officers do mostly foot patrols and spend more time teaching members of the community about crime prevention. Rotations are important to find the appropriate place for an officer and to ensure knowledge of all areas of policing.

Successes and Challenges - Community Security Councils (Consegs) are open meetings between the PMESP and the community to discuss solutions to crime problems. The crime rate in Jardim Ângela, one of the poorest neighborhoods in São Paulo, is still high today, but since community policing began there has been a considerable reduction in crime. Community policing is still considered light policing and soft on criminals by many PMESP officers. Other officers remain largely unfamiliar with the concept.

### ISSUES TO CONSIDER

The following is a list of the major issues to consider regarding community policing in San Francisco:

**Community Interest.** Community policing often grows out of concern and frustration with the traditional policing model. Under traditional policing, the community may not feel any sense of security when officers respond to calls for service only and criminal behavior in their neighborhoods continues after police leave. The community may feel more secure when beat officers are assigned to their neighborhoods for extended periods of time. As such, the Board of Supervisors may wish to survey public satisfaction with traditional policing as well as interest in community policing practices.

**Leadership.** In order for community policing to work, the chief needs a clear vision of what community policing means, what it should look like, why it is important and how it will improve police and the community served. However, this is not enough. Although the chief must be the ultimate champion, a lack of support among mid-level managers almost guarantees that community policing efforts will ultimately break down. The support of police staff who are in charge of day-to-day activities, such as sergeants, lieutenants and captains, ensures effective implementation of community policing.

**Employing the right community policing practices at each district station.** Because each neighborhood in San Francisco has its own crime problems and available police resources, a cookie cutter approach may not work. Bringing a wide range of stakeholders to the table early, including residents, merchants, neighborhood groups, social service providers, police officers and command staff will help to ensure that the right community policing practices are employed at each district station. It is important to note that the SFPD advised the OLA that as part of the Community Connect initiative, it already has plans to hold monthly "best practices" meetings, comprised of the 20 designated district station community policing lieutenants, MONS representatives and community organizers, to address unresolved district problems and discuss appropriate solutions.

**Performance evaluations.** As law enforcement agencies adopt community policing practices into their organizations, officer performance evaluations are often changed to reflect these new practices. The SFPD advised the OLA that it is currently considering adding performance measures based on community policing goals to evaluations for the ranks of officer through captain. Presumably, this is a labor-management issue subject to collective bargaining negotiations.<sup>10</sup>

**The danger of short-lived efforts.** Some community policing programs are too often begun with intensive law enforcement efforts that are short-lived and therefore do not produce the desired results of reducing crime and communities' fear of crime in the long run. When this happens, residents begin to view community policing as "just another program" in which services are here today but gone tomorrow. This perceived view of community policing leads to a lack of community involvement and can break bonds of trust and reliance between police and the community.

### CONCLUSION

The City's current community policing program employs many of the practices typically associated with community policing and used in successful programs in other jurisdictions. However, there are areas where the SFPD can improve community policing in San Francisco. It could increase the number of foot/bicycle beats at each district station; begin to formally solicit input and feedback from residents on police performance; and share crime information with the public via radio, television and newspaper announcements. Of course, whether the Board of Supervisors should urge/require the SFPD to adopt these measures is a policy decision. Other issues to consider regarding community policing in San Francisco include community interest, departmental leadership, employing the right practices at each district station, officer performance evaluations based on community policing goals and the danger of short-lived efforts.

---

<sup>10</sup> The current contract between the City and the San Francisco Police Officers' Union runs from July 2003 through June 2007.