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Community Mobilization for Community Policing

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Executive Summary

Communities vary in their ability to solve problems independently and to form partnerships with police and other agencies. In some areas neighbors count on each other to watch out for trouble and even intervene on each other’s behalf; in others they do not even trust their immediate neighbors. Some areas are richly endowed with a broad range of active community organizations; others support only a few struggling civic associations. Some communities have a proven ability to get the help they need from government and private agencies, while in other areas residents do not have any significant downtown connections they can capitalize upon for their collective benefit. The varying capacities of neighborhoods for self help are important because Chicago’s community policing program places heavy emphasis on the roles played by neighborhood residents in maintaining safe and secure neighborhoods. Citizens are expected to come together on a regular basis to debate the nature of local problems and what their place should be on the agenda; to help formulate strategies that police and city service agencies can employ to tackle them; and to get involved themselves in solving problems that are within their reach.

This report describes an experiment in Chicago aimed at creating community capacity for self help in neighborhoods where that had been lost. Beginning in 1998, the city deployed a cadre of organizers charged with rebuilding the capacity of some of its most troubled communities. Some worked directly under the supervision of the city while others were on the staff of neighborhood organizations. The evaluation described in this report began at about the same time. Evaluation staff interviewed the participants and monitored the activities of the organizers as they worked in selected beats. A survey was conducted to profile conditions in the beats that were first involved in the program, and a few were re-surveyed to monitor changes that may have taken place there over time. This report summarizes our conclusions about a number of the issues the evaluation addressed. These included: What do community organizers do to build community capacity? What were the impediments to their organizing efforts? What projects did they succeed in bringing to fruition? And were there any changes in neighborhood conditions that might be tied to their efforts?

The surveys found that the beats that were selected for organizing fit the project well. Most reported much higher than average problems, especially in the categories that Chicagoans find most vexing: drugs, gangs, loitering, physical decay and public drinking. Most fell below the city average in terms of the strength of informal social control and their ability to mobilize themselves politically, and many residents reported low levels of organizational involvement. Residents of the project beats were also quite dubious about the capacity of the police to help them much, a factor that could make the work of the organizers a “tough sell.”
The organizers kept busy. They spent a great deal of time trying to increase beat meeting attendance, by canvassing their beats, posting flyers, attending local meetings and working through existing organizations. Because the latter were often in short supply, they worked to establish new block clubs and revive dormant ones. One strategy was to help the neighbors around drug houses to mobilize to shut them down. They also used liquor ordinance enforcement and “vote dry” referenda to generate political involvement. They organized marches and prayer vigils, which solidified the support of pastors all over the city. They helped run local neighborhood festivals and staffed booths at larger, official events. Organizers also ran public education programs around the CAPS court advocacy program, parent patrols and safe school zones, citizen patrols, city services, landlord training and the adopt-a-street program. Many were actively involved in supporting projects sponsored by their district’s advisory committees. They also worked to build support for neighborhood safety legislation, including the city’s gang loitering ordinance and the state’s Safe Neighborhoods Act, and turned out busloads of residents for rallies supporting these initiatives and the police.

The organizers found that the work was hard and unrelenting. Much of it was at night and on weekends, and they had to deal with crises as they emerged. Once they built a solid base in one area they were expected to take on another. The city demanded a careful accounting of their time and activities, so “paperwork” plagued their day as well. Some found themselves maneuvering through complex political minefields planted by aldermen and their protagonists, and in conflicts between police and residents with high expectations. They also found themselves taking sides in conflicts over economic development and gentrification. There were perhaps inevitable bureaucratic snafus during the start-up phase of the program, and staff turnover made it difficult to keep familiar faces on the beat in some areas. Organizers who worked on the project indirectly, through local organizations, were less closely supervised and more likely to be advancing the interests of their parent organizations rather than the city’s program.

By many measures conditions in the evaluation beats improved after the first year of the program. Fear went down, informal social control strengthened, and many serious neighborhood problems were in decline. However, there were parallel changes in many other areas of the city, for by several measures the city as a whole prospered during the period. As a result, it is not clear that these trends in the evaluation beats could be attributed to the program. However, there were also improvements in perceptions of the quality of police service in the evaluation areas, and those somewhat exceeded changes over time in matched comparison beats. Residents of the organizing areas also were more likely to hear about beat meetings, and attendance rates held up better there than in matched areas of town. None of these changes were large, but neither was the one-year period over which the evaluation was conducted.
Community Mobilization for Community Policing

One lesson of research on communities is that they vary tremendously in their ability to solve problems independently and to form partnerships with police and other agencies. In some areas neighbors count on each other to watch out for trouble and even intervene on each other’s behalf. In other areas, residents do not even trust their immediate neighbors. Some areas are richly endowed with a broad range of active community organizations; others support only a few struggling civic associations. Some communities have a proven ability to get the help they need from government and private agencies, while in other areas residents do not have any significant downtown connections they can capitalize upon for their collective benefit. As awareness of the importance of these advantages has grown, the question of how communities that do not enjoy them can reclaim them has become a prominent policy issue. This report examines Chicago’s ongoing effort to “even the playing field” with regard to civic involvement, in order to encourage greater and more effective resident involvement in the city’s community policing program. It describes a city-sponsored program aimed at developing block-level organizations and supporting the efforts of existing ones to support community policing, involving residents in problem solving projects, and helping mobilize resources to resolve those problems.

Our research has identified these as elements of what we call “community capacity.” One of the core components of community capacity is the willingness of residents to actively represent the norms of the community to safeguard them when they are threatened. The willingness of residents to step forward and confront those who violate popular local norms is known as “informal social control.” In most theories of social organization this is viewed as one of the principal ways community members maintain order on their own initiative. Residents of high-capacity communities trust each other and are willing to take action in the best interests of the community. In these high-capacity communities, what is perceived as beneficial for the common good is often indistinguishable from that which benefits an individual. Residents expect reciprocity; they assume that others will take the initiative when it is their turn, and acts of generosity, support and even courage are common in these communities.

Our research indicates that the density of local organizations is another important component of a community’s capacity. Networks of civic engagement, such as block clubs, neighborhood watch groups and tenant associations provide resources that residents can draw upon to solve problems. While individual efforts to intervene and set things right are important, so are durable connections between engaged residents. Organizations enable individuals to share, accumulate and prioritize their concerns, and to coordinate efforts to deal with concerns at the top of their collective agenda. They help them pool resources, and frequently it is organizations that can muster help from the outside when more resources are required than the community can generate internally. A number of our evaluation reports have documented the extent to which actual resident involvement in problem solving is tied to involvement in locally-based organizations. Organizations institutionalize individual effort, and they can also recruit replacements for those who tire, retire or turn to other interests.
High-capacity communities are exceptional in many regards, and they are particularly good at defending themselves against the crime and disorder problems so common in urban areas. However, it remains unclear how areas where trust and reciprocity are low and organized groups are sparse can develop or reclaim these features of community life. Neighborhoods that need interveners and organizers the most by-and-large have them the least. Research finds that trust and reciprocity are lowest in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, where the resident population turns over rather than remains stable, and in racially or ethnically heterogeneous areas. Mistrust and lack of reciprocity undermine the capacity of community residents to become effective partners in community policing in just the areas that need the most help in securing safety.

This report describes an on-going project in Chicago. Beginning in 1998, the city deployed a cadre of organizers who were charged with rebuilding the capacity of some of its most troubled communities. The evaluation described in this report began at about the same time, supported by the MacArthur Foundation and the State of Illinois. Evaluation staff interviewed the participants and monitored the activities of the organizers as they worked in selected beats. A survey was conducted to profile conditions in the beats that were first involved in the program, and a few were re-surveyed to monitor changes that may have taken place there over time. This report summarizes our conclusions about a number of the issues the evaluation addressed. These included: What do community organizers do to build community capacity? What were the impediments to their organizing efforts? What projects did they succeed in bringing to fruition? Were there any changes in neighborhood conditions that might be tied to their efforts?

The research on which this report is based was conducted in 1998, and the last of the neighborhood surveys was completed in the summer of 1999. But the city’s community mobilization effort is a continuing one. The program presented a “moving target” during the evaluation, and has evolved since the research was concluded, so this report is not necessarily a description of its current organization or activities. Pledges of confidentiality were made to many of the individuals who were interviewed or observed at work in the field, and to keep this commitment we have altered some details about them and use descriptive rather than proper names for neighborhoods that were selected for intensive investigation.

The Challenge: Getting Residents Involved

The varying capacities of neighborhoods for self help are important because Chicago’s community policing program places heavy emphasis on the roles played by neighborhood residents in maintaining safe and secure neighborhoods. Citizens are expected to come together on a regular basis to debate the nature of local problems and what their place should be on the agenda; to help formulate strategies that police and city service agencies can employ to tackle them; and to get involved themselves in solving problems that are within their reach.

However, savvy activists know that there are significant obstacles to establishing a consistent level of effective community involvement in community policing, particularly in the
The depth of this divide, as well as the magnitude of the city’s problems, is illustrated by a study of citizen attitudes toward police that was conducted by the federal government in 1998. Residents of 12 large and middle-sized cities were surveyed. They were quizzed about neighborhood crime problems, their views of the quality of police service, and the community-oriented activities by police serving their neighborhood. In these surveys, Chicagoans tied for first place in the level of fear of neighborhood crime, and they were either first or second in reporting that drug sales, property crime, robbery and gun violence was happening in their immediate neighborhood. And even after five years of experience with community policing, residents of Chicago still ranked their police near the very bottom on important measures. Chicago scored second from the bottom in terms of overall satisfaction with the quality of police service, and the gap between white and African-American residents in terms of satisfaction with policing was second worst among the 12 cities surveyed.

It is also worth noting that pessimism and skepticism are not unique to the resident perspective; there are still a significant number of police who are suspicious of CAPS. For them CAPS sounds too much like social work and not enough like policing. Some officers believe that CAPS blurs an important distinction between police and the community; they say that CAPS undermines the public deference and operational independence crucial to their job. Other police may agree with the goals of CAPS but lament bureaucratic burdens imposed by CAPS, believing it takes away time that could be spent on the street. These attitudes are too often on display at beat community meetings, where officers sit mute with their arms folded throughout the proceedings. It is no easy task to get stubborn, uninterested or distrustful residents and police committed to working together productively.

The city responded to this problem by issuing a special ordinance providing stiffer penalties for prosecuted offenders who threaten or injure CAPS employees and volunteers. Concerned residents and activists remember Arnold Mireles, a CAPS activist in the South Chicago community, who was fatally shot in December 1997 in retaliation for his activism targeting buildings with housing code violations and criminal activity.
Despite these problems, awareness of opportunities to participate is widespread in Chicago. Our 1999 evaluation report documented that about 80 percent of residents are aware of the city’s CAPS program, and the 1998 12-city survey placed Chicago at the top of the list in terms of the proportion of residents who were familiar with the concept of community policing (73 percent) and who reported that police in their community were engaged in it (67 percent). The gap between awareness and actual involvement is of course a wide one. Our past evaluation reports have indicated that 13-15 percent of adults report attending one or more CAPS community meetings in the course of a year. That number has not changed much, and citywide attendance has been stable at about 6,000 residents per month since 1995. Compared to other cities this turnout level is also impressive: in the 12-city survey Chicago also ranked first in the percentage of residents who reported hearing about neighborhood anti-crime meetings, and first in the percentage who reported attending a meeting. Our surveys also find that those who participate in beat meetings have a favorable opinion of what went on there, and of the quality of police service in their immediate community.

But these figures vary from neighborhood to neighborhood within the city, signaling differences in local capacity for involvement in CAPS. Some have a strong “infrastructure” of individual initiative and organizational talent while others do not. And, as we have also seen, some have an optimistic view of the role that police are willing to play in helping solve neighborhood problems, while others do not. This too will play a significant role in the ability of the program to function effectively in all of the city’s neighborhoods.

**Community Mobilization in Chicago**

Since it is clear that traditional policing alone is insufficient to deal with many problems now commonplace in large cities, community activists, mayors and police are looking elsewhere for solutions. Community residents and organizations are great resources and natural partners in helping manage crime and disorder problems, for a number of reasons. Concerned residents recognize that they have a vested interest in helping to rebuild their neighborhoods because property values, the quality of life and the safety of their own children are closely tied to neighborhood-safety issues. They understand that no one else is as likely to care about the place they live.

The focus of this report is the City of Chicago’s community mobilization effort. Reflecting the citywide commitment to community policing, this project is an ongoing experiment in creating new capacities in some of Chicago’s neediest neighborhoods. The goals of this new city effort include:

- bringing block-level organization to areas where there is none
- involving already-existing organizations and their members in the problem solving process
- identifying and securing the resources required to solve pressing problems
- teaching community members to solve problems in their neighborhoods in concert with their local beat officers and city service agencies
To accomplish this, part of the city’s bureaucracy – the CAPS Implementation Office – assembled a team to help establish “community infrastructure” supporting the city’s community policing program. Community organizers, some employed by the city and others by local organizations that have contracted to work with the city, assist beat and district problem solving projects and help sustain participation in beat community meetings. The Implementation Office also has staff members supporting the city’s court advocacy program, mobilizing residents to turn out for court hearings of cases of particular concern to the community. Youth services coordinators work on implementing school safety initiatives, and community service representatives submit requests for and monitor the delivery of city services. Building services coordinators identify problem buildings and work with their owners to improve the structures and, in turn, neighborhood safety. In this report we refer to these efforts as the city’s “community mobilization project.” Implementation Office staff do not use this term, but it is a useful one for referring to the organizing efforts of the agency and its partner organizations.

Community policing is promising, but it may only work when there is a solid and stable organizational infrastructure to support it. In its most elementary form, community policing employs community residents as the “eyes and ears” of the neighborhood, relaying information to police who use it for making arrests and securing convictions. In more robust versions of community policing, residents play important roles in crime prevention and reduction by doing independent research on chronic problems, forming block clubs, honing their problem solving skills, and learning to develop and flex their political muscle through community organizations. In this model, residents become active participants in the development and implementation of solutions to crime and they take responsibility for some portion of it.

From the outset, Chicago has been committed to the latter, larger vision of community involvement in neighborhood safety. Chicago’s community policing effort features extensive roles for the public, ranging from attending monthly meetings held in every part of the city to serving on formal committees that advise each district commander. Chicago’s program also features a strong commitment to problem solving by neighborhood residents as well as the police. Residents are to be involved in crafting local problem solving plans, through regular beat meetings and the districts’ advisory committees, and are expected to become actively involved in carrying them out.

Chicago made significant political and financial investment in the “community side” of CAPS by establishing the community mobilization project. The staff is responsible for jump-starting and propelling the civilian side of Chicago’s community policing effort by helping Chicago residents and community leaders build productive relationships with Chicago police.

Since its inception, the mobilization project has expanded to employ a staff of 88 people with a wide range of responsibilities and expertise. Although it is a city office, its administration works hard to minimize the bureaucracy typical of municipal departments. Aside from clerical and administrative office staff, nearly everyone else works directly in Chicago’s neighborhoods with residents, police and community leaders. The director provides the overall direction and
The entire staff meets monthly and smaller groups hold additional meetings throughout the month. During the startup phase of the effort the program hired community organizers on a contractual basis through a nonprofit agency, the Chicago Center for Health Systems Development (CCHSD). For the fiscal year 1999, the contract with CCHSD was $1.087 million dollars which included salaries, fringe benefits, administrative and logistical operating costs. In October 1999 the organizers became regular city employees and a normal line in the city budget.

The Implementation Office also masterminds CAPS marketing campaigns, which include radio, print and television advertisements in a variety of languages. Working with the city-sponsored cable television program “Crimewatch,” staff direct producers towards CAPS success stories in districts all over the city. This marketing program, which has been extremely successful, is described in the CAPS 1999 evaluation report.

In addition to the 30 on-staff community organizers, the program sponsors an additional group of organizers through contracts with about a dozen partner organizations. The partner agencies are local nonprofit community organizations that committed to the promotion of CAPS strategies within the areas they serve. Partner agencies receive funding through contracts with the city and are paid through the city’s corporate budget or by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a national organization which provides funding and support to community development corporations. In the fiscal year 1999, $348,000 was awarded to partner agencies through the city contracts and a commensurate amount was given to agencies funded through LISC. At the close of 1999, the city issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) with the intent of spending about $425,000 to support partner organizations during fiscal year 2000.

The program offers in-house training for both its novice and experienced organizers to build comradery and skills, and to make sure that everyone understands their roles, the mission of the Implementation Office and the resources available to them. Organizers attend three days of training featuring an intensive problem solving training session and a walk-through of city services. City department representatives, police academy trainers and the program’s senior managers and staff guide trainees through a number of role-playing exercises which place special emphasis on developing listening and analytic skills and cultural sensitivity. Trainers interject humor and personal anecdotes to keep everyone’s eyes open and spirits up. Although most organizers who go through the training say it is good and appreciate the information they

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glean, they also say that the most valuable lessons are learned on the job in the streets working with residents, police and community leaders on specific problems.

This is not the city’s only contribution to building local capacity for effective involvement in CAPS. During 1995 and 1996, the city and the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety conducted problem solving training for more than 10,000 residents. Community organizers worked in conjunction with civilian and police trainers in that effort, both to stimulate involvement in the training and to provide some follow-up support for local problem solving efforts. Early in 1997, civilian and police trainers were added to the regular staff of the police department’s Education and Training Division. They are charged with tailoring training and technical assistance efforts to the needs of individual neighborhoods, community organizations and police beats. On several occasions special training has also been conducted for the sergeants responsible for supervising the beat teams that serve each area of the city. The civilians who have been appointed as “beat facilitators” in order to inject resident leadership into beat meetings have been trained on several occasions. Other evaluation reports have described those training efforts; this focuses on the activities of the CAPS Implementation Office.

The Evaluation

Between March 1998 and September 1999 evaluation staff members conducted extensive field work to study the activities of CAPS community organizers. They attended monthly CAPS staff meetings, training sessions for police, residents and organizers, beat meetings, and community events. Community organizers, area coordinators, activists, business owners, police district commanders, beat sergeants, beat and neighborhood relations officers, block club leaders, beat facilitators, church clergy, lawyers, and political representatives were interviewed in person. Project staff toured program and non-program areas and attended special CAPS events like the Chicago Neighborhood Assembly. They kept detailed notes documenting neighborhood resources, problems, organizing efforts and perceptions of crime and CAPS successes and failures. They also reviewed organizer monthly reports, news articles and literature from community organizations.

Between April 1999 and September 1999 extensive field work was conducted in four African-American beats, in order to better understand how the program looked in action. Three of the beats were areas of concentrated poverty and one was a working-class area. Three represented the work of city organizers while the fourth represented the efforts of a partner agency.

In each of the beats we wanted to know: what the crime and safety issues were, how CAPS was being used to address those issues, what sort of community organization was present, who was active in CAPS and who was not, and what were some of the successes and shortcomings of CAPS’ implementation. Evaluation staff members conducted many interviews in each of the beats, with residents, business owners, community organizations, the community organizers, beat facilitators, and aldermanic staff. They rode with beat officers and toured the areas with residents and community organizers. On the police ride-alongs they were able to see
how needy certain beats were of police service and to better understand local police capacity for proactive community work. Community organizers and beat facilitators pointed out both problems and strengths in their communities. They identified problem buildings, abandoned lots, drug corners, problem liquor stores and sometimes the individuals, families and gangs who jeopardized public safety. But they also pointed with pride to redevelopment and renovation projects, remedial educational and drug rehabilitation programs, low-cost health clinics, and community service centers. They introduced staff members to block club members, community residents, police officers and leaders who were working hard to ameliorate the quality of life in their beats. Finally, observers attended beat community meetings and training sessions in selected target areas.

The Beats

In principle, organizers are available for “all 279” of the city’s beats, but most organizers work intensively in a few “focus beats.” The plan is to get resident involvement “up and running” in these areas and then move to the next beat. Organizers first try to increase beat meeting attendance and then educate residents on using the CAPS problem solving process. Once a regular core of residents is established and they demonstrate commitment to the CAPS process and proficiency in using CAPS resources, organizers are to move to another pair of focus beats to start the process anew.

Organizers are assigned to beats with special consideration given to their ethnicity, language skills and familiarity with particular neighborhoods. For example, most organizers who work in beats that are predominantly Latino and Spanish-speaking speak Spanish themselves and live nearby. Partner agencies work with two beats chosen by assessment of community need and the agency’s influence in a particular area. Though the agency organizers work in beats proximate to city organizers, they usually work independently of each other. When the evaluation began in early 1998 the program involved about 40 organizers, and they were active in almost 80 beats. Figure 1 depicts the location of beats that were initially identified for special attention. It is apparent that even at that time the community mobilization project involved a significant fraction of the city.

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4 Focus beats are selected based on input from district commanders, crime reports, local residents and the program’s managers. Generally speaking, focus beats are typically the two beats in a district considered most in need of organizing. The focus beats change once organizers and managers judge that there has been acceptable progress towards increasing safety and stability. Although organizers pay special attention to focus beats, they are still expected to monitor and provide assistance to other beats in their district when needed.
A survey was conducted of a small sample of these beats to establish a baseline profile of conditions there. Because it was necessary to contact people living in small geographical areas, respondents were selected using samples drawn from telephone directory listings, and interviews were conducted by telephone both in English and Spanish. Nineteen beats that had just been assigned organizers were included in the study and 1,880 adult residents were interviewed. The number of respondents ranged from a low of 62 to a high of 140 per beat. The overall response rate for the survey, conducted by the Survey Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois-Chicago, was 56 percent. Most interviews were completed between April and June of 1998 — shortly after the official beginning date for the mobilization project, but before most organizers were hired, trained and active in the beats.

The survey beats were selected to represent the kinds of areas that were involved in the project as a whole and the kinds of organizing that were going on there. Nine predominately African-American beats were selected, including five being served by city organizers and four by organizers hired by the nonprofit agencies. Another six beats were predominately Latino in composition, three of which were city organizer beats and three were agency beats. Finally, four beats were selected for the survey because they were racially diverse; all were served by partner organizations.

The survey examined residents’ views of neighborhood problems, their awareness of CAPS and their involvement in beat meetings. It also gathered reports of the quality of police service in their community. The survey included questions measuring features we identified as important components of the neighborhoods’ capacity to deal with problems: residents’ participation in community-based organizations and their perceptions of willingness of their neighbors to intervene to reestablish order.

The survey found that residents of the beats involved in the community mobilization effort shared the priority concerns of Chicagoans as a whole, but their problems were more extreme. A citywide evaluation survey that was conducted at about the same time as the beat
studies found that street drug sales were the most highly rated problem, followed by gang
loitering, actual gang violence and public drinking. Residents of the beats that were about to get
involved in the organizing project also gave top ratings to these problems. However, while 27
percent of all Chicagoans reported that street drug sales were a big problem in their
neighborhood, 43 percent of the focus beat residents shared that view. The comparable figures
for “groups of people hanging out on corners or in the streets” were 25 percent for the city and
38 percent for residents of the nineteen focus beats. For “shootings and violence by gangs” the
figures were 23 and 33 percent, and for public drinking they were 19 and 28 percent,
respectively. The relative rankings of citywide and focus beat ratings switched a bit after that,
but in the project areas the fifth biggest problem was “vacant lots filled with trash and junk” (24
percent). Like many studies, this one found that residents of a cross section of poor city
neighborhoods were concerned about a mix of physical decay, social disorder and “serious
crime” problems that called for a sophisticated package of services and not just more traditional
policing.

The baseline survey also found that residents of most of the beats lay below the city
average on the dimensions that we have identified as affecting the capacity of communities to
respond to local problems. Figure 2 depicts some key measures of neighborhood capacity and
perceptions of the quality of police service for 19 targeted beats, and it illustrates where they lay
relative to the city as a whole. The height of the bars indicates the scores for each beat. Labels
below the bars identify predominately African-American (“A-A”), Latino (“Lat”), and racially
diverse (“Div”) beats. They also signal whether they were served by city organizers (“City”) or
employees of community organizations (“Org”). The city averages identified in Figure 2 are
based on a citywide survey conducted at about the same time.

The study beats fared best on a measure of resident involvement in local organizations.
The survey asked whether the respondent or someone else in the household was involved in a
neighborhood-watch group or citizen patrol, a block club or community organization, or a Local
School Council or PTA group in their area. Overall, 21 percent reported that their household was
involved in a block or community group, 14 percent in a neighborhood watch or patrol, and 13
percent in a school-based group. But most households did not belong to any local group; overall,
67 percent were not affiliated with any on the list. Only 11 percent reported that their household
was involved in two or three of the kinds of groups on the list. Figure 2 presents the average
score separately for each beat. As it depicts, the citywide score for Chicago averaged just below
one organization per household. Of the 19 study beats, seven lay above that figure, but 12 lay
below.

Responses to three questions were used to gauge the strength of informal social control in
these targeted beats. The survey asked about the likelihood of their neighbors getting personally
involved in stopping three kinds of incidents: children spray-painting graffiti on a local building,
a teenager harassing an elderly person, and a fight in front of their home where someone was
being beaten up. Their judgments were used to represent the strength of the defensive web of
social support that characterized each of the study areas. Respondents were most optimistic that
their neighbors would intervene to stop teens from harassing senior citizens: overall, 35 percent
thought they were very likely to do so, and 37 percent felt that they were likely to do so. On the other hand, 15 percent indicated that their neighbors were unlikely to act, and 19 percent thought such involvement very unlikely. Less than a majority thought their neighbors would personally intervene in a fight. Just over 40 percent thought that was unlikely or very unlikely, and another 15 percent volunteered that their neighbors would just call the police. The perceived likelihood that neighbors would intervene in the spray-paint scenario stood close to the figures for harassment of the elderly.

Figure 2
Capacity of the Program Areas

Responses to the three questions were fairly consistent, so they were combined to form a single index of the strength of informal social control. As Figure 2 indicates, the citywide average for this index was 3.03, very near the “likely to intervene” response category. Most of the beats targeted by the mobilization program (16 of the 19 surveyed) lay below this figure, and one was tied with it. Compared to the city as a whole, most residents of these areas were not particularly optimistic that their neighbors would represent collective norms by intervening to safeguard them when they were threatened.

Survey participants answered questions asking how likely neighbors would organize to protest the possible closing of their local police station or public housing that might be built in their community. Both are topics in the news, and in 1992 a (failed) attempt by the city to close a number of district stations was a matter of extensive community debate. Police representatives doubted the station houses’ value, but residents perceived the threatened closings as a “take-away” that might affect officers’ responsiveness to local concerns. Presented with a similar scenario, across the project beats almost 75 percent thought that it was likely or very likely that their neighbors would try to stop a station closing. The public housing issue remains a lively one due to wide discussion about scattered-site housing in the city. In the 1998 survey, respondents were asked, “Suppose that the city announced that public housing was going to be built in your neighborhood. How likely is it that neighborhood residents would organize to try to keep the public housing out?” About 30 percent thought this was very likely and another 30 percent
thought it likely. Thirteen percent thought their neighbors very unlikely to organize against such development.

Responses to these two questions were combined to create an index of the political mobilization capacity of the study areas. The citywide average on this measure was 3.15, which placed the average Chicagoan just above “likely” to respond. As illustrated in Figure 2, 15 of the 19 priority beats surveyed lay below the city average on this measure.

The final benchmark data presented in Figure 2 represent beat residents’ views of the quality of police service delivered in their neighborhood. Respondents to the survey were asked five questions about policing in their area.³ Four called for assessments of how good a job police did, and those were measured on a four-point scale ranging from very good to poor. Four categories ranging from very responsive to very unresponsive represented their responses to the fifth question. Police got the lowest marks for working together with residents to solve problems: 56 percent gave them a fair or poor rating on this dimension. Police got their highest rating for responsiveness to community concerns. More than three-quarters of those interviewed gave them a good job or very good job rating, and only 9 percent felt they were poor on that dimension. Residents of the study beats were very consistent in their views of neighborhood policing (the average correlation between responses was +.66), so another summary index of opinion was created from them. As Figure 2 indicates, 17 of the 19 project beats included in the evaluation fell below the city average on the same measure. At the outset, organizers for this project were working to encourage cooperation with the police in communities that were not particularly optimistic about the quality of police service in their neighborhood.

Getting Organized

Who are the organizers? The city-employed and agency organizers are a diverse group, varying in age from mid-twenties to seniors. They are culturally diverse as well, representing a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and speaking many different languages. There is tremendous variation in organizing experience; some are new to the field, while others have been organizing for decades as active citizens.

CAPS community organizers do a number of different things, but mainly they act as CAPS evangelists who try to get as many people as possible involved in Chicago’s community policing initiative. Organizers have to be able to convincingly answer the question “What’s in it

³ The questions were: “How good a job are the police in your neighborhood doing to prevent crime in your neighborhood?” “How good a job are the police in your neighborhood doing in keeping order on the streets and sidewalks?” “How responsive are the police in your neighborhood to community concerns?” “How good a job are the police doing in dealing with the problems that really concern people in your neighborhood?” And, “How good a job are the police doing in working together with residents in your neighborhood to solve local problems?”
for me?” when asked that by people from various socioeconomic backgrounds with different perspectives on what their problems are. In four beats that were examined in detail (see below) they organized anti-drug/gang marches, prayer vigils and smoke-outs⁶; manned CAPS booths at city fairs; attended and spoke at CAPS beat meetings; provided city service information; worked with local police, beat facilitators, clergy and aldermen; attended meetings; and helped recruit attendees for special CAPS sponsored events. Organizers were also expected to help CAPS participants with problem solving, but that happened infrequently, as most organizers were still working on increasing CAPS participation and establishing community organization through block clubs and networking with community stakeholders.

Organizers spend a great deal of time in meetings. They meet with residents, police, church groups, businesses, block clubs and city departments. They also facilitate training and educational sessions for residents on a variety of topics including: problem solving, city services, the Adopt-A-Street⁷ program, landlord training and block club organizing. All of this is done with a focus toward increasing CAPS participation, building relationships within and between community and police, and the development of problem solving skills within the community.

Maintaining good levels of participation at beat meetings is a continuing effort for all the organizers. Because CAPS is no longer a new concept in Chicago, and since some people have been participating for several years, CAPS organizers and management recognize the need for bringing new people into the CAPS process. A senior manager of the program urged organizers to seek out new CAPS participants. “You should always be looking for new blood. New people can bring new ideas and new energy to CAPS... Stagnation is what we’re trying to avoid.” Organizers look for new CAPS participants by approaching block clubs, local school councils, community organizations, churches and community leaders. They post flyers and even do door-to-door canvassing. To some, beat meeting attendance appears to be a “numbers game” but there is a good reason for wanting a healthy turnout at beat meetings. A large turnout increases the likelihood that the problems raised at the beat meeting are actually solvable with the resources (skills, time, willingness) that are available. A meeting with only five people means that those five people have to do the work that might otherwise be divided amongst 15 people, provided, of course, that those five people are willing to do any work. Some beat meetings regularly draw between 40 and 50 people, while others struggle to get 10. Our observations of beat meetings citywide have found that beat meetings most closely approximate the CAPS model when there are more people involved.

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⁶A smoke-out is a temporary public barbeque set up where illegal activity (drug dealing, prostitution, public drinking) usually occurs.

⁷Adopt-A-Street is a public-private partnership where local businesses, residents, block clubs, schools and other agencies “adopt” a site in the neighborhood and take responsibility for keeping it clean.
Once organizers get people to the beat meetings, they try to build constituencies by motivating people to voice their concerns and act on specific issues: loitering, drug sales, violence, gang activity, prostitution, building issues, graffiti, gang intimidation, illegal businesses and public drinking. Community action encompasses a wide variety of activities and is determined by a number of different factors including personal motivation, commitment and experience of the organizer and residents, organizational skills, analytical skills, number of participants, resources available, political mobility of the residents and the level of support police and local politicians give to initiatives. Although community organizers participate in community initiatives and problem solving, organizers are reminded that community empowerment and self-sufficiency are key goals of CAPS. They are cautioned against taking ownership of community problems. “Never do for another what he can do for himself,” one of their managers preaches. They are expected to provide direction and assistance in problem solving, but never to solve the problem themselves. Residents develop confidence in CAPS and in themselves when they achieve something on their own. They also make life easier for organizers and police when they can solve their own problems.

It is clear that communities with a robust organizational infrastructure – in the form of active, effective and well-connected community residents, organizations and leaders – do a better job of preventing and dealing with eruptions of chaos and disorder than those that lack such structure. Recognizing this, the organizers try to help communities build an infrastructure at a grassroots level within the framework of CAPS. They try to create connections between police, residents and other community stakeholders by selling the premise that it is better to know and have working relationships with each other rather than exist and act independently of each other when they often share the same problems, aspirations and goals. This belief in the power of unity is evident in the CAPS slogan “Together We Can.”

CAPS makes available a number of tools that help communities solve problems and improve the quality of life. City service tools include the city service request process, Strategic Inspections Task Force, the landlord training program, fast track demolition and liquor license control. There are also a variety of community-action tools: Court Advocacy, block club organizing, citizen patrols, parent patrols, safe school zones and the Walking School Bus. The

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8Information gathering, research, smoke-outs, marches, writing letters to business owners and landlords, Court Advocacy, building public gardens, neighborhood clean-ups, and the formation of phone trees and neighborhood watch groups are some of the CAPS related actions that communities can get involved in.

9The Strategic Inspections Task Force uses building inspections and fines to motivate negligent building owners to provide better care for their property. Fast track demolition is a way for the city to quickly raze an abandoned problem building.

10The Walking School Bus (WSB) is a group of students accompanied by an adult walking a designated route to and from school. The WSB is intended to promote neighborhood safety, friendships and provide children with a positive adult role model.
Under the instruction of police academy trainers, community residents learn how to analyze and solve complex problems like drug dealing in their own neighborhoods.

African-American organizers are especially fond of the prayer march as a community action tool and the beats we looked at were no exception. Chicago’s African-American neighborhoods are often spiritual, so the church is a natural partner in community action. In the warm months of summer and the early days of fall, organizers, residents, police and community leaders march through troubled neighborhoods tormented by gang activity, violence and drug dealing. Along the route, marchers stop in front of the problem buildings, join hands, sing and recite aloud prayers for the community and the sinners. The marches are vivacious and colorful, led by charismatic and vocal black religious leaders, who with bullhorn in hand, shout positive and spiritual commands along the way. “Up with Hope! Down with Dope!” Curious residents peer out of windows and sometimes come out into the streets to join the march. Though it is not clear what long-term effects prayer vigils have on drug houses, they do serve a number of positive purposes. They give the community the chance to point out hot spots to the district police commander. They let dealers know that the community is aware and disapproving of their behavior, and they help build social cohesion by getting neighbors outdoors and together.

Many of the organizers who have participated in court advocacy say that doing so has positive results. With input gathered at beat meetings or from other members of the community, court advocacy subcommittees of the police district’s advisory committees identify and track cases of interest to the community. Cases can range from violent crimes, such as murder or rape, to “quality of life” cases, such as drug dealing and public drinking, abandoned buildings and negligent landlords, and problem liquor establishments. Volunteers attend court proceedings associated with those cases and provide support for victims and witnesses who may be hesitant to testify in court. The presence of volunteers sends a message to the defendant, the judge and all other parties in the criminal justice system: the community cares about the outcome of these cases and is willing to devote its time and energies to monitoring the workings of the judicial system.

The work of the organizers can easily edge into the world of politics, given their grassroots connections with residents active in crime and public safety matters—one of the public’s “hot buttons.” They are responsible for turning people out for events. Sometimes this entails organizing busloads of residents to attend city-wide neighborhood assemblies focusing on community policing. It also involves turning out crowds for the mayor’s appearances to promote public safety projects or to open new police stations. Occasionally those rallies are held to generate support for legislation as controversial as the city’s gang loitering ordinance or the state legislature’s Safe Neighborhoods Act, both rejected by the appellate courts. In the case of Chicago’s anti-gang loitering ordinance, the Implementation Office strongly supported it and

\[11\] Under the instruction of police academy trainers, community residents learn how to analyze and solve complex problems like drug dealing in their own neighborhoods.
sent organizers out into the neighborhoods to promote the controversial legislation by gathering
tens of thousands of petition signatures. Earlier, organizers were involved in drumming up
support for the city’s fast-track demolition ordinance, designed to speed the process of dealing
with abandoned buildings. More recently the organizers have been involved in the battle to pass
the Safe Neighborhoods Act. Again, Implementation Office staff rallied articulate community
leaders and sent them to the state capitol to demonstrate community support for the legislation.
One organizer also explained that when police superintendent Hillard was under fire following
police shootings of LaTanya Haggerty and Robert Russ in June 1998, organizers all over the city
were asked to rally supporters for the police department and send them to city hall so that news
reporters could interview someone with a “pro-police perspective.”

It is important to note that these efforts have remained confined to crime and policing
issues. From the city’s point of view, the legislative lobbying efforts of organizers are promoting
official initiatives to fight crime. Although the organizers have been asked to work in support of
particular pieces of legislation and police issues, they have been repeatedly cautioned against
overt political involvement. Their manager admonished them in one meeting: “I encourage you
to learn about politics and to get involved, but only on your own time. Don’t mix your work with
political campaigning. We’re about safe neighborhoods and building partnerships with police.
This is an election year. Don’t let CAPS be manipulated into someone’s political agenda.”

Problems in Organizing

This section reviews some of the impediments to organizing encountered by staff
members of the mobilization project.

Demanding Assignments

As noted above, most CAPS organizers are assigned to a few focus beats, where they
work to establish a functional and self-sufficient level of community organization, typically
through block clubs. Once there is an acceptable level of organizational infrastructure built and
residents feel confident solving problems on their own, organizers are supposed to move on to
the next pair of focus beats, all the while offering support to other beats in their district. The
problem was that few organizers we interviewed had work experiences that matched this
idealized model. Organizers discovered that the amount of work needed to organize—even a few
blocks in a neglected neighborhood can be exhausting—was much more difficult, in fact, than
most of them realized when they took the job. Since worse off areas needed more attention, it
was difficult to provide even just two focus beats with all the attention they needed because the
job was “bigger than one person.” Organizers working in better off neighborhoods also
acknowledged that theirs was hard work. Although they didn’t have to focus intensively on one
or two difficult beats, they were often asked to organize six and seven beats simultaneously, and
sometimes even an entire district all at once. One community activist commented on what he
perceived to be the lack of progress in CAPS effectiveness in his district by noting: “[The
organizer] is a great guy and a great organizer. But there is only one of him and he has to
organize this entire district. I’m not being critical of him; he always helps whenever he can.
There is only so much he can do and we’ve got a lot that needs to be done here. I think the CAPS [administration] should hire more organizers.” Many organizers, including experienced ones, felt that their work assignments were too demanding to allow them to do the best possible organizing in their areas. One of the organizers described the round-the-clock nature of the work: “It is a 24-7 job. I always wear a pager. I’ve been called very late, many times, even at 2:00 AM because something happened in my beat. You just never know when something is going to happen. This is not a nine-to-five job; I work around the clock. You know what I mean? This is a very demanding job.”

Another city organizer complained that the CAPS community organizer job description was inaccurate. “I don’t know whose job that is, but it certainly isn’t mine. I do a lot more than what is in that job description; I have to in order to make CAPS work for residents in this community.” A staffer also confided her disappointment when asked to take on the organizing duties of a colleague: “I’m already working far beyond the duties described in my job description and now they [CAPS management] expect me to work even more hours in other beats and without any compensation?!” Organizers described their extensive weekend and evening work hours, the miles of pavement they walk through dangerous neighborhoods on evangelical missions, the scores of heavy boxes of CAPS literature they carry around, endless hours of phone conversations and, of course, the time they spend on paperwork. None of the organizers we interviewed felt that they could single-handedly organize both the focus beats and provide adequate attention to the rest of the beats in their district. Some likened their work to triage medical care. Emergencies come up in certain beats and they need immediate care. One organizer noted that while he felt he could handle one or two beats, there were often other problems happening elsewhere in the district that needed his help. “Even though I may have organized in an area and got some block clubs together, they still need help with some problems. You can’t organize there and just forget about them.”

Paperwork

Most organizers interviewed felt burdened by the volume of paperwork they confronted on the job. In this they mirrored the complaints of police officers involved in Chicago’s community policing program, and probably the views of most who consider themselves “do-ers” rather than “paper-pushers.” At their monthly staff meetings they groaned whenever a new form, report or deadline was announced. Organizers had to complete a “Daily Individual Employment Field Report”\(^{12}\) and a “CAPS Community Organizer Monthly Report.”\(^{13}\) One complained that it

\(^{12}\)The Daily Individual Employment Field Report requires that organizers document who they met with, including name, agency, phone number, address, time and purpose of visit.

\(^{13}\)The CAPS Monthly Report is a lengthy document that requires organizers to: summarize their top four major projects; measure and comment on monthly beat meeting attendance for focus beats; write about their participation in district advisory committee subcommittees; list any steps taken towards building community organization (such as block
was an extraordinary amount of work all for the sake of accountability. “It takes a long time to fill out this paperwork, and we have to do it everyday. We have to account for every minute of our work period.” Some organizers were offended and felt they were being treated like children when they discovered that supervisors had phoned contacts on their reports in order to “check up on them.” This created a feeling of distrust and resentment on the part of some organizers. Implementation Office managers acknowledged that the daily and monthly reports were devices useful for monitoring organizer activity, but principally in regards to meeting goals. At a staff meeting a manager announced, “You should find these reports useful because they help you structure your time so that you can take clear steps towards your strategic goals for the year. They also give us an opportunity to see how you are progressing and what strategies you are using.” Management also lamented that their organizers’ report narratives were too often vague and insubstantial, while organizers complained that they were not taught how to properly complete all the requisite paperwork. “They didn’t give us any examples of (acceptable) completed reports. I asked for it, but I never got it.”

**Turnover**

Both the city staff and the partner agencies have experienced a fair amount of personnel turnover. During the last months of the evaluation community organizers for two of the study beats left their positions. One took a new job in another state and another was fired. There are many reasons for turnover: job dissatisfaction, poor performance, contractual problems and internal conflicts. Turnover can disrupt and delay organizing; without a consistent committed individual working to push things forward, the process stalls. Because CAPS only moves as fast and as well as the people behind it, staff turnover can profoundly affect the course of organizing efforts. Turnover almost inevitably necessitates new training, orientation and rebuilding, and it can be a trying setback in communities that come to rely upon particular organizers, activists, police, facilitators and other key players in the CAPS process.

**Aldermen**

One organizer appears to have been a casualty of a political dispute. In his view, an alderman felt politically threatened by a resident pursuing economic development in his ward. A city-hired organizer at first cooperated with the new venture, and was then attacked by the alderman and told to “back off.” The alderman threatened, “You work for the city, don’t you?” Later the organizer was fired, perhaps as a result of political pressure. More generally, organizers were wary of getting caught in the crossfire between aldermen and other powerful or emergent political groups in their districts.
Conflicting Agendas

Because CAPS involves a great deal of resident involvement, it has become apparent in beats throughout the city that there can be differences among residents over resource allocation, leadership and problem prioritization within the framework of community policing. We observed conflict between police and residents, city organizers and partner agency organizers, and community organizations and police. Irate citizens protested against what they felt were ineffective and dismissive police in one neighborhood and, in another, a city organizer claimed that a community group had subverted the CAPS process by using it to advance gentrification in their area, pushing out minorities who were not represented at beat meetings.

Gentrification was a salient issue in one of the beats selected for intensive study. There could be found groups of dissatisfied residents who felt that the CAPS organizer for the area was integral to the conflict that ensued. By most measures the area had hit rock bottom. However, a local nonprofit organization also responsible for CAPS organizing began to redevelop part of the beat, building new market-rate housing and renovating old buildings. They hoped to attract moderate income families and new economic activity to the area, to rebuild its class diversity. In this they had the support of the alderman, but some residents were cynical about the organization and the efforts of its organizer. In interviews, residents, activists and two beat facilitators revealed their anger and frustration about the organizer. They felt that CAPS organizing in the area was exclusively serving the interests of the developer. “We rarely saw [the organizer] at beat meetings. I don’t know what ... was doing. Except when the cameras came, then he was there.” Few in this well-informed group knew what the organizer was doing, but believed his efforts focused on areas affecting the redevelopment area. A district advisory committee member expressed her disappointment with the organizer’s lack of follow-through on efforts in other parts of the beat. None of the residents we interviewed believed that the new development would benefit anyone currently living in the area. Two VISTA workers dubbed the development “gentrification” and rhetorically asked “How are $300,000 homes going to help the poor people in [this area]?!”

Going Public vs Going Private

One important question is, “What kinds organizers are more effective—the city-hired organizers, or those working through partner agencies?” Vocal advocates for independent community organizations argue that only partner agencies can act first and foremost in the best interest of the local community. These organizations can be staffed by trained and experienced professionals who are in close touch with issues of local concern and who know how to deal with them. The best community organizations demonstrate a high degree of organizational capacity. These organizations are attractive CAPS partners because they have dedicated constituencies that are willing to work on designated problems in a timely manner. It is not uncommon, for example, for an agency to get 50 people together at the last minute to a march on
a given issue. Some of the city’s partner agencies also have special expertise in specific areas (community redevelopment, youth, elderly, schools) and relationships with civic associations. Strong community organizations do not have to expend unnecessary energy to attract a volunteer base to a fledgling enterprise. Supporters of funding existing organizations also raise the issue of trust. They argue that local community organizations are more likely to work for the good of the community, even if it involves challenging the status quo.

We have seen partner agencies enjoy great CAPS successes through community action: they have rid neighborhoods of slum lords and buildings of criminal tenants; they shut down problem liquor stores; they encouraged owners of problem businesses to comply with community demands and the law; they brought gang members to justice in court; and they even brought a recalcitrant police district to the bargaining table to acknowledge community demands. But the problem, especially for the partner agencies it seems, is maintaining focus on amassing social capital that contributes to the CAPS process. We have also heard complaints of maverick partner organizers who act on behalf of self-serving organizations whose community interests do not extend beyond redevelopment plots against incumbent residents.

While these organizations might bring new jobs and economic growth to an area, they do not, critics complain, serve the CAPS process. They may have experience at economic redevelopment or housing development, but lack expertise in crime prevention. Another concern is supplantation — the risk that funds will be informally reallocated from CAPS toward non-CAPS activities. Successful community organizations inevitably develop unique areas of expertise, methodologies and philosophies. They also develop their own opinions on what constitutes effective and ineffective ways of using resources. They might, for example, believe that job training and assistance programs are more beneficial to the community than a crime-prevention project. They may be tempted to divert resources to support these good works, rather than change their focus in return for a contract. Another criticism of independent community organizations is that they do not always represent the views of the entire community. Some organizations in Chicago have already been criticized for implementing non-CAPS agendas under the guise of cooperating with the program. Can organizations and organizers with different and even conflicting versions of community policing both be allowed to call what they do CAPS and get funding for it? Because community organizations in areas of low collective efficacy are often at odds with the police and government institutions, this also raises the question of whether, as a political matter, government should be expected to fund its critics. Is a contractual arrangement between agencies and the city government an appropriate response to pressure from community organizations to fund their versions of neighborhood empowerment?

Questions related to funding complicate matters given that partner agencies have different arrangements with the city. Some agencies receive funding through LISC, some are paid through the city’s corporate budget and others find other funding sources. It appears that the city’s control over organizing strategies diminishes the further removed the agency is from direct funding. That is, organizers who work through partner agencies funded by LISC or non-city funds have more liberty to implement strategies in accordance with the philosophy, resources, goals and organizing styles of the agencies employing them.
Supporters of city-hired organizers cite the consistency and accountability of Implementation Office organizing strategies and policies as principal strengths of the program. City-hired organizers receive the same training, meet regularly and are monitored closely by area coordinators and management. They work on specific agendas mandated by the Implementation Office and coordinated with the Chicago Police Department. This regular coordination, supporters argue, facilitates the development of focused and efficient CAPS strategies that are less likely to diverge towards interests. Because these organizers often work from formal plans that are coordinated with police and community members, there is an inherent degree of accountability as the role of the organizer is readily available information to all CAPS participants in the community. Area coordinators are never far from the organizers and this limits any tendency to stray from central office directives.

Critics contend that city-hired organizers are shackled to serve the policies of the city, and cannot always represent the interests of the community when residents are, for example, at odds with police over brutality complaints. Several veteran organizers from the Implementation Office have reported frustration with Implementation Office initiatives that they have found frivolous or philosophically objectionable. They felt that they know how to most effectively use their time since they work directly in the community and can assess its needs, despite contrary instruction from management.

Case Studies: Four African-American Beats

In order to examine in detail the problems facing the mobilization project communities and the strategies adopted by organizers, four beats were selected for intensive study. The general location of the beats is illustrated in Figure 3.

Resurrection. This African-American beat is struggling to recuperate from decades of losses in housing stock, depopulation and problems with gangs, drugs, alcoholism and a poor local economy. There are many vacant lots, for once-elegant greystone and brick structures were abandoned in large numbers and then demolished, leaving behind only empty plots of land. This beat is poor; 1998 estimates of the median family income there placed it among the poorest 40 percent of Chicago’s beats. Thirty-one percent of households had an annual income under $15,000. However, there are signs of convalescence. A local development initiative has brought a new bank to the area, the first in over forty years, and new market-rate housing is being built in one section of the beat.

Exodus. It is hard to believe now, but Exodus was once the heart of a thriving commercial center, the largest in the city outside of downtown. Nowadays street gamblers toss coins on cracked sidewalks covered with broken glass and litter. Store fronts are boarded and empty lots mark the spots where businesses once stood. The few businesses remaining are dimly lit liquor stores, laundromats, and a cellular communications store selling beepers and telephones. A currency exchange serves as a makeshift bank for nearby residents. Most of the beat is residential and houses are a mix of brick and wood frame structures. Building upkeep
ranges from abandoned to excellent; most buildings fall somewhere in the middle, leaning toward “needs repair.” Though there were a few active block clubs and dozens of churches, we found no strong community organizations addressing crime and safety issues. Long-time residents claimed that the churches were, by and large, civically inactive. An old-time resident of Exodus joked, “You’d think with all the churches we’ve got around here we wouldn’t have any crime problems at all.” Indeed there were problems. Police reports and ride-alongs revealed pervasive domestic violence and drug sales. Unsupervised groups of children ran through alleys and streets in search of entertainment in the hot summer months, sometimes getting into fights, drawing police attention. Like Resurrection, Exodus was poor; 1998 estimates indicated that 32 percent of its households had an annual income under $15,000.

Figure 3
Location of the Study Beats

**Faith.** Like Resurrection and Exodus, Faith is poor. Its area of the city ranked fifteenth among the nation’s poorest neighborhoods in a 1995 estimate. In this area of the city an estimated 75 percent of working-age people are unemployed and over 50 percent of residents receive some form of public assistance. It is estimated that in 1998 more than 25 percent of households had an annual income under $15,000, while median family income was at $20,437. Faith's commercial strip is a painful reminder of a failed local economy and its replacement by a thriving drug market. Vacant lots and buildings provide resting spots to public drinkers while bold drug dealers loiter on corners throughout the beat, occasionally yelling out “rock” and “blow” to cars passing by. Of the four program areas we studied, only Resurrection’s community area surpassed Faith’s in the number of vacant lots; there are about 1,000 in and around Faith. Most buildings are brick and stone and their upkeep ranges from abandoned to exceptional. This beat stands out from the other program beats in that it has a number of buildings which are architectural gems. One block rich with these buildings is meticulously maintained and awesome to behold, and proud homeowners live on this and nearby blocks. The streets with active block clubs (mostly towards the southeastern portion of the beat) tend to be quieter and cleaner. The beat worsens on its north end, where there are fewer block clubs, more gangs, dope dealers and reports of violence. At the center of the beat stands a church which, for many people, is the heart of community life.

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14Crack and cocaine.
**Hometown.** The quietest and most residential of the four beats we studied, Hometown is home to working families. Median family income was estimated at $45,057, putting Hometown in the top third of city beats. Only 11 percent of households there had an income under $15,000. Most houses are single family homes built in the 1940s and ‘50s with garages and well-kept yards. Local residents appear to be fond of block clubs as block club signs are posted on many corners. There are other indications of unity: entire blocks have identical lampposts in yards and “We Call Police” signs hanging in windows. The few vacant houses found in Hometown are securely boarded, unlike the open, graffiti-covered, menacing structures in the other beats. Occasionally one sees a loiterer or two, possibly drug dealers, waiting on corners in seldom patrolled, out-of-the-way parts of the beat. Visitors can feel safe in Hometown. The streets are quiet and empty, even in the middle of summer. Although Hometown had some problems, overall it was in much better shape than the other three beats. There were active block clubs and a good number of smart, organized and vigilant residents who had the commitment and resources to keep their beat safe and secure. Like the other beats, Hometown residents had some battles to fight, but these battles looked winnable.

**Their Common History: Disinvestment and Depopulation**

Lee Herbert Salisbury and Mary Elizabeth Vroman Gibson wrote a play, “Woodlawn: A Backward Glance-A Forward Look,” for the Woodlawn Centennial, 1859-1959. Though the play is somewhat heavy-handed, it is worth looking at because it is historical documentation intimating many of the fears–loss of property value, stereotypes about blacks, decline of housing quality and neighborhood safety–that concerned white Chicago communities proximate to what they felt were encroaching black communities.

NARRATOR: Instead of the small cracker-barrel stores of those early years, we see large department stores and busy modern shops lining the main thoroughfares. Men go to work in sleek limousines and orderly busses; while women, leaving well-kept homes and apartment buildings, sun their babies in grassy shaded parks. (Off stage, muted honks of horns and murmur of populace accompany this speech.) Woodlawn has arrived as a community, it feels. Woodlawn is said to be the garden spot of Chicago. And Woodlawn is content. (A pause here in movement on stage.) Content? Not quite. There is a whisper beginning to be heard in Woodlawn. Woodlawn is uneasy. People are saying--

WHITE GROUP: (Moving together in groups and whispering in growing crescendo) Have you heard? Have you heard? Have you heard?

NARRATOR: (Clearly after a pause) Heard what? (All turn to side where voice came from and freeze for a second’s silence)

1st WHITE: (Slowly and hesitantly) They say that some people. . .

2nd WHITE: Yes?

1st WHITE: They say that . . . . . . . . . (Again hesitates)

ALL: Well?

1st WHITE: (Very quickly) That Negroes are beginning to move into Woodlawn!

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15Special Collections, Harold Washington Chicago Public Library.
Many of Chicago’s neighborhoods have gone through dramatic demographic changes over the years. Immigration trends, local economic forces, political activity and ethnic migrations can change a community. A hustling, bustling area with a robust local economy might wither away to a broken shell of its former self 15 years later. Or vice versa—an impoverished area might suddenly see a new wave of development, bringing the area new residents, commerce and political activity. Extensive demographic change can bring a wide variety of problems, as it did to three of the four program areas we examined.

In the early part of the 20th Century African-Americans migrated to Chicago from the South in search of better economic opportunities. During the 1920s more than 120,000 African-Americans came to Chicago and between 1930 and 1940 came another 43,000. As European immigrant populations matured and prospered, they relocated to newer neighborhoods on the borders of the city and suburbs, thus freeing up more housing for the African-American population which was in dire need of more affordable housing. For example, nearly 70,000 African-Americans moved into the area around Faith between 1940 and 1960. Today black congregations worship in former synagogues and black families live in the buildings that were once populated by the departed Jewish population. None of the study areas remained integrated; once the white exodus began, it continued until it was virtually complete. In many ways, these beats are still dealing with the consequences of this profound demographic shift.

Three of the four program beats we examined—Resurrection, Faith and Exodus—were hit hard by disinvestment (closure of local businesses and manufacturing firms), depopulation and significant losses in housing stock. An estimated 120,000 jobs were lost between 1960 and 1970 when International Harvester, Sears and Western Electric left near-by Faith. The scars of that disinvestment were the vacant lots, abandoned properties, closed businesses and scores of loiterers on corners and in front of liquor stores. The complete history of these areas is surely a complex one, but it would have to include some mention of the fact that unlike the European immigrant populations, the growing black communities could not assimilate so easily into developing mainstream American culture. In addition to the obstacles facing other groups—the acquisition of employable skills and the pressures of adapting to urban life—blacks had to face the problem of discrimination.

According to longtime residents (40 years or more), these areas once had thriving commercial centers where local residents could purchase just about any good or service they needed. Bakeries, butchers, hardware stores, produce markets, cleaners, banks, clothing stores, doctors and dentists, taverns and live music and entertainment were all available, usually within walking distance. Residents claimed that the quality of life in their neighborhoods was superior in the 1950s, but then began a steady decline starting in the early ‘60s. A long-time resident of Faith reminisced about life in the area when she first moved there in the late 1940s.
When I moved in, this block was nearly all white. There were two other black families on this block. [The nearby commercial street] used to have all kinds of stores—there was a bakery, a butcher, a produce store, clothing stores . . . anything you needed you could find there. I used to buy a cake every Saturday from the bakery. Now all you can buy is liquor and drugs. I wish there were more white folks living here; it was a better neighborhood then.

Though exaggerated—on the area’s commercial strip there are other small shops, including a dry cleaner, a few fast food restaurants, a barber, a livery service—her point was made: liquor stores outnumber other kinds of businesses and the ubiquitous loiterers discourage cautious shoppers. These beats were by and large economically isolated and racially homogenous.

**Neighborhood Problems**

Crippled local economies, high unemployment, unreliable city services, an undereducated population and the deterioration of housing provided conditions ripe for a wide variety of chronic crime and disorder problems in the study beats. Through surveys, field observation and interviews with police, residents, business owners and CAPS activists, we identified the problems that characterized each of the four program areas and observed how CAPS organizers responded to them. The four program areas shared, to varying degrees, a number of problems that we divided into four broad categories—gangs, drugs, physical decay and social disorder. In the field, the most serious crime problems reported were associated with gangs and the illegal drug trade in the three poorest beats: Resurrection, Faith and Exodus. Drug dealing in Hometown was conducted on a much smaller scale and was less obvious—not the hustling street business that was visible in the other three beats. Overall, the three poorest beats had the worst problems, the busiest police, and the least community organization.

**Gangs and Drugs.** Towards the end of the summer in 1999, a beat meeting in Resurrection was filled to “standing room only” in the wake of shootings which had left a seventeen year old and an eight year old dead in a privately owned low-income housing complex. Irate community members and residents of the development came to express their frustration with the private security service at the housing complex and with the response by Chicago police to the shooting. Residents could not understand why, they claimed, after calling police and repeatedly giving the security guards very specific information about gang loitering and drug dealing at the housing complex, no one took any action. Residents argued that the tragedy was truly preventable, if only police and security guards had taken action. One by one, angry residents stood up to demand an end to gang violence and drug dealing. When one woman began to recount the number of times she called and the missed opportunities of police and security officers, the district’s commander interrupted to say “This beat meeting is not the place for discussion of [this housing complex]. Beat meetings are for community issues.” He announced a separate meeting with a representative of the housing complex. The woman,
incredulous that the discussion was cut off so abruptly, turned to her neighbor to say “Why isn’t this a community issue?! This [drug dealing and violence] happens throughout [the area]!” In this and other areas, the seeming inability of police to suppress street drug dealing that residents consider to be open, blatant and well-known to all is a major source of public frustration.

Residents and police both identified gangs as a serious problem in all but one of the program areas we looked at; the exception was Hometown. In the 1998 survey, fully two-thirds of those interviewed in Faith rated street drug sales a big problem in their neighborhood, followed by Exodus at 64 percent and Resurrection at 60 percent. By contrast, the city-wide figure for African-Americans that year was 52 percent, and in Hometown the comparable figure was 34 percent. Gangs are associated with drug sales, illegal arms sales and turf wars—activities that can bring crippling violence and fear to communities. In the program areas, all of the gangs were African-American and most of the gang violence was over control of drug market areas. Officers said that marijuana, cocaine, and crack cocaine markets have been fairly stable over the last ten years, but recently they have seen a curious resurgence in heroin sales. During ride-alongs, officers pointed out telltale signs of drug trafficking. Loitering, and slow movement away from police cars, and the shouting of “five-O” was indicative, according to the officers, of drug dealing. Indeed over the course of several months of observing events in the beats, we witnessed scores of men and teens standing on street corners, in all three of the poor beats. Occasionally we actually witnessed drug deals in broad daylight. The buyer (driving) would pull over at a corner and someone would come to his car. The dealer and driver would say a few words and during a handshake they would exchange drugs for money. The buyer would drive off and the seller would either return to loitering or move on. In the absence of a police officer, they would occasionally yell “Rock” or “Blow” at passing cars. To a person who sees few options in finding legitimate work, street drug sales represent an attractive and potentially lucrative opportunity for those willing to take substantial risks to their personal freedom and health.

Drug dealing is, after all, a dangerous business in which sellers vie for turf and customers in what sometimes becomes lethal competition. Sellers who encroach on another’s turf often provoke semi-automatic gunfire, which puts not only themselves at risk, but everyone in the neighborhood. Too many residents have told stories of stray bullets flying into their living rooms, forcing them to sleep on the floor and away from any windows. Too often also have there been stories of residents losing family members to drug related gang violence. While on tour with him in Faith, the organizer stopped at an auto repair shop to point out a black cross that had been painted on the facade in memory of a young man whose life had been taken by gang violence.

Three of the program beats have seen the establishment of a regular and dangerous drug culture which police and residents seem overwhelmed and ill-equipped to deal with. In Resurrection the drug dealing took place mostly in the west half of the beat. Western Resurrection was noisier, uglier and more dangerous than the east end of the beat. “Like night
and day” said one local informant. Bands of youths loiter underneath railway tracks. Just west of the tracks stood a public housing project which police and residents claimed was the home and headquarters for most local drug dealers. ICAM reports, beat logs and interviews with police and residents identified western Resurrection as having the bulk of the beat’s drug and violence problems.

In Faith the drug dealing was everywhere, all along the major shopping arterial, in front of liquor stores, in the front yards of houses and apartment buildings on side streets and on many street corners. Beat meetings in Faith were very similar to those in Resurrection. The number one problems are gangs and drug sales, and residents were frustrated. Again, residents claimed they knew who the drug dealers are, and that they had called police repeatedly with information about specific dealers without avail. One resident complained that he had been calling for several years with information about a dealer living down the street and still there were no arrests made.

At a beat meeting in Exodus, police told residents that they were looking for a dangerous and prominent drug dealer who was wanted for questioning in a murder case. One of the residents, a young man, said that he had seen this particular drug dealer on the street only a few days ago. Police asked for a description and the resident described him and added “I know this guy; I went to high school with him.” After the meeting an officer dismissed the young man’s testimony, saying he couldn’t possibly know what he was talking about because if the dealer was in Chicago, the narcotics officers, who were “in the know,” would have nabbed him already. We never learned if the beat officers passed on the information, but their readiness to discount it confirmed the community’s notion that some police dismiss any information which suggests that they know less than civilians. It is impossible to say how many officers share this attitude, but it is clearly antithetical to the notion of police and community collaboration.

Drug dealing in Hometown was mostly confined to the back streets, cul-de-sacs, and out of the way parks that were usually left unpatrolled by police officers. Separate tours of the beat with police, the community organizer and the beat facilitator confirmed the accusation that police do not patrol the entire beat, particularly where the drug dealing occurs. Hometown is geographically the largest and most irregularly shaped beat of the four program areas we studied in detail. In many places, the streets do not lie on a grid; they meander, run alongside railroad tracks, end in cul-de-sacs and follow old horse trails. In other areas, the streets are bordered by an expressway. The beat is almost completely residential, and because most of the housing is comprised of detached single family homes, it is extremely quiet in comparison to the other three program areas. It is in these quiet, out-of-the-way places that the drug dealing occurs. In these secluded “nooks and crannies” where police do not patrol, drug dealers are relatively free to sell their goods. While touring with the area organizer and a beat facilitator we saw men loitering on street corners, but there were few—perhaps three or four—in comparison with the 20-30 that we would see in the other beats in the same time-span. Though the drug dealing was less overt and frequent in Hometown, that did not mean that residents took it any less seriously. At the beat
meetings residents were always pleased to hear about drug arrests, most of which took place in private drug houses, thanks to information supplied by residents. They saw drug sales as a threat to community stability, and being a responsible group, these residents seemed keen on maintaining and improving that stability. There was rarely any violence over drug sales in Hometown, suggesting that gang involvement or turf issues were not urgent concerns.

**Physical Decay.** Physical decay permeated all of the program areas. In the survey of 19 organizing beats conducted in 1998, one-quarter of those interviewed rated “vacant lots filled with trash and junk” a big problem in their neighborhood, 20 percent gave top ratings to graffiti problems, and 14 percent to abandoned buildings. Twelve percent were concerned about abandoned cars in their neighborhood. In the four study beats physical decay problems were caused by a number of problems: poverty, lack of city services, neglect by absentee landlords, lack of understanding in home ownership, riots, disinvestment, arson, natural accidents and overcrowding.

Salisbury and Gibson’s play also featured a caricature of the avaricious absentee landlord. The authors clearly thought he played a role in the decline of housing quality in Woodlawn.

6th NEGRO: Please Sir, do you have a place for me?
7th NEGRO: And me?
8th NEGRO: And me?
OTHER NEGROES: (Alternately) And me? And me? (Landlord walks around surveying the entire group. He produces pencil and note pad and begins to make notes.)

(white) LANDLORD: I needs must make notation, of this delicate situation – Perhaps with possibilities. Oh, definite possibilities! Not since the conflagration Has there been a situation with such enormous possibilities! (Here he rubs hands together gleefully.) What! So many? Well, let’s see. I can make six dwellings out of three. That’s pretty fair, I’d say, Hey? How much can you pay?

As the rich and middle-class departed the south and west sides of the city, their mansions, elegant row houses and apartments became the new homes of the black community. Houses and apartments were divided and subdivided. Many crowded in where a few previously had lived. While this provided more living space it was disastrous for the quality of Chicago’s housing. The overextension of Resurrection’s housing stock combined with a decrease in city services, high unemployment, widespread neglect and arson fires led to the inevitable deterioration of the area’s buildings. Absentee landlords and struggling owners who were either uninterested in or too poor to maintain their buildings, let their properties fall to pieces. Though these structures were made of brick and stone, the ravages of time, weather and decades of neglect left many buildings with crumbling mortar, peeled paint, rotted wood, broken windows and leaky roofs. Eventually, many of Resurrection’s once sturdy and beautiful buildings had to be razed because they were no longer habitable and no one wanted to make the necessary
investment to renovate the structures. Resurrection lost a significant portion of its housing stock and population and the resulting vacant lots, sometimes taking up entire and consecutive city blocks, give this beat a “prairie-like” feel, its expansive views unobscured by buildings or trees. The main business thoroughfare was left with a handful of shops—diners, five and dime stores, liquor stores, a barbershop, many empty storefronts, and even more vacant lots where stores used to be. A local resident and beat facilitator in Resurrection observed that the business strip was much different when he first opened his dry cleaning business there in the early 1950s.

First of all there were stores all up and down this street. Everywhere you see vacant land, there used to be a business there. These were family-owned businesses. Believe it or not, this diner we are in used to be an elegant supper club. There was a beautiful wood bar across from where we are sitting and there was a stage just to the left of it and there was a harp player who would come and play every week. Can you imagine that, here?! It was just beautiful.

Indeed it was difficult to imagine the thriving commercial center he described. Few businesses remain, and those that do are now owned mostly by Arab businessmen who work behind iron gratings and thick bulletproof plastic.

Faith was most similar to Resurrection in its architecture and the quality of its housing stock. Though none of the other program areas had the expanse of vacant lots found in Resurrection, there were plenty of vacant plots in Faith, many of them resembling what prehistoric Illinois must have looked like: overgrown trees, grass and weeds. Like Resurrection, Faith’s once thriving commercial strip was decimated by the collapse of its local economy following the period of depopulation and disinvestment. Faith’s architecture is a mixture of brick, stone and frame structures, most of them close to one hundred years old. Though there were streets that looked well kept and safe, there were also blocks and scattered buildings in dire need of repair and maintenance.

Many of the vacant lots in Faith and Resurrection were used as makeshift parking lots for cars, trucks and abandoned vehicles. These lots were not only ugly, but they posed a health hazard as tall weeds, accumulating trash and abandoned vehicles inevitably become nesting spots for rats. The overgrown weeds made great places to hide stashes of drugs and weapons which drug dealers no longer wanted to keep on their persons. Vacant lots also attract illegal dumpers, and provide places for public drinking. Vacant lots pose serious risks to communities and they require maintenance and supervision to prevent them from becoming crime locations. In the 1998 survey, fully 47 percent of those interviewed in Faith rated vacant lots filled with trash and junk a big problem in their area, followed by Resurrection at 42 percent and Exodus at 40 percent. By contrast, the comparable city-wide figure for African-Americans that year was only 20 percent.
In special situations, residents could turn neglected vacant lots into a beautiful flower or vegetable garden. A patrol officer pointed out such a garden in Faith to our field observer during a ride-along. Residents got together and, with donations from local businesses and block clubs, converted a vacant lot into a lovely garden with flowers, a brick walking path, a gazebo, wood benches and delicate saplings. While taking photos and admiring the garden, the officer and our field observer were approached by a man who exclaimed “Isn’t it beautiful?” They agreed, but asked about the tall fence and padlock on the gate. “Is it always locked?” Looking somewhat startled by the question (as if it had not occurred to him that someone might actually want to go into the garden), he confessed that he had never actually been inside nor had he seen anyone else in it. In Exodus, a group of school children and a few adults were working on a hot midsummer day to convert a large vacant lot into a public garden. One of the counselors explained that the garden project was helping in a number of different ways all at once. “We’re taking this lot, which is really nothing more than trash and weeds, and turning it into a vegetable garden on the west end and a walking flower garden on the east end. We got a grant to help pay for the cost of the soil and flowers, and to give the students some money for their work. We’re sending out a message that our urban land is a valuable resource and that we care about the way our neighborhood looks and what our kids do with their time during the summer.” Unlike the garden in Faith however, there were no plans to limit access to this garden.

Exodus’s structures seemed to be in somewhat better condition than those in Resurrection or Faith, although not by much. Buildings there were a mixture of brick and wood-frame construction, and nearly all of them very old. Like Faith and Resurrection, there were blocks which were well kept. Usually these blocks had identical lampposts in the yards and prominent block club signs at the corners indicating intolerance of certain behaviors—littering, loud music, car washing, loitering, drug sales, or street games. Unfortunately the blocks lacking such unity outnumbered those with it and these were the blocks where the weeds grew taller, the car radios were louder, the houses were less attractive, and more people were on the street.

Vacant buildings were a problem in all four beats, but more so in the three poorest beats. While more than one-third of those interviewed in Exodus and Faith rated abandoned buildings a big problem in their area, the comparable figure for Hometown was only 8 percent. Hometown had vacant buildings, but they were fewer and none were in as poor condition as those found in the other three beats. Abandoned properties in Hometown were more likely to be boarded up as required, while many buildings in the other beats lay completely open to public access and the elements. Quite a few of the buildings, especially those in Resurrection and Faith, were “tagged” (marked with graffiti) in the vestibules and sometimes on the front doors and facades, indicating gang activity. Murderous sexual assault has been a prominent problem in the general area of Exodus, and abandoned buildings provided the venue for a number of those incidents. Though residents disliked the abandoned buildings, few of them knew any details about what the current status of a particular property was—i.e., was it scheduled for demolition or rehabilitation, who owned it, were there any crimes committed on the property, etc. If left abandoned long enough,
scavengers would go through buildings and pick them clean of anything of value—stained glass, light fixtures, wood molding, and bathroom fixtures. Hometown’s beat facilitator noted that an abandoned building had been stripped of its aluminum siding by scavengers who would exchange the aluminum for money.

Like Resurrection and Faith, Exodus’s commercial strip was burned out, razed and forgotten. Boarded windows, vacant lots, and cracked sidewalks with broken glass, litter and weeds were signs of yet another collapsed commercial center. What was peculiar about Exodus was the great number of churches around its perimeter. Where in another neighborhood, one would expect to find grocery stores, barbershops, fast food restaurants and laundromats, Exodus’s commercial strip was instead lined with storefront churches. There were 36 churches around the perimeter of the beat alone, but it was unclear how many of these churches were actually operational. In between the churches, there was usually an empty lot, much like the layout in Resurrection and Faith.

One of the worst things that could happen to an abandoned property is to become a crack house.

*While on a police ride-along in Resurrection, I had an opportunity to see the inside of a crack house in the company of two beat officers. The building was pointed out to us by one of the regular drinkers in the area, who reported that drug dealers and users had been going in and out of the building over the past several weeks. The officers checked it out, and then invited me in for a look around.*

Taking two steps in, the officers and I were assaulted by the fetid odor of urine, rotting plaster, cigarette smoke and beer spilled into a heavily soiled carpet. The building had no windows other than those facing the street, so it took a few moments for the eyes to adjust to the darkness. Liquor bottles, beer cans, cigarette butts, lighters, matchbooks, half-eaten food and hundreds of tiny plastic bags covered the floor. Extensive water damage left chunks of plaster dangling precariously from the ceiling. In one corner near the window on the second floor, someone created a makeshift table by placing a broken mirror atop a wood frame. One officer hypothesized that the mirror made a good place to “cut junk” and that the dusty film on top of the mirror was residue from drug usage. The tiny ziplock bags all over were used for packaging drugs. The officers said that marijuana and crack cocaine were the most common drugs found, but for the last few years they had seen a resurgence in heroin use. Among the debris, one of the most disturbing discoveries was a can of baby formula and a diaper. The building’s interior was a testament to the depravity of its visitors. I couldn’t help but wonder aloud “What person would willfully choose to spend time in here?” One of the officers suggested that drug addiction presents a difficult challenge to the notion of free will.
**Social Disorder.** Social disorder is a problem category that includes street gambling, public drinking, panhandling, loitering, fighting, truancy, school disruption, prostitution, vagrancy, street side auto repairs, the playing of loud music and other activities that disturb residents yet often pose difficulties in enforcement for police bent on responding to their concerns. The 1998 survey of 19 project beats asked about some of problems, and they were among residents’ biggest concerns. Loitering – defined in the survey as “groups of people hanging out on corners” – was rated a big problem by 38 percent of residents, the second most highly ranked concern. Public drinking was not far behind at 28 percent, and it stood fourth on the overall list. Vandalism to cars was rated a big problem by 18 percent of those interviewed, but among Latinos it was the fifth most highly rated problem at 29 percent.

All of these disorders could easily be found in all of the study beats, with the exception of Hometown, which was the quietest of the four program areas. Social disorder is essentially about behaviors and conditions that in some way constitute disorder in public space. It was unsurprising to learn that most of the social disorder problems happened most often in places where there was exceptional leniency towards disruptive behaviors and conditions.

**Public Drinking.** One of the most common social disorder problems in the three troubled beats was public drinking and the related problem of alcoholism. In the 1998 survey, 43 percent of those interviewed in Faith rated public drinking a big problem, followed by 37 percent in Resurrection and 33 percent in Exodus. The comparable city-wide figure for African-American was 27 percent, above that for Hometown (19 percent). Police and residents in Faith, Resurrection and Exodus claim that public drinking is an everyday pastime for the groups of people who congregate near liquor stores, usually in vacant lots. In Resurrection and Faith, men and women sat on milk crates and curbs in the alleys, empty lots and on street corners, never straying far from the package liquor stores. There they would sit, passing around bottles wrapped in brown paper, surrounded by overgrown weeds, empty snack food bags, broken glass and debris. When the police asked them to move, they never went far, shuffling around the corner or to the other side of the street, just enough to give the illusion of movement. Within minutes, however, the group would recongregate. In Resurrection beat officers did not come down hard on the drinkers. “I know them; they’re out here everyday.” (Several of the drinkers did in fact greet him by name.) “Mostly they are harmless, but they do litter, they urinate in public and they set a bad example for kids. Adults drinking on the street all day do not make positive role models.” In Faith a beat officer had less patience with the drinkers. Once, after several unsuccessful attempts to clear away a group of recalcitrant drinkers with the loudspeaker, he drove his squad car onto the sidewalk to disperse them. He claimed that some of the loiterers were not only drinkers but drug dealers. A liquor store owner in the area confirmed this, but said he said he had learned not to call police because he had been threatened in the past. “Once I did call police because they were dealing in front of my store. They broke my car windows and threatened me. I try to be polite and ask these people to move on, but they disrespect me, call me names and threaten me. I don’t think it should be my job to get involved. It is too dangerous.
That is the police’s job.” A CAPS activist and beat facilitator in Faith responded “Well, did you ever think that maybe you’re in the wrong business? You could open a grocery store or another kind of business. I think you are treated that way because those are the customers your business attracts.” The store owner reluctantly agreed that this was probably true.

Beat officers recognized that the drinkers could at times be useful. Being semi-permanent street fixtures, they saw things and were privy to information that officers were often unaware of. One of the loiterers in Resurrection, a toothless lady who was probably much younger than she looked, approached the squad car after an officer asked out the window her why she was loitering next to the liquor store after being asked to leave moments before. She protested that she wasn’t loitering, but talking to some old friends. She declared that she had recently become a born-again Christian teetotaler. Her slurred speech and exaggerated mannerisms suggested otherwise, but she insisted it was true. She told the officer that he should be more concerned about the drug dealing that had been going on under his nose, rather than bothering people in the lot. She leaned over to whisper that drug dealers had recently been hanging around with the regular drinking crowd, using them for cover from police. They had been frequenting an abandoned building for the purpose of selling and using drugs. She nodded and looked across the street at a two-story brick building—the crack house described earlier in this report. In Exodus, the drinkers were less visible than in Faith or Resurrection. They preferred to drink in secluded alleys and lots, sitting on couches, recliners, van seats and other misplaced furnishings surrounded by overgrown weeds and shady trees. In Exodus, beat officers showed little interest in confronting the drinkers. They explained that when the radio calls are continuous, public drinking is low on their list of priorities. “As long as they’re not harassing anyone and they move when asked, then I don’t give them a hard time.” In Hometown public drinking was not mentioned as a problem.

Loitering. In addition to public drinking, loitering was a common problem in three of the study beats, and less so in Hometown. In the 1998 survey, 53 percent of those interviewed in Faith rated loitering a big problem, followed by 50 percent in Exodus and 49 percent in Resurrection. The comparable city-wide figure for African-American was 43 percent, which was considerably above that for Hometown (31 percent). Police officers and residents associated loitering with a host of problems including gang activity, violence, street gambling, public harassment, drug sales, public drinking and other delinquent behaviors. When asked about his neighborhood’s biggest problem, one survey respondent replied: “Drugs. How the guys stand on the corners, you can’t even walk down the street because they are selling the drugs. They stand in the middle of the block.” Another observed: “The guys are always on the corners saying ‘rock,’ ‘hot’ and ‘weed’.” A respondent who identified gang violence as the biggest problem described it in these words: “Gangs get together in the weekend. They hang out in the streets, they have problems with other gang members and gangs start shooting each other.” Another identified his beat’s biggest problem as: “Teenagers. No respect. There is no curfew, you hear them cursing, hanging on the corners.” Others identified their area’s number one problem as:
“People on the corners in the liquor stores cause fear to other people;” “Guys hanging on the corners all night long;” and “Younger kids hanging out on the corners and on the next block... It has become a party street because the teenagers hang out on the weekends and I have called the police because they were so loud around two in the morning.”

Loitering became a major local political issue when the city council tried (unsuccessfully) to institute an “anti-gang loitering ordinance” which would have given police officers the authority to arrest loiterers known to be gang members who did not move along when asked. The ordinance was ultimately declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but tens of thousands of Chicago residents signed petitions, believing that their neighborhoods would become safer places if such an ordinance were passed. When particular locations become sites of chronic loitering, CAPS organizers suggested that building owners display “No trespassing” and “No Loitering” signs in addition to the “We Call Police” signs. This might encourage police to move loiterers along.

Noise and Neighbors. Residents often complained about noise and loud music coming from subwoofer-equipped cars and “party houses.” In a beat meeting in Faith, a man irritated by late-night noise and partying asked police why his noisy neighbors continue, after several months, to disturb the block without penalty. Police responded that they recently received a call to investigate noise at the address the man mentioned, but when they arrived, it was quiet. Incredulous, the man replied “Well, you all must have come through in a jet because they were making noise all night. I’ve seen animals in a zoo behave better than they do!” Police said that they could not take action against the neighbors unless they heard the noise themselves. One resident in Exodus explained that her block was quiet and peaceful until a family with ten kids, relocated from a public housing project, moved into a house on her street. She complained that the city was saturating the blocks in her neighborhood with “project families,” people who bring down the area when they “bring their bad habits with them.” She was upset about the continuous loud music, the steady parade of vehicles and visitors, and the visible negligence in upkeep of the house and lot, all of which made her suspicious of drug sales.

An observer attended another beat meeting in Exodus at which a young man in his early twenties suggested that the city has recently (and quietly) been relocating public housing tenants to neighborhoods like his without informing the community. Like the other noise-tormented resident mentioned above, this young man also complained that these families make poor neighbors due to the unwelcome noise and (drug) traffic they bring to the neighborhood. Some of the other residents at the beat meeting nodded in agreement, but neither the police nor the aldermanic representative in attendance had any comment. After the meeting, however, a beat officer opined that the young man was “talking a lot of crap,” but did not explain what the young man would gain by fabricating such a story.
**Domestic Violence.** During ride-alongs in Exodus and Resurrection officers were called to check on domestic disturbances. Most often these were instances of men threatening and/or battering women. In Resurrection a beat officer picked up a young woman who had been so badly beaten by her boyfriend that she wore sunglasses to conceal the hideous bruises and cuts he had inflicted upon her. Officers in all four beats reported that domestic disturbances were the most frequent sorts of calls they received. Most often these are arguments between family members that escalate to violence or the threat of violence. They usually involve alcohol or drug use. There were in fact billboard advertisements in the vicinity of Resurrection and Faith featuring similarly brutalized women with messages like “He says he loved me.”

Hometown’s community organizer was aware of the problem and invited our observer to an informational subcommittee meeting on domestic violence. Presenters told a group of residents and police what are the signs of domestic violence, they described its cyclical nature and they explained what resources—legal rights, shelters, agencies and counselors—were available for domestic violence victims. The organizer said she would share the information with others in the course of her organizing.

**Prostitution.** One side of Resurrection is bounded by a well-maintained city park. Prostitutes worked a corner of the park adjacent to Resurrection. A longtime resident of western Resurrection, who owns a building facing the park, observed that “things had gotten significantly worse” in the last eight years. He pointed to the grating over the first floor windows and iron fence posts recently set in concrete. He explained that although he had lived in the building since the early 1950s, it was only during the summer of 1999 that he decided he needed to build a tall fence to protect his property. Otherwise, prostitutes would bring their customers into the vestibule of his building. Although he locked the door, they still managed to force their way into the building until he barricaded it with a 2 x 4. This was a good solution for keeping prostitutes out of his property, but it also meant that tenants would have to enter through the rear of the building. This landlord hoped that his new fence would work where his calls to police had failed to stop the problem.

**CAPS Organizing in Four Beats**

The organizers active in these four areas pursued a number of strategies to mobilize the community around public safety issues. These included:

- **Building Beat Meeting Attendance.** Most organizers spent a great deal of time trying to increase beat meeting attendance. This was a regular part of their job and they used a variety of tactics to get people to come to meetings. They contacted community organizations, canvassed blocks, posted flyers, went to block club and local school council meetings, worked with neighborhood relations offices and went to businesses.
• Organizing Block Clubs. Organizers see the block club as the basic unit of community organization. Organized neighborhoods are often safe neighborhoods, so organizers work hard to establish new block clubs and revive dormant ones. The organizer for Hometown is recognized as a consummate block club organizer. After identifying leaders who commit to a new block club she meets with residents to walk them through the process of starting a block club. She says it takes three meetings of about an hour and a half each to launch a functional block club.

• Turning Out Residents for Neighborhood Assemblies. Organizers make a special effort twice a year to send Chicago residents to the Neighborhood Assembly, a large scale information and networking session for Chicago residents. There, residents can go to workshops, talk with city department representatives and meet others who have an interest in improving the quality of life in Chicago neighborhoods. Organizers devote significant time and energy to supporting the Neighborhood Assemblies.

• Closing Liquor Stores. Chicagoans have a number of tools to deal with problem liquor establishments. The city’s Liquor Control Commission has a great deal of formal authority over licensees, and in addition attempts to broker informal, negotiated solutions to local problems that satisfy the needs of protagonists. Ordinance enforcement can result in fines, closings, suspensions or license revocations of particular establishments, and via referendum residents of a ward can prohibit the sale of alcohol in a precinct or at a particular address—a process known as “voting dry.” Several problem liquor stores were shut down in Resurrection after residents decided that shootings, drug dealing, prostitution and gang problems at one liquor establishment and an abandoned gas station across the street had to stop. They gathered signatures for petitions and the store was closed and the gas station was torn down. In the 1999 survey, 30 percent of the residents of Resurrection and Hometown reported that efforts were underway to deal with problem liquor establishments in their community; the comparable figure for Exodus and Faith was 15 percent.

• Providing Information and Training. Community residents have a wide range of resources available to them to deal with neighborhood problems, but they have to first be made aware of them and how to use them. Organizers in each of the beats presented residents with information on all of the community action tools like the court advocacy program, block club organizing, citizen patrols, parent patrols, safe school zones and the Walking School Bus. Organizers also invited police academy trainers to beats for problem solving training sessions. In the 1999 beat survey, 30 percent of the residents of Faith reported that they had been involved in some form of civilian training about CAPS or about “... how to deal with neighborhood problems and get better city services.” The comparable figure for Hometown was 15 percent, and it was about 10 percent in the other project areas.

• Shutting Down Drug Operations. In Faith, the organizer worked with local residents and police to stop drug dealers from using an apartment building and the corner in front of it for
serving narcotics. After inviting the owner of the problem property to a beat meeting, residents discovered that the owner wanted to get rid of the drug dealers, but did not know how. Once police were made aware of the drug dealing, they suggested that the owner post “No Trespassing” signs which would give them authority to move people from the corner and search them if there was reasonable suspicion. Neighbors agreed to call police whenever there was suspicious activity and some went so far as to stand on the corner themselves when they saw the dealers on the street. Shortly after the beat meeting the police made several arrests, using tips from citizens, and the drug dealers stopped selling at that location.

• Organizing Marches. As noted above, marches are a popular community action tool in African-American neighborhoods. Ministers relish the opportunity to lead and preach while the community seems to love the messages and the unity. Faith’s organizer noted:

> Marches are the key. They bring recognition from all over the community. They can be the solution to the drug problem. I’d like to get one person from every beat to march. There are over 270 beats in the city and some of these people could bring someone. That would be over 300 people marching on a drug house. Can you imagine?...If I could, I’d like to do nothing but organize marches.

The evaluation survey conducted in the early summer of 1999 found that 20 percent of respondents in Faith and Hometown reported that marches were taking place against crime or drugs; the figures were lower in Exodus (15 percent) and Resurrection (less than 10 percent). In Faith, 20 percent also reported that prayer vigils were being conducted there against crime or drugs, and residents of Exodus and Hometown were not far behind.

Near the end of the summer of 1999, residents, children, police, firemen, clergy, CAPS workers, politicians, community activists and media gathered together early one Saturday morning for a prayer march against drugs, violence and gangs in Resurrection. The group began in typical fashion by joining hands to form a large circle for an opening prayer. Once the group was blessed and energized, squad cars, a fire engine, a small army of children, the district’s clergy subcommittee, political figures, and a group of parents and residents queued up to march through the streets. Once the director signaled that his children’s choir was ready, police sirens bleeped, the fire engine horn blared and the march began. The children led the way with their cautionary lyric ...

> If you want to be somebody,
> If you want to go somewhere,
> You better waaaaakeup, and
> paaaaaay attention!
Along the way people came out of their houses to join in the singing and chanting. The group grew to more than three hundred people and ended in the park where refreshments were served. This march was by all measures a great success—there was a large and diverse turnout, there were lively speakers and most importantly, there was good interaction between everyone involved.

- Organizing and Promoting Community Events. In addition to the community marches, organizers rallied people together for local events and projects like a gospel music festival. An information booth at the event helped spread word about CAPS. Local teens were commissioned to design and paint a wall mural in Resurrection. The organizer felt this would give them something positive to do and pay them at the same time.

In addition to efforts by the organizers, residents of these areas inaugurated some projects on their own. In Resurrection, residents formed two organizations whose agendas include (but were not limited to) crime and safety issues. One was a leadership-heavy group seeking Empowerment Zone16 dollars to revitalize Resurrection; the other was a block group formed to improve neighborhood safety and to provide local children with positive activities and role models. The latter was formed because its leaders did not think that the area’s organizer was concerned about their end of the beat. In fact, a curious side effect of the partner agency’s reported disinterest in areas not adjacent to its development projects is that it may have pulled together a constituency of dissatisfied residents sharing similar views about their community. This fledgling organization was formed to represent them, giving them a voice where previously they were unheard. The effectiveness of these organizations remains to be seen, and these efforts did not become visible enough to be reflected in our 1999 survey of the area.

**Community Change 1998-1999**

Part of the evaluation was designed to assess changes which took place in the beats over the course of the study. One important tool for doing so was the resident surveys that were conducted in 1998, just as the program got underway, and then repeated in 1999. These can be

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16The Empowerment Zone (EZ) program is the capstone of the Clinton Administration community revitalization strategy. The program is designed to empower communities across the nation by inspiring citizens to work together to develop strategic plans designed to improve conditions in the most impoverished urban and rural areas. The strategic plan requires communities to assess their assets and problems, create a vision of a better future and structure a plan for achieving that vision. Selected strategic plans receive funding for implementation. Designated EZs also receive priority consideration for federal programs and direct assistance from federal officials to facilitate implementation of the plan.
used to monitor changing neighborhood conditions and residents’ reports about CAPS and the mobilization project in the areas selected for intensive observation. Interviews were also conducted in selected areas which were not involved in the program, so that comparisons could be made between changes in the program beats and those that were not directly targeted. Finally, the findings of all of these neighborhood interviews could be compared with citywide surveys that were conducted at about the same time. This provides a broader benchmark, albeit from a more diverse and less closely matched population, against which to examine trends in the program beats.

The 1998 survey included respondents living in 19 beats that were to be involved in the program and a matched set of 10 areas that were not on the Implementation Office’s list at the time. The former were selected from among the almost 80 beats that the organizers planned to take on. From that list were selected some beats that are predominately African-American, others that are principally Latino in composition, and some that are very diverse in character. The ten comparison beats were divided in the same way, and were selected to be close matches for the program areas. The evaluation was designed from the beginning to examine trends in groups of mobilization project beats and their matching group of comparison areas. This was not to be a beat-by-beat study, for the sample sizes that would be required to characterize individual beats meant that the study could concentrate on only a few areas. Instead, the plan was to (for example) compare changes between 1998 and 1999 in African-American program beats and comparison areas, with the survey respondents in each group spread across several program and comparison beats. This design had several advantages. More organizers could be included in the study, and their work could be examined in varying contexts. The inclusion of more mobilization project beats may enhance what is known as the “external validity” of the findings, because what was observed there may be more generalizable than a project examining the work of a smaller number of organizers. The evaluation was also designed to protect against “losing” its comparisons (for we had to fear that someone would start organizing in a comparison area during the course of the study), by spreading the comparison respondents in more than one area.

These proved to be fortunate decisions, for several things occurred during the course of the evaluation that we could partially accommodate. We indeed “lost” many of the comparison areas. As the mobilization project’s staffing level grew and as organizers begin to look past their initial focus beats for other similarly troubled areas, they often fastened upon a – highly similar – comparison beat. They eventually began working in every one of our predominately Latino comparison areas, and in beats that were selected because they matched racially diverse project areas. They also began organizing in two of our African-American comparison areas. However, we found that, for bureaucratic and fortuitous reasons, organizing did not take place in two areas that we had initially surveyed because they were to be program areas, so we were able to convert them into comparison areas instead. In the end, we were able to conduct 1999 surveys in four African-American areas in which community mobilization efforts took place, and in two areas that had not (yet) gotten involved. This was a smaller number of areas than planned, but reflected
the fact that – unlike an experiment using white mice – we exercised no control over the people working in the field.

Table 1
Population Characteristics, Community Capacity and CAPS Involvement in the 1998 Beat Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Sample Sizes 1998</th>
<th>1999 Percent home owners</th>
<th>Percent income above $20,000</th>
<th>Percent married couples</th>
<th>Percent kids live at home</th>
<th>Percent not a high school graduate</th>
<th>Percent over age 50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Average reciprocity between neighbors</th>
<th>Average neighborhood political mobilization</th>
<th>Average informal social control</th>
<th>Average involved in community organization</th>
<th>Average satisfaction with police service</th>
<th>Average index of safety from crime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Percent know of CAPS</th>
<th>Percent know of meetings</th>
<th>Percent attend meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 profiles the two groups of Chicagoans, based on the 1998 surveys in the comparison and program beats. It also indicates the number of respondents involved in each survey in each set of beats. In the aggregate the two groups of respondents were quite closely matched. The comparison areas were somewhat higher-income than the program areas (53 vs 46 percent reported incomes above $20,000) and households there were about 8 percentage points more likely to consist of married couples. They were much closer together in terms of home ownership, education and age. The two groups were also quite similar on many measures of their capacity to get involved in CAPS and problem solving. Residents reported similar levels of reciprocity, political mobilization, informal social control, satisfaction with police service, and fear of crime. Residents of the program areas were less likely to be involved in community organizations (households there averaged belonging to about “one half” of an organization), and as indicated near the bottom of Table 1, they were somewhat less likely to report attending beat meetings.

17 How these factors were measured is described in the next sections of the report.

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meetings. These differences in organization and involvement reflected the reasons why program beats were to be chosen in the first place.

The other major benchmark against which changes in the program beats can be assessed are the results of citywide surveys that were conducted at about the same time, during both 1998 and 1999. Because the beats in the evaluation were overwhelmingly African-American in composition, trends in responses by the 966 African-Americans interviewed citywide in 1998, and 884 who were interviewed in 1999, will be examined here as well.

**Trends in Safety and Informal Social Control**

The trends revealed by the beat surveys, and some of the problems we encountered in interpreting them, are illustrated by two examples in Figure 4. The left panel of Figure 4 presents trends in perceived neighborhood safety between 1998 and 1999. It is based on the combined responses to two questions:

How safe do you feel or would you feel being alone outside in your neighborhood at night? (Responses range from ‘very safe’ to ‘very unsafe’)

How often does worry about crime prevent you from doing the things you would like to in your neighborhood? (Responses range from ‘very often’ to ‘never’)

![Figure 4: Trends in Safety and Informal Social Control](image)

Figure 4 compares 1998 and 1999 findings separately for the four program and two comparison beats, and for African-American respondents citywide. Responses to the two fear-of-
crime questions (which were correlated +.41) were combined to produce a single “neighborhood safety index.” The vertical axis (the safety measure) is presented in its full possible range, ranging from respondents who replied “very unsafe” and “very often” to the two questions, to those who answered “very safe” and “never.” The dotted line in Figure 4 depicts where a beat would fall if residents averaged in the middle on both measures, the neutral position. It indicates that most of the beats we surveyed were perceived by their residents to be risky places to live, but that things got better in most between 1998 and 1999. None of the over-time changes presented for individual beats was statistically significant because of the small samples involved (recall that the evaluation was designed to examine the combined surveys), but they are presented separately to indicate the generality of trends in neighborhood safety. It was up everywhere, a conclusion confirmed by the city-wide figures for African-Americans. When aggregated, the changes illustrated in the left panel of Figure 4 were statistically significant, both for the program areas, the comparison areas, and the city as a whole.

These and the data presented in the right panel in Figure 4 illustrate a difficulty in interpreting the evaluation surveys: conditions were getting better in Chicago in general, including in the study beats, and the survey samples are not large enough to determine if the mobilization project beats were getting still better, or just tracking the general city trend. The right-hand panel in Figure 4 mirrors this trend. It presents average scores on the informal social control index described at the beginning of the report, one combining responses to questions about the perceived likelihood that residents would intervene to stop spray-painting, break up fights and stop teenagers harassing senior citizens. Informal social control is fundamental to most theories of social organization in urban neighborhoods, and the surveys also point to a slight strengthening of informal control in the city. A few of the individual beats depicted in the right panel of Figure 4 evidenced statistically significant increases in informal control on their own, and in the aggregate the three sets of comparisons all changed significantly between 1998 and 1999.

Trends in Views of Police and Program Involvement

Other important factors measured in the surveys identified patterns of change that were consistent with the goals of the program. First, the mobilization organizers picked difficult targets: they selected beats that fell well below the average—even among African-American beats—in terms of satisfaction with the police, awareness of beat meetings, and meeting attendance. Second, although changes over time in their focus beats were small, they were
statistically significant and pointed to higher levels of satisfaction and resident involvement in CAPS during their first year of work.

Responses to five questions were used to measure satisfaction with the quality of police service. These included questions about police effectiveness at preventing crime, keeping order and dealing with problems that really concern neighborhood residents, and police responsiveness to neighborhood concerns and ability to work with residents to solve problems. In each case respondents were asked about the police serving their own neighborhood. The combined responses had a reliability of .90. The vertical axis of Figure 5 presents the percentage of residents in each group who on average rated police performance as good or very good (rather than fair or poor) on each question. The percentages are presented separately for the program and comparison beats, and for African-Americans city-wide. Unlike the previous Figure, it combines respondents for the four program beats, an approach which parallels the statistical analysis of the data.

![Figure 5: Trends in Police Satisfaction and Beat Meetings]

Like in the Figure above, a dotted line in Figure 5 indicates where a beat whose residents were “neutral” toward the police would fall, in this case where half of them thought police were doing a satisfactory job. It is apparent that the beats the organizers targeted for action fell well below that standard (in fact, taken individually all four beats fell below the neutral line). Residents of the two comparison beats also were negative in their view. These differences may be attributable to social class, for all of these beats were poor as well as racially homogeneous. Residents of the more diverse African-American communities that make up the city as a whole were more positive about the police by a notable margin, as is illustrated by the height of the city-wide bar presented in Figure 5. Note, however, that they too remained below the “50 percent support” line.
Statistically, the increase in support for police registered in the program areas between 1998 and 1999 was significant, while changes in the comparison areas were not (there was no visible change in either beat). The percent averaging a satisfactory rating increased in the program areas from 24 to 32 percent, and from 20 to 23 percent in the comparison areas. However, the views of African-Americans in general also grew more positive, growing from 36 to 44 percent favorable between 1998 and 1999, so it is not clear that improvements registered in the program areas (and there were positive shifts in all four of the areas) were directly linked to the organizer’s efforts. Interestingly, the shift between 1998 and 1999 in the program areas was due to increasingly favorable reviews of the most traditional police activities measured in the surveys: preventing crime and maintaining order. Those measures shifted from 30 percent each to 42 percent and 38 percent, respectively. The measures more directly linked to community policing – working with the community, responding to local concerns, and working on problems that are important to residents – started at a lower level and rose only slightly over this period. This weighs against over-interpreting the shifts in opinion as a victory for community policing. And, of course, all of the performance measures in the survey still stood below the 50 percent mark, for every beat, one year into the program.

However, Figure 5 also includes measures of two direct targets of the program: the extent to which residents were aware of and actually attended beat meetings. Stimulating participation in those monthly meetings was one of the organizer’s most important goals. The surveys found that awareness of beat meetings went up significantly in the program group (they were up in three of those four areas, to over 50 percent), but did not change significantly (only by 3 percentage points) in the comparison beats. Awareness of beat meetings also did not change city-wide. On the other hand, attendance at beat meetings went up only slightly (from 10 to 13 percent) among the four program areas (attendance was down in Resurrection, but went up in the other three areas). Among residents of the comparison areas self-reports of meeting attendance went down by four percentage points.

One other key measure also moved in a positive direction in the mobilization project areas but did not change significantly in the comparison beats: reciprocity among neighbors. One goal of the community mobilization project was to instill a “self help” orientation among neighborhood residents, to encourage them to work on their own on community problems after the organizers moved on to other areas. This was measured by responses to two questions:

Do you really feel a part of your neighborhood, or do you think of it as just a place to live?

In some neighborhoods people do things together and help each other. In other neighborhoods people mostly go their own way. What kind of neighborhood would you say yours is?

Responses to these two questions were correlated +.51, and they were combined to form a reciprocity index. The index average went up significantly in the mobilization project areas.
between 1998 and 1999, but did not change significantly in the comparison beats (these questions were not included in the citywide survey). Perceptions of both “feeling a part” and “helping each other” increased, and the average score increased in three of the four project areas.

On the other hand, there was no discernible change in the extent to which residents thought that their neighbors would turn out politically. The index, which was described earlier in this report, did not change significantly over time in either the program or comparison areas. Involvement in local organizations other than the CAPS beat meetings also did not change much, and this was an important goal of the project. Involvement in block clubs and citizen watch groups went up in frequency in two mobilization project beats, but down in another.

**Trends in Neighborhood Problems**

The 1998 and 1999 surveys also enable us to track trends in reports of neighborhood problems over time. As noted above, residents of the beats that were involved in the community mobilization project ranked drug sales, loitering, gangs and public drinking at the top of their list of concerns. These were also the problems that were most frequently identified by respondents in a parallel citywide survey, but residents of the study areas rated each of them much more seriously.

![Figure 6](image)

Figure 6 presents the percentage of respondents who rated these concerns as a “big problem” in their neighborhood. As it indicates, problems were generally declining in the city over this period, and these beats were no exception. Statistically, the biggest declines were for reports of gang violence, followed by street drug sales, but the across-the-board downward trend (albeit not always statistically significant) is apparent across all four problems depicted there.
Because these problems (and others, ranging from graffiti to abandoned buildings and car vandalism) declined at least as much among residents of the matched comparison areas and among African-Americans city-wide, it is impossible to infer any impact of the organizers on the extent of neighborhood problems in the program beats.

**Conclusion**

The community mobilization project raises a number of questions concerning government and community contributions to public safety. Chicago’s organizers were expected to support community organizations, generate involvement in beat meetings and stimulate local problem solving efforts in poor, disorganized, high-crime areas. This evaluation examined their efforts to do so during their first year in the field.

We found that the organizers worked hard, but in the most desperate beats changes in local conditions that extended beyond general trends in the city were slow to appear. Few residents leave beat meetings with strategies more sophisticated than calling the police at the first sign of trouble; ongoing complaints about slow police response and chronic problems like drug dealing confirm the limited success of this approach. Beat meetings were good places to begin discussion of neighborhood crime and safety issues, but usually poor places to devise solutions to complex community problems.