

Designing a Safer Future

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This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

Designing a Safer Future

Is your downtown corridor in anywhere U.S.A. nice and shady despite the global warming debate? Maybe it's the well-planned layout of the trees or the shade structures that are so popular in urban planning. With the current trend in building, though, it is just as likely the cool shadows are not from flora or fauna, but from the new high-rise structures sprouting up all over the country. Well, if your department wants to have a voice and a role in determining how your urban forest grows, the time to begin planning your approach is now! Dealing with criminal activities and other social ills occurring in a self-contained vertical neighborhood may require a measure of creativity and innovation to ensure safety.

With the introduction of high-rise living in many communities where none previously existed, police officials might want to consider how this new landscape will change the way the business of policing is done. As we look toward the future trend of vertical communities, what impact will there be on policing? How could the introduction of residential towers and similar business structures affect our capacity to respond to police issues? In the pages that follow, we will study the use of the environmental design process during high-rise development. We will note ways community development and police professionals might collaborate on issues of mutual concern. From that, we will describe how this collaboration can benefit law enforcement, and how the cities of the future will be safer as a result. Finally, we will review an example of how the City of Sacramento, California is using these steps to address this issue to create their desired future as new vertical communities come on line in their City.

Population Trends

As the population of the United States continues to grow at a pace exceeding 3 million people per year, land use and housing space are rapidly becoming issues of concern. The increasing population brings an additional concern: with each person added, there is an increasing demand for more space to cultivate life-sustaining resources. According to figure from *Population Fact, Statistics, and Comments*, the current U.S. population of nearly 300 million persons is projected to exceed 560 million over the next 60 years (Enviroalternatives, 2003). The way many communities are addressing space needs is to grow up as opposed to out. This type of growth has to potential to challenge traditional law enforcement methods.

Although high-rise buildings have been a part of much of the American landscape for many years, current building trends indicate the country sits poised to start building vertically as a means to mitigate ever-increasing space needs. Until the late 19th century, buildings exceeding 17 stories were a rare site, primarily because of construction and design limitations. Since the beginning of the new millennium though, high-rise buildings, generally defined as structures of 20 stories or more, are being erected in America at a pace exceeding 20 buildings per year, which far exceeds the pace of the past. A 2002 article by Battle McCarthy, a firm of consulting engineers and landscape architects, notes the pre-millennial lull in building: "...of the 20 American high-rises that reach 900 feet or more, none have been built in the 90's" (Battle McCarthy, 2002). In the

short period of time since the year 2000, the City of Chicago alone has erected at least 40 new buildings over 50 stories high (Emporis Building Index, 2007).

A particularly popular trend is mixed-use (commercial/residential) high-rises to give Americans the option to live, work, shop, and play without ever leaving the building. The convenient design of these neighborhoods has brought many suburban commuters back to the city. Urban areas such as downtown Denver, Colorado, where a project called the “DenverInfill” is working to “promote the restoration of central Denver's built environment through the eradication of surface parking lots and the construction of high-density urban development of quality design” is a prime example of this sort of development (DenverInfill, 2006). Unfortunately, like most other communities, the conveniences of all of these amenities also present an opportunity for the criminally inclined to commit the same sort of acts that are common in traditional communities. Also present is the opportunity to devise some solutions to limit criminal behavior.

Possible Solutions

Some solutions to the issue of crime in high-rise housing may, in the future, come in non-human form. Emerging technologies have the potential to impact on how policing services are delivered in a vertical society. Technologies like wireless digital video monitoring systems, GPS monitoring of certain types of offenders, and biometrics, all systems that are coming into prominence in today's world, may have implications in the way these future living environments are policed. Giving consideration to the potential

problems associated with policing tomorrow's world may give rise to as yet unknown technologies, which could lead to police forces fully prepared to meet the challenge.

But until such time that these future possibilities become a reality, there exists a need to form sustained partnerships to address crime issues.

POP

Neighborhood Police or Problem Oriented Policing (POP) was supposed to lead to better intergovernmental and community collaboration and ultimately to innovative crime fighting strategies. But for many agencies, the POP philosophy has not been fully integrated into their operating principles. Take as an example this excerpt from a United Kingdom government study on POP: "At present, the delivery of problem solving in the UK is best characterised as being based on isolated pockets of good practice generated by a small number of highly motivated individuals. If this remains the case, then problem solving will never reach the organisational mainstream and, as a consequence, policing in the UK will face significantly more difficulties when tackling the wide range of current and future challenges", (Kirby & Reed, 2004, pg. 2). Anecdotal evidence suggests the same problem exists with American law enforcement.

POP can be a very effective tool dealing with criminal and social issues. High-rise neighborhoods, just like any other neighborhood, would benefit from a coordinated response to problems. But if only a few specialized individuals are armed with this tool, how effective can it be? High-rise structures will not likely introduce us to a completely different type of crime. The emergence of this type of neighborhood does present us with

new opportunities. We can apply the techniques and policing philosophies learned over recent decades to get an early start on preventing crime in vertical communities.

Although many of the traditional crimes will inevitably happen, the nature of high rise buildings will allow police an opportunity to implement planning strategies to prevent many that might otherwise occur.

CPTED

In recent years, police and regulatory agencies have begun to realize the importance of getting involved in building projects at the planning stage. The Portland, Oregon Police Bureau, for instance, has established a webpage dedicated to their role in building plan review (Portland Police Bureau 2007). One has a difficult time locating cities where this sort of partnership exists. Where the benefit of taking a systemic approach to this process is recognized, the environment can be designed to minimize crime opportunities.

Partnerships that include the police department among the stakeholders in planning need to be part of the normal development process as a proactive means to reducing the impact of crime on law enforcement and other city and community resources. It is through this kind of collaboration that safe high-rise communities can be built.

Of the many ways in which law enforcement could become involved early in the planning process, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is one of the more commonly used methods. CPTED allows trained crime prevention specialists and police officers to work with planners and property owners to create an environment that maximizes public safety. CPTED training.net points out that "it...is based on the premise that "The proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a

reduction in the fear of crime and incidence of crime, and to an improvement in quality of life." CPTED strategies are ideal for Law Enforcement Officers, City Planners, City Managers..." (2007).

CPTED is not limited to low-rise environments. In a 2005 article, the San Diego Police Department Neighborhood Resource Team noted the use of CPTED principals in high-rise facilities and environments. They discuss limiting building access points, the use of video and human surveillance, and the placement of internal building amenities among the ways in which CPTED can be employed to reduce crime opportunities (San Diego Police Department, 2005, Pg. 9-11).

In yet another example, The City of Spokane, WA, successfully used CPTED to improve conditions in an area of older deteriorating high-rise residential hotels. The area under examination was one block in the downtown area, which was plagued by gang-sponsored drug dealing. In 1995, calls for service in this area had risen to 3,300 per year. Using CPTED, the Spokane Police Department was able to decrease calls for service by 35 percent by the end of 1996. "They improved alley lighting, banned on-street parking, removed litter, repaired and renovated buildings, fences off the viaduct (where dealers hid drugs), and changed traffic flow, restricting right turns and stopping the circling of cars for drugs and sex" (West First Street Project, Pg. 3). These are all innovative CPTED methods, which could be easily employed in any community.

The Sacramento Experience

In Sacramento, California, a City of nearly 500,000, intergovernmental cooperation is heading up change. As the capitol of California and the hub of the State's politics, Sacramento is remarkably like many other major urban areas. This city, which already has a number of high-rise buildings in its central core, is experiencing a construction boom with twelve high-rise structures currently under construction and nine more in the pipeline. One project recently approved in Sacramento would have two 53-story buildings, the tallest buildings on the west coast, being erected there.

According to Sacramento officials, cooperative relationships between the police and the planning department began to form several years ago as a result of an increase in home and business construction. The relationship emerged slowly and old attitudes had to be overcome.

According to Lieutenant Eric Poerio, who heads up the department's CPTED Unit, "the previous way of doing business was that the planning department would, at some point in the process, send the police department a survey requesting input on a project. The police department would frequently not bother to comment and when they did, the comments were too late to have any impact on the final decision. For their part, the planning department often dismissed comments by the police as not important or too costly. The whole process was perfunctory." These relationships with the planning department lead the Sacramento Police Department to form their CPTED unit. Lt. Poerio

said that the working relationship and outcomes have improved and now they are training others in the region on the principals of CPTED and collaborative relationships in the development process.

In preparation for the high-rise construction occurring in the city's central core and in the region in general, The Sacramento Police Department, in conjunction with the Sacramento Regional Office of Homeland Security, recently held a five-day "High-Rise Training" course. The seminar included participants and presenters from the federal, state, and local levels of government. Lt. Poerio was the lead organizer of the high-rise training course. He said the offering was but the first of several planned to meet the planning and training needs of the region. The course was timed ahead of the construction occurring in Sacramento, and was presented with the intention of preparing first responders and public officials of this region to respond to any type and scope of emergency occurring in a high-rise structure.

Subject matter experts were brought in from throughout the country to provide instruction on such topics as homeland security threats, infrastructure protection, explosions in high-rise buildings, crime prevention and physical security, building infrastructures, unified command, and many other areas of potential concern. Not all of the presenters were law enforcement or fire department officials. In fact, one of the opening presentations was done by an Assistant City Manager, who talked about the value of partnerships with development and the community during early planning stages.

As the organizer of this training, Lt. Poerio said the point of the training, besides imparting some historical knowledge about what has worked in the past, was to drive home the need for early involvement of all potential stakeholders at the beginning of the process. He added that operationally, the training proved that there is no “magic bullet” for how to police high-rise buildings and that cooperative relationships and communication was the key. The Sacramento Police Department webpage (sacpd.org) contains additional information about when this course will be presented in the future.

MATRIX

As a means of guiding the development process in the City of Sacramento, the City has established a “MATRIX”, which is used to facilitate cooperation between and among stakeholders. The MATRIX process is described as: “The MATRIX merges Development Services Department Staff and all City Departments related to the development review process into specialized teams organized around Development Types (Products) - eliminating the traditional function based silos created by Department Divisions. At the concept phase of a project, customers will be working with a specialized City team that consists of planners, building inspectors, engineers, landscape architects, etc. The goal is to "Get the Customer to Success" in a timely, seamless, and predictable development review process” (City of Sacramento, 2007).

This MATRIX is also used as a customer service tool to ensure “one-stop shopping”.

When a developer approaches the city with a project, he or she deals with one representative (in this example a planner). The planner becomes the only point of contact for the customer, holding group discussions behind the scenes with all of the other

governmental agencies. This process is set-up to facilitate the issuance of all the necessary permits and licenses and to allow the stakeholders input on the project from the start. The City's motto is "Getting the Customer to Success". This is their way of accomplishing that. While not revolutionary, this approach to the development process gives the police department an early entry into the discussion and an opportunity to address potential crime issues before they become a reality.

Conclusion

Even though there is no way to know with certainty what the future will bring, there are ways to prepare. Communities of committed and flexible individuals working together, definitely presents the best prospect for a positive response. Cultivating and nurturing both internal and external partnerships, considering planning methods such as CPTED, engaging in organizationally sustainable POP, and continually scanning the horizon for new technologies and opportunities all go a long way toward meeting future needs of policing a vertical society. The potential to "design away" crime or to at least reduce opportunity in a high-rise, or any other type of community, and to engage in innovative crime fighting strategies are measures we should all be planning, to help bring about a safer future.

The issues facing law enforcement in the different regions of the country can be unique. Each agency must determine its own course. Organizations failing to plan to address future needs may find themselves forced to accept changes not of its choosing.

Awareness of the trend toward a more vertical society presents organizations with an opportunity to craft a future in an image which most suits their needs.

Police agencies generally have well-established relationships which should be used to the benefit of the development process to address law enforcement needs. Stakeholders from planning, the public and other industries will be very pleased to have their input included and taken seriously to evaluate the needs of such projects. It is important these relationships are in sync to avoid allies becoming adversaries and result in possible delays to the process.

As we conclude, it is important to remember that maintaining an orderly society in America is not just the responsibility of sworn law enforcers. It is imperative for governmental agencies to work together to identify potential stakeholders who could play a part in determining how law enforcement will respond to the future. The circle of involvement in the design and implementation of the way in which communities will grow and how they should be governed must be widened. The veil of mystery surrounding the policing industry must be lowered and value given to input from those outside law enforcement.

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