



**IN THE MATTER OF...**  
**Community Based Policing in Milwaukee**

**A Recommendation Report**

**By**

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## **The Concept**

Police departments are in the business of changing human behavior. They want to discourage criminal acts and arrest those who act criminally. They want to encourage feelings of safety and security in the mind of every law abiding citizen. Finally, they seek to create community stability sufficient for citizens to walk their streets with their loved ones without fear.

At this point in time, community policing is a concept currently being advocated by our new Chief of Police Edward A. Flynn. It is a concerted effort to build cooperation between neighborhood stakeholders at all levels through identification of specific concerns and working with the department in “joint police-community interventions”. It is implemented by:

1. Focused, mutually agreed upon goals and objectives. Environments that support criminal activity are addressed through a “partnership” with local organizations that focuses on elimination of those conditions.
2. Effective communication between police and local members that foster an “intimate knowledge” of the community.
3. Establishing a relationship of “trust” among all parties.
4. Providing a long term commitment to mutually agree upon goals and objectives focused on the “underlying causes of crime”.
5. Making “effective use” of the “talents and resources” residing in the community in order to fully establish a working and on-going relationship between the police and the local community members that reduces levels of crime.

## **Traits of Successful Programs**

Given that it is a philosophical approach to law enforcement *it requires a determined, coherent commitment to it*. Integration of community policing means long term dedication of resources and manpower. Coordinating any comprehensive program of crime prevention requires innovative planning. In order to be effective community based policing must:

1. Communicate clearly roles local residents must play in revitalizing their community.
2. Disseminate timely and informative data on which all decision-makers can rely upon.
3. Surmount issues of trust in which community cooperation with police is done on a mutually advantageous level.

## **Response to Need**

On Monday, February 18<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held to discuss a 7<sup>th</sup> District initiative to increase police presence in Sherman Park. Generally the meeting was informative. In response to increased crime the Chief is fielding a targeted, intensive approach to reduction. Through “quick intervention” of criminal activity and a movement away from “call driven policing” MPD intends to place a new emphasis on neighborhood patrolling using a group of dedicated officers. I am going to suggest an alternative approach to community policing that I believe would both augment and enhance MPD’s efforts.

I am lucky to have as a student (I teach at Cardinal Stritch University’s College of Business and Management) the Assistant Chief of the Racine Police Department (RPD), Steve Hurley. Assistant Chief Hurley has been involved in a fourteen year community policing effort that centers on crime reduction through stationing police officers and support service personnel in Racine’s most troubled neighborhoods. He informed me that Racine had been hit in the 1990’s with a string of criminal activity that demanded

## COP House

immediate attention. Neighbors were concerned with increased violent crime and associated neighborhood deterioration. The centrally “call driven” dispatched service philosophy of RPD was seen as reactive in nature and ineffective.

In response to this situation, the Chief of Police for Racine (Richard Polzin) in 1993 commissioned a study by the University of Wisconsin - Parkside that showed that the community trusted the department but was concerned with its ability to fight crime. In response RPD sought a way to fight crime while improving the physical environment of their city. In essence, how could a police department achieve the following goals?

1. Reduce violent crime and calls for service
2. Develop a joint police community problem solving “action” group
3. Foster working partnerships with other city, county and state agencies
4. Improve the quality of life in the community
5. Promote neighborhood reinvestment

Out of this came the COP House Concept. This approach to community policing seeks to produce “long term neighborhood stabilization”. Its goal is to eliminate the need for the house to even exist.

### **Strategy**

Innovation is the key. Initially using a rent free apartment and donated furniture and supplies, the Racine Police Department in 1993 placed community police officers directly within a neighborhood. That initial Community Orienting Policing (COP) “outpost” was successful enough to stimulate corporate sponsorship by Johnson Wax, a subsidiary of SC Johnson, sufficient to expand the neighborhood, apartment based COP office into two locations.

This simple strategic concept evolved to become the underlying philosophy of Racine’s community policing; create anchor locations of safety and stability directly in crime ridden neighborhoods. By purposefully locating a COP Office close to a problem drug

## COP House

house and adjacent to large buildings infested with criminal activity RPD sought to psychologically limit the freedom of criminals to dominate their community and foster collaboration with law abiding residents to take back their neighborhood. The Department then sought to move beyond the apartment based Office into more substantial housing.

Initially, the City of Racine balked at acquiring a vacant home to be converted into a COP House. Chief Polzin sought to overcome city hesitation by partnering with local business entrepreneurs to form a nonprofit organization, the *Racine Community Outpost*. This group of businessmen raised money for the department to purchase dilapidated housing right next to existing drug houses. The first house (see below) was then renovated using grant money from a variety of sources. Racine's City Attorney did not want the city to own the property so the *Racine Community Outpost* bought the house and "leased" it back to the police department at a rate of one dollar a year. The City of Racine then forgave the property's back taxes and the RPD provided necessary equipment and supplies.



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## COP House

Racine has seen each COP House becoming an anchor of peace and security for the area it is responsible for. As noted earlier, the COP House concept provides a number of desired outcomes. The House itself becomes an outstanding renovated property. Out of its location are fielded a set of patrol tactics focused on foot/bike patrols and staff beats that emanate into the community.

The concept supports community based officers in their effort to gradually become fully involved with residents in cleaning up *their* neighborhood, both physically and mentally. Officers literally reside during their work hours in the community and partner with neighborhood leaders to have city services haul away debris, inspect and correct deteriorating housing and go after landlords who negatively impact *their* community.

As a result of these combined efforts city services are enhanced and problem housing is diminished. Housing adjacent to a COP House becomes a desired property and is refurbished and sold to local residents through partnered non-profits.

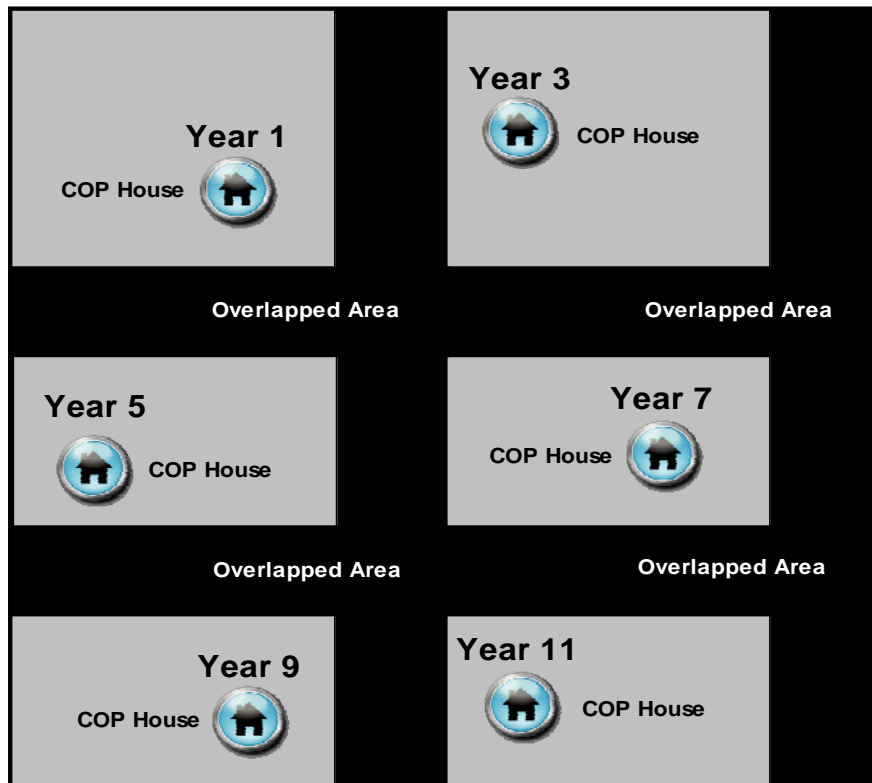
## Services

The COP House hosts a wide range of city services. Office space is offered to social service, health, and corrections agencies. As all work in tandem, the amalgamated staff becomes increasingly familiar with community needs. An added benefit of the concept is flexibility. Because the COP House concept is based on a community/business partnership and local determination of needs; money was raised to install security cameras and monitors in the neighborhood around the house. The cameras are monitored in the house and fed into police headquarters. Innovation bred innovation. RPD is now working to upgrade monitor cameras to digital status. They are also investigating how to use wireless networking to broadcasting the signal in ways that allow a patrol officer, in his or her squad cars, to view the neighborhood at any time, day or night.

The original plan was to renovate and occupy a house for a set period (say two or three years) and then sell the house and begin the process all over again in another renovated home within the designated COP House geographic area of responsibility. There are

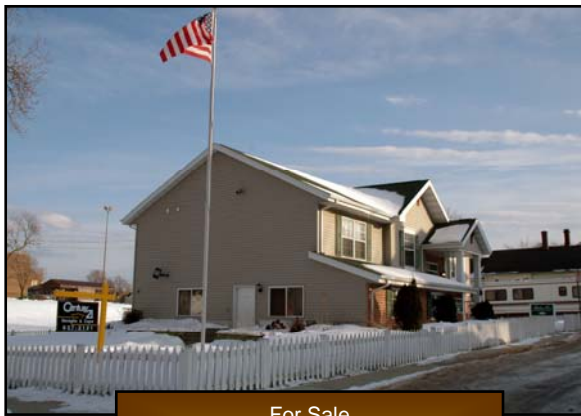
## COP House

presently four COP Houses in Racine. The Racine Police Department is building a new House that will replace an existing facility. The old House will be sold to a local resident. Significantly, there are also requests by (3) three other neighborhoods to establish COP Houses in their communities.

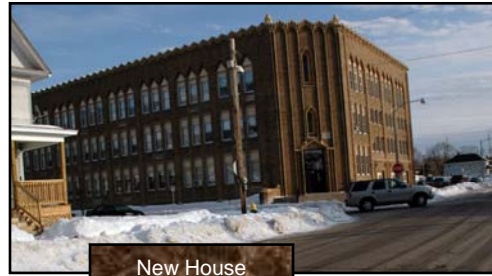


**Each House Placed Near Criminal Activity (Moved on a 2-3 Year Cycle)  
Area of Responsibility Stable - The Cycles are Recurring**

In essence, each COP House location becomes a “seed” to help exterminate the “weed” properties and crime in that area. This concept can be used in Milwaukee. The above graphic outlines the concept of one COP House moved about a given area of responsibility (AOR) over an eleven year period. Potentially this concept can be scaled up to any number of Houses in any size AOR.



For Sale  
Thelma Orr Community Oriented  
Policing House  
1009 Davis Place  
Racine, Wisconsin



New House  
To be  
Built Across from  
Catholic School



## Implementation

Implementation, I believe, could be fairly straightforward. There are existing stakeholder groups eager to foster housing improvement. Some City services have already been disbursed to our police districts. What we would have to do to make this work is:

- ✓ First, define a geographic area whose size is reasonable enough to service using existing MPD manpower and resources.
- ✓ Second, partner with appropriate city agencies and local non-profits to provide for renovation and ownership of COP House residence. The City then moves community police officers, prosecutorial, and corrections personnel from the District office into these renovated homes.
- ✓ Third, in a systematic and tactically sound manner the COP House team spreads their influence throughout the neighborhood.



## COP House

- ✓ Fourth, once a community is sufficiently stabilized, move the COP House and its team into a newly renovated home. The owner non-profit sells the old COP House to a neighborhood resident and the process begins anew.

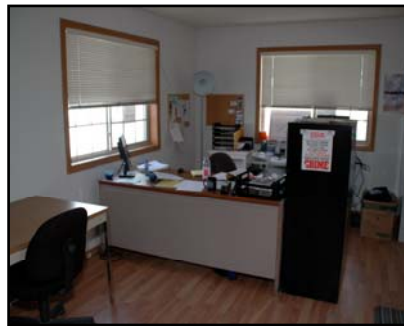


Examples of  
Rehabbed  
Housing



## Administrative Issues

I toured the Racine COP Houses and was impressed with both their staffing and potential to invigorate the community. The COP House concept does not require 24/7 staffing. For RPD each house is normally a two shift operation open from 6AM to 10PM. At its maximum it is open when the community wants it open. This approach requires flexible, tailored services to local residents. RPD hosts myriad Neighborhood Watch meetings at each House on an as needed basis. Police squads hold meetings for planning and fielding various enforcement activities.



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## COP House

The RPD has taken an innovative approach to recruiting officers to “man” each house. The Department realizes that officers placed in each location must be a special breed of police officer. On one hand they are expected to highly proficient at crime prevention and apprehension. They also have to be street cops who exhibit the following traits:

1. A reputation for working well with minimal supervision. Racine sees each COP House officer as the best of the best. They operate the house almost as a “stand alone entrepreneurial business”. Each officer works flexible hours and one’s days off are scheduled around community needs. The assignment is seen as a “plum” position leading to career advancement. The average length of service in this position is three years.
2. A proven ability to function efficiently as part of a team (high flexibility). Because the COP House provides a wide range of services and acts as a home for varied law enforcement personnel it needs a team oriented leader to oversee it.
3. Five or six years experience. COP House officers must be seasoned professionals to even be considered for the job. They need to have a proven record of accomplishment in all phases of enforcement and prevention.
4. Above average ability to communicate with a wide range of stakeholders (verbal, electronic, and written). COP House officers interact with a wide range of people, from the business professional to the average citizen. This officer must be a “people” person who relishes dealing with complex human problems.

In the time COP Houses have been in Racine the officers running them have effectively reduced crime. Neighbors see the COP House officer as their officer. They respond to the officer in positive ways because the COP House concept encourages cooperation. COP House officers have built strong relationships with local landlords and rental management firms with the goal of focusing on improving the style of living of all community

## COP House

members; home owners and renters. For Racine the COP House concept has produced the following benefits:

- ✓ A sense of community where it did not previously exist
- ✓ A better educated citizen (open doors for group meetings)
- ✓ Reduced crime
- ✓ Improved housing stock and living conditions



In summary, I suggest that the COP House concept presents an ideal way for the Milwaukee Police Department to implement Community Based Policing concepts in a systematic and effective way. The Sherman Park area is an ideal setting for piloting the COP House Concept. It can be economically tested and refined here. Our community has the resources and knowledge required to support MPD in this program. I firmly believe that the positive outcomes for residents in our community will be profound.

## References

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