

# **FIGHTING BACK IN BRIGHT LEAF: Community Policing and Drug Trafficking in Public Housing**

**WILLIAM F. WALSH†**  
*University of Louisville*

**GENNARO F. VITO**  
*University of Louisville*

**RICHARD TEWKSBURY**  
*University of Louisville*

**GEORGE P. WILSON**  
*North Carolina Central University*

**ABSTRACT:** *Drug trafficking and related disorders are common in public housing properties. This research draws from a site-specific, multi-dimensional study of an urban public housing authority plagued with drug distribution and related crime. Focus group interviews and face-to-face surveys yield a vivid description of the residents' perceptions of crime, disorder, and the impact on their lives. An analysis of the community-policing response reveals implementation problems which call into question some of the underlying assumptions community-policing advocates often take for granted.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the more enduring crime problems public housing authorities face is drug trafficking. The illegal drug trade and its ensuing problems challenge the safety and security of project residents. Drug trafficking in public housing is characterized by open, indiscrete street-level drug dealing, crack houses or apartment units devoted to drug use, and drug-related violence (Jacobs, 1999). The highly visible, market-like atmosphere surrounding drug trafficking indicates the community is in chaos and no one is safe. Residents tend to withdraw psychologically, develop cynical attitudes towards the police, avoid public areas, and isolate themselves from active community participation (Kidd &

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† Direct all correspondence to: Gennaro F. Vito, University of Louisville, Department of Justice Administration, Louisville, KY 40292. E-mail: gfvito01@gwise.louisville.edu.

Chayet, 1984; Lavrakas, 1985; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981). These reactions destroy any sense of mutual responsibility among community members, weaken informal social control elements, and accelerate the general decline of the area (Rainwater, 1966; Skogan, 1990; Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Left unchecked, these criminogenic conditions undermine the civility of community life, contribute to residential dissatisfaction, and eventually lead to desolation (Droettboom, McAllister, Kaiser, & Butler, 1971; Kasl & Harburg, 1972; Moore & Kleiman, 1989; Wilson & Kelling, 1982). The deleterious impact of drug trafficking on public housing communities has become a major public policy issue.

This study describes the drug-trafficking problems faced by the Bright Leaf Housing Authority (BLHA), its residents, and the police. BLHA is a pseudonym for a large, urban public housing authority with more than 19 properties and 2,100 housing units, located in a medium-size southern city in the United States. The challenges BLHA faced when attempting to drive out drug traffickers highlights issues associated with the implementation of a community-policing strategy.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Public housing properties, typified by high density and a low-income population, provide a fertile market opportunity for illegal drug traffickers. Public housing often promotes geographical isolation, a dense concentration of residents, and socioeconomic self-containment. These conditions help sustain illegal activity once it originates (Weisel, 1990a). This environment, coupled with the residents' lack of employment opportunities and job skills, contributes to the lure of the drug market as a source of income (Van Nostrand & Tewksbury, 1998). Once young people of limited skills and opportunities take up drug dealing, it is unlikely they will ever enter the legitimate job market (Cummings, 1998; Dembo, Hughes, Jackson, & Mieczkowski, 1993; Jacobs, 1999).

Weisel (1990b) identifies a number of effects drug trafficking has on residents and communities. They include violence among drug dealers which often affects innocent bystanders, corruption of housing authority staff and the police, as well as the creation and support of criminal organizations. The aftermath invites public disorder (vandalism, fear, and loss of neighborhood morale), physical harm to residents, economic losses, destructive effects upon the youth, distrust of government, and alienation from society. Controlling these conditions, restoring security, and infusing safety present a formidable challenge to community-policing strategies. Many police departments and public housing authorities are devising new approaches to restore public confi-

dence and community well-being (Hayeslip, 1989; Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990).

Prior evaluation of efforts aimed at eradicating drug trafficking problems in public housing reveal several common attributes. One consistent finding is that nonresidents are responsible for most of the drug trafficking and crime in public housing (Pettitway, 1995; Van Nostrand & Tewksbury, 1998; Webster & Connors, 1992, p. 1). The information the police need (such as who is selling, where, and when) is readily known by residents. One suggestion is that the police develop closer, trusting relationships with public housing residents through community-policing strategies if they wish to obtain this information (Peak & Glensor, 1999). Positive interaction between police and residents is a necessary first step for intelligence gathering. It also creates a mutual understanding, communication, trust, and willingness to exchange information (Dunworth & Saiger, 1994). Unfortunately, this type of relationship is often not the norm.

Public housing residential leaders have been identified as critical players in successful crime prevention efforts. These individuals tend to have a great amount of social influence with other tenants, contribute to the cohesiveness of the community, and can work with the police to organize support for crime prevention programs (Baranyk, 1994). When positive police-community relationships do develop, one by-product is an increase in crime reporting (Peak & Glensor, 1999; Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990). Residents who feel the police care about them tend to call more frequently and provide information to make arrests (Peak & Glensor, 1999). The solidarity of the housing community's social organization and the perception of the police are contributing factors in molding a partnership and a safer environment. When social organization is lacking, it is in the best interest of the police and housing authority to work together to create it (Rosenbaum, 1998). Community policing has emerged as the suggested tactic for doing so (Peak & Glensor, 1999).

Judicial rulings, federal laws, state statutes, and local ordinances often frame the police response to public housing crime problems. Under such conditions, the imagination and innovation of the police leadership is on display. Options are constrained further by the availability of personnel, agency resources, the population served, nature of the local drug problem, and the amount of knowledge the agency has about effective approaches to drug enforcement (Fyfe, Greene, Walsh, Wilson, & McLaren, 1997). The National Institute of Justice and the Police Executive Research Forum have identified approximately 140 drug enforcement tactics police employ throughout the country (Weisel, 1996). The more promising tactics include publicizing drug arrests, cov-

ert videotaping of drug markets, targeting drug probationers and parolees, and collaborating with code enforcement officers to identify violations at residences suspected of being used for drug dealing (Weisel, 1996). These tactics are reactive responses to visible problems and tend to exclude resident participation. As such, they only treat the immediate visible conditions and fail to address the long-term objective which is the creation of a safe and secure environment through a partnership forged between residents, the police, and the public housing authority.

The variety of tactics the police have at their disposal should allow them to be flexible and adjust their responses to unique community drug problems. Dealers have a habit of realigning their activities to elude police tactics (Hafley & Tewksbury, 1996; Jacobs, 1992). Therefore, agencies must adopt a wide range of responses, consistently evaluate the impact, and adjust tactics as needed (Maple & Mitchell, 1999). Frequently, such is not the case. What usually develops is a game of hounds and hares between the police and the drug traffickers where each side reacts to the moves of the other party.

One frequently employed police response to street-level drug markets is to sweep an area, cracking down on suspected dealers and customers (Skogan & Annan, 1994). This tactic accomplishes short-term displacement of drug market activities rather than long-term eradication (Worden, Bynum, & Frank, 1994, p. 84). In addition, it creates a vacuum which other dealers quickly fill after the police move to a new location (Moore & Kleiman, 1989). The end result is the police win a statistical victory, but fail to achieve a lasting solution.

One promising operational strategy is community policing (Moore, 1992; Skogan, 1990). Community policing is both a philosophy and an organizational strategy which supports the creation of partnerships between the police and local residents (Reed, 1999; Saunders, 1999). This strategy is grounded in the assumption that the police and the community can work together to solve problems and to enhance the quality of life. It also requires dedicated individuals from both sides. Unfortunately, rank-and-file officers often harbor negative attitudes toward public housing residents.

One popular response calls for housing authorities to supplement standard police service by hiring off-duty officers to patrol these properties on a fixed schedule. This tactic provides a high level of visible patrol for a specific time period. Unfortunately, enhanced patrol is a very traditional police response and does not constitute community policing. While this initiative provides the impact police and housing authority officials typically desire, it is merely a temporary fix to a long-term problem (Cordner, 1994).

In sum, the police have a variety of proven tactics at their disposal (installation of better lighting, speed bumps to divert traffic, a parking decal program which provides two decals per apartment and four-hour visitor parking, and neighborhood cleanup) with which to address drug trafficking in public housing. Yet, they commonly invoke traditional enforcement methods which provide a short-term impact. If a long-term solution is desired, the current literature suggests it is necessary to establish partnerships through community-policing and problem-solving strategies. The effort to carry out these activities in the BLHA properties is the subject of this analysis.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The first objective of this study was to obtain information on the nature of crime and drug trafficking in BLHA properties. The second objective was to assess the impact of the police response a year after it was implemented. Four methods of data collection were employed to accomplish these objectives. First, trained interviewers conducted door-to-door, face-to-face interviews with a 10% sample of residents from 14 BLHA properties. Second, 50 residents participated in focus group sessions conducted over a four-day period during November of 1996. Each session lasted between 90 minutes and two hours, was audio-recorded, and then transcribed verbatim. Third, the BLHA crime prevention specialist provided calls for service data during calendar year 1996. Finally, there was a one-year assessment of the community-policing efforts.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Door-to-Door Survey**

The door-to-door survey disclosed that more than half the residents considered the sale of illicit drugs to be the key public safety issue within their community. Three other activities (drug use, shots fired, and loitering juveniles) also stood out as major problems in the minds of the residents. Other annoyances contributing to disorder were graffiti, vandalism, noisy neighbors, garbage or litter, and juveniles drinking. Half the BLHA residents named nonresidents as the primary violators on housing authority property. Residents consistently expressed a deep sense of frustration and serious concern for their safety.

Resident perceptions of the Bright Leaf Police Department (BLPD) are presented in Table 1. Responses were grouped by the total reported crime rate in their properties as high or low crime areas. Similar proportions of residents in both types of communities reported call-

**TABLE 1**  
**BLHA Residents' Perceptions of Bright Leaf Police Department**

Item	High Crime		Low Crime	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Called Police This Year				
Yes	36	36%	39	37%
No	65	64	67	63
Total	101	100%	106	100%
Frequency of Police Patrol <sup>a</sup>				
Almost Never	31	30%	12	11%
Few Times A Month	14	14	13	12
Once A Week	7	7	19	18
Several Times A Week	14	14	28	26
Every Day	18	17	17	16
Several Times A Day	19	18	18	17
Total	103	100%	107	100%
Police Effectiveness <sup>b</sup>				
Very Effective	9	9%	18	18%
Somewhat Effective	32	32	59	55
Little Effect	38	38	26	24
Ineffective	21	21	3	3
Total	100	100%	106	100%
Police Respect Citizens <sup>c</sup>				
Almost All The Time	15	15%	29	27%
Usually	32	31	42	39
Sometimes	38	37	30	28
Hardly Ever or Never	17	17	6	6
Total	102	100%	107	100%
Satisfaction with Police <sup>d</sup>				
Very Satisfied	9	9%	18	17%
Somewhat Satisfied	44	44	63	59
Somewhat Dissatisfied	33	33	20	19
Very Dissatisfied	14	14	5	6
Total	100	100%	107	101%

<sup>a</sup>  $\chi^2 = 18.62$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .002$

<sup>b</sup>  $\chi^2 = 27.13$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .000$

<sup>c</sup>  $\chi^2 = 11.89$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .008$

<sup>d</sup>  $\chi^2 = 12.54$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .006$

ing the police in the previous year. However, their perceptions of the effectiveness of and satisfaction with police services differed significantly. People living in high crime properties rated the frequency of patrol, the overall effectiveness of the police, police respect for citizens, and satisfaction with police service significantly lower than residents of low crime properties. Residents of the high crime areas firmly believed

they were not receiving adequate police protection. This finding mirrors Sampson and Bartush (1999) who found neighborhood crime conditions were crucial factors influencing the attitudes of Chicago citizens towards the police and law.

Table 2 provides a similar breakdown concerning the BLHA residents' knowledge of and participation in crime prevention programs. While the BLHA management claims the authority has specific crime prevention programs in place, tenant responses indicate these programs are well-kept secrets. Especially notable is the low rate of participation in the Resident Parking Program and Partners Against Crime Programs and limited awareness of Police Bike and Foot Patrol programs. These findings may have a direct bearing on the previously reported police satisfaction and effectiveness levels.

Also notable is the low program participation rate by residents in high crime areas. When residents are unaware that programs exist, they have no way to judge their impact and effectiveness. In addition, if citizens do not have confidence in the police, they will not become involved in crime prevention programs and crime rates will flourish. Community apathy is a by-product of this type of resident perception. It is extremely difficult to organize volunteers who will address safety and crime problems when there are negative feelings toward the police and citizen apathy and fear are high (Buerger, 1994; Grinc, 1994).

### **Focus Group Sessions**

Focus group participants voiced frustration, fear, and discontent with community conditions consistent with the survey findings. Residents reported their communities have significant, albeit not insurmountable, problems. This environment profoundly detracted from their quality of life and contributed to high levels of personal fear.

Tenants identified drugs, shootings, property crimes, litter and graffiti, and vehicular traffic as major problems. Participants in the different sessions all named drugs as the primary issue and root cause of most other community problems. Residents claimed drug use and transactions were highly visible activities. The majority of residents were disturbed by the omnipresence of drug dealing around the clock, both inside apartments and in open-air drug markets. Dealers purportedly displayed great confidence in their abilities to defy detection and punishment. As one resident observed, "They just laugh as the police drive by in their cars."

Most residents were quick to point out that many drug dealers and purchasers were not BLHA residents. Residents frequently spoke of "outsiders coming in and taking over." They reported dealers often ap-

**TABLE 2**  
**BLHA Residents Awareness of and Participation in**  
**Crime Prevention Programs**

Item	Aware of Program				Participated in Program			
	High Crime		Low Crime		High Crime		Low Crime	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Resident Patrol<sup>a</sup></b>								
Yes	25	32%	54	52%	3	3%	21	21%
No	54	68	50	48	90	97	80	79
Total	79	100%	104	100%	93	100%	101	100%
<b>Partners Against Crime<sup>b</sup></b>								
Yes	53	55%	40	38%	6	7%	13	13%
No	44	45	65	62	85	93	86	87
Total	97	100%	105	100%	91	100%	99	100%
<b>Kids I.D. Program<sup>c</sup></b>								
Yes	46	47%	39	37%	23	25%	18	18%
No	51	53	66	63	68	75	84	82
Total	97	100%	105	100%	91	100%	102	100%
<b>Resident Parking<sup>d</sup></b>								
Yes	11	11%	17	16%	3	3%	6	6%
No	88	89	88	84	92	97	94	94
Total	99	100%	105	100%	95	100%	100	100%
<b>Foot Patrol</b>								
Yes	21	22%	32	31%				
No	76	78	72	69				
Total	97	100%	104	100%				
<b>Bike Patrol</b>								
Yes	8	8%	12	12%				
No	89	92	92	88				
Total	97	100%	104	100%				

<sup>a</sup>  $\chi^2 = 61.81, df = 1, p = .000$

<sup>b</sup>  $\chi^2 = 70.49, df = 1, p = .000$

<sup>c</sup>  $\chi^2 = 23.45, df = 1, p = .000$

<sup>d</sup>  $\chi^2 = 11.87, df = 1, p = .010$

proached them to conduct transactions, sold to customers who drove through the area, and took over the porches of residents whom they did not know. If residents complained or tried to chase the dealers away, these efforts met with threats or actual violence.

Residents also complained that drug market activities often were punctuated by gunshots. Sometimes drug dealers would fire their weapons just to intimidate residents so they would not interfere with trafficking or call the police. Residents believed that gunfire was also a means



to intimidate competitors and one way for dealers and other "low lifes" to have fun. As a result, many residents feared being shot.

Another primary problem identified by the residents was the high incidence of property crime, especially burglaries and theft of property left outdoors. These thefts, like drug dealing, occurred at all hours of the day and night. All residents participating in the focus groups either were victims of such crimes or could name residents who were victimized. Here again, residents expressed a combination of outrage, resignation, and despair. As one participant declared, "What do you expect? Look at where we are living." Property theft has become more or less accepted as a fact of life in BLHA residential properties and typically goes unreported. Residents felt the police would not or could not do anything about it.

The physical appearance of the communities added to high level of frustration. Large amounts of litter (paper, discarded liquor bottles, beer cans, broken glass, along with drug paraphernalia) and graffiti seriously diminished what most residents considered a fairly attractive setting. Public urination where young people and drug dealers congregated added to these problems. Residents saw the responsibility for maintaining a clean, graffiti-free community as an obligation of both themselves and BLHA staff. Consequently, many residents stated they personally cleaned the grounds around their individual units, collected trash, swept up broken glass, and tried to scrub away graffiti. However, the effort of BLHA staff and officials in these tasks was seriously questioned.

The final set of major problems related to vehicular traffic. Residents complained there was a high flow of traffic in and out of the area at all hours. These vehicles were believed to be in the area for the sole purpose of buying drugs. Drivers typically disregarded traffic laws and often endangered pedestrians, including small children. The installation of speed bumps did not solve these problems.

### **Perceptions of Fear and Safety**

There was a strong sense of fear and concern for personal safety among BLHA residents. The overwhelming presence of drug markets and their associated activities made day-to-day life unpleasant and stressful. Fear of violent victimization was strong and ever present. Residents worried about being intentionally shot by drug dealers or being caught in the crossfire of dealer disputes. Anxieties about safety ran high.

Intimidation by drug dealers toward residents was fairly common. Intimidation was accomplished using both overt and relatively indirect

and subtle means (a menacing look, non-directed comments in a resident's presence). However, some attempts were blatant. In at least two communities, residents reported being physically threatened in their own apartments by drug dealers. Residents were told to stop looking out windows and not to interfere with dealers using their porches. Often, threats were simply yelled toward people looking out their windows. Most residents retreated in fear and these acts of intimidation successfully facilitated the entrenchment of dealers in the community. As one resident described this situation, "There's no need to tell them (dealers) to move or whatever, you know. I haven't got time to go to no hospital because I've got a black eye or a busted lip. So, I have to just tune them out."

These fears intensified during the evening and nighttime hours. It was not so much the issue of darkness, but rather the absence of on-site BLHA staff which accounted for this amplification. Restricting social activities and limiting contacts with others allowed outsiders to practice their illegal activities at will without fear of disruption. Several participants explained "once the manager leaves for the day, the evil begins." As one community manager recalled:

I've had people tell me that when I leave everything just starts happening. So, I intentionally stayed here late one night and a resident came down and said to me would you please hurry up and go home so they can get on with whatever they are going to do so that we can go to bed.

Most BLHA residents have coped by altering their day-to-day activities to include not going outdoors once darkness falls. The idea of being outside after dark, especially away from the immediate vicinity of one's home, was generally unthinkable. When asked if they ever "go for a walk in the evening," residents of one property reported they would never even consider it. These residents recognized they were extremely vulnerable and open to criminal victimization without proper lighting and some form of visible protection. As one resident explained:

I've got to the point that when I leave home and come back I am constantly afraid. You know I used to leave home at any time and come in my door at any time of the night, and I wouldn't be afraid. But now, you know, I pull up out there in front of my house and I'm by myself, and it's quiet, it's dark and it's quiet. I have this apprehensive feeling. You know, I'm looking around and you can't see . . . and then when I get in my door, I'm turning on lights and going from room to

room checking. I never had to do this before. There is this constant element of fear.

Clearly, residents felt safer when they thought outdoor areas were well-lit and free of drug trafficking. As one resident commented,

I'll tell you what has really helped is to have lights. That helps a lot. Before the lights was here, it was really scary. But since the lights are here, it's not scary because you can see. But, still, it's not a 100% safe.

Whereas almost all residents took some precautions to ward off potential victimization, there remained a strong sense of not completely giving in to fear. Among female senior citizens, there was a somewhat common belief "if you give them respect, no matter who they are, you'll get respect back from them." However, this opinion was the exception. Most residents of BLHA believed this view was naïve and potentially dangerous.

### Perceptions of Police

Many residents felt they had no effective options for dealing with drug dealers and other troublemakers. They believed the police were of little or no help. They felt powerless to change or influence the activities which threatened them. Typically, they believed drug dealers knew who notified the police and they feared retaliation if they called. The police knocking on a complainant's door provided a tip-off to the troublemakers. The residents also thought the drug dealers either listened to police scanners or had the ability to monitor telephone calls. One resident advised his neighbors to use a pay telephone instead of calling the police or dialing 911 from their apartments.

Despite these impediments, residents did contact the police in some instances. Tenants almost universally desired a greater, more visible police presence to control crime and disorder. Residents wanted the visible presence of uniformed officers who walk, rather than drive, through their communities. They hoped these officers would be able to distinguish residents from nonresidents and initiate order-maintenance activities and crime fighting.

This desire to work with the police was offset by a notable level of dissatisfaction with the BLPD. Common complaints were police officers acted aloof, refused to stop when waved down by residents, would not leave their vehicles for conversations, and treated residents with little or no apparent respect. *Elderly BLHA residents, on the other hand, felt they received sufficient respect from BLPD members. However, both elderly and younger tenants believed officers were especially*

disrespectful when interacting with young, African-American men. Many residents said officers did not take their complaints seriously. As a result, residents did not envision the police as their allies for addressing local safety and crime problems.

An even greater community concern was the widely-held belief that police response time was very slow. Residents reported having called the police and never receiving a response. They attributed this poor service to the negative attitudes of individual police officers. They also believed 911 dispatchers actively assigned low priority status to calls coming from BLHA properties because they considered public housing areas as less deserving of their attention.

BLHA residents complained police call-takers were insensitive, inattentive, and generally unpleasant. Condescending attitudes, apparent disinterest, being placed on hold, asked if the problem was “serious enough” to warrant assistance, and being queried for minute or irrelevant details about incidents were reported as problems. Many residents believed calling for assistance was “not worth the bother.” As one resident explained, “When you call into 911 . . . often times operators will identify the community and sort of have a condescending attitude toward you, realizing where the calls are coming from.” Such experiences have generated conflict between the residents and the police. Tenants felt abandoned and helpless. They believed “things are out of control” and nothing can or will be done to help them live safely. Thus, a siege mentality of fear and hopelessness dominated the lives of these residents.

## **THE RECOMMENDED POLICE RESPONSE**

The most critical issue facing BLHA public housing properties is control of drug-trafficking and related crimes. This problem is compounded by the residents’ loss of confidence in the police department’s ability to address these problems. The logical first step for the police should be an immediate, meaningful response to correct both the existing crime conditions and the negative police-resident relationship. The long-term objective should be to create a safe environment, free of drug-related crime, where residents can live, work, and raise families. To accomplish this end, the BLHA and the BLPD developed a plan of action which contained the following strategies:

- identification and removal of drug dealers and offenders from BLHA residential areas;
- reduction of drug trafficking and drug-related crime in the residential areas;

- mobilization of residents to join in a problem-solving partnership with local authorities to create a safe and secure community; and,
- development and utilization of effective crime prevention and problem-solving strategies.

The police established a visible presence to suppress drug-market activity to accomplish these priorities. Later, community-policing and problem-solving tactics would be used to develop resident-police partnerships which would permit tenants to take a more active role in creating their own safety and security. Thus, the police plan contained a mixture of traditional and community-oriented strategies. To this end, the BLPD created a 14-member, site-specific uniformed Community-Policing Housing Patrol Unit (CPHPU). The Unit's directive was to reduce drug trafficking and to develop a comprehensive program of community-oriented, problem-solving policing in the public housing communities.

This approach has proved effective in other cities. Intensified police enforcement strategies resulted in the reduction of drug market activity in New York City (Zimmer, 1990) and in Lynn, Massachusetts (Reuter & Kleiman, 1986). Place-specific and problem-specific responses had the greatest chance for solving problems in Jersey City public housing (Mazerolle & Terrill, 1997). However, a highly visible uniform patrol strategy will not produce a long-term positive effect if it fails to involve the residents in the creation of their own safety (Mazerolle & Terrill, 1997).

Officers working in the CPHPU were encouraged to be creative and innovative. Some tactics this unit employed during the first year of operation included:

- enforcing laws and making arrests for criminal violations;
- conducting foot and bicycle patrols;
- developing a profile of site-specific criminal activities;
- conducting needs assessment surveys of buildings and housing areas;
- developing and maintaining a list of involved, supportive residents in the community;
- meeting and working with residents to implement community-policing programs;
- attending community meetings;
- assisting the community to identify resources and develop problem-solving methods; and,
- implementing citizen patrol programs within the various BLHA properties.

A review of first-year operations found open trafficking of drugs was reduced within the housing properties. The police had made numerous arrests, issued a host of trespass warnings, and took action on lease violations. The result was a 15% decrease in reported crime and a 14% reduction in calls for service within the BLHA properties.

During this same period, police officers attended 242 Bright Leaf Housing Management team meetings, 196 Resident Council meetings, created and maintained 13 site-specific residential councils, and identified and resolved 56 community problems. However, they were only able to sustain three resident patrols during that year, not an unusual difficulty (Hammett, Feins, Mason, & Ellen, 1994).

Both officers and tenants had positive assessments about the unit's performance. A survey of 578 BLHA residents found 37% now believe their community is safer and 46% of the respondents are pleased with the effort. This outcome is not surprising when one considers the prior existing conditions. While a substantial number of tenants still harbor worries, the first-year operations appear to be gaining a foothold.

## CONCLUSION

This paper describes the beginning of a long-term strategy aimed at addressing public housing safety and crime problems. These efforts have brought some improvements in the relationship between public housing residents and the police. However, drug trafficking has not been entirely eliminated. The dealers who escaped enforcement activities simply relocated to less heralded market locations. Thus, short-term displacement, as opposed to a long-term eradication, has taken place, an effect which others have seen elsewhere (Worden et al., 1994, p. 84).

Residents are still reluctant to assume an active role in providing for their own safety and security. Timing is an important factor here. Deprivation, fear of becoming involved, and negative perceptions of the police have developed over many years. It is unrealistic to expect one year of community-policing tactics will cure these attitudes. It is important for policy makers to remember the introduction of community policing into blighted areas does not usher in an immediate fix. It will take a long-term effort on the part of the public housing authority and the police department to gain the support and active participation of the residents. The real challenge comes in the commitment and investment of sufficient organizational resources for a long-term solution.

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