Empowering Neighborhoods to Implement Crime Prevention and Neighborhood Revitalization

Jason Reynolds
May 21, 2015
• Need for Safe Neighborhoods
• Safe Neighborhoods Program
• Successful Projects/Initiatives
“Neighborhoods are not created by planners or builders, but by networks of people who know each other, share some of their social life, help each other out in emergencies, and get together to manage community projects.”

--Jonathon Barnett
Need for Safe Neighborhoods

- Safe Neighborhoods Program
- Successful Projects/Initiatives
• Public Safety
  ◦ Crime rate and perception of safety
  ◦ Indicator of a neighborhood’s economic and social health

Integrating Planning and Public Health: Tools and Strategies to Create Healthy Places
by Marya Morris et al
• Crime
  ◦ Creates fear and distrust among residents
  ◦ Contributes to community neglect and disintegration
  ◦ Disincentive to economic and social investment

Integrating Planning and Public Health: Tools and Strategies to Create Healthy Places
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• Need for Safe Neighborhoods

• **Safe Neighborhoods Program**

• Successful Projects/Initiatives
• Advent of the Safe Neighborhoods Program
  ◦ Older communities starting to decline
    • Residential crime and code enforcement violations increase
  ◦ Orange County Government wanted a grass roots program to address issues
  ◦ Empower residents to reverse decline
What is the Safe Neighborhoods Program?

- Tool to revitalize Orange County’s transitioning communities
  - Assist residents and stakeholders in reclaiming the community
  - Address the physical, social, and economic aspects of the neighborhood
  - Work with citizens to develop and implement plans

- Legal Authority
  - Florida Statutes define a Safe Neighborhood
  - Board of County Commissioners authorizes target areas
Goals of the Safe Neighborhoods Program

- Address neighborhood crime and public safety
- Community partnerships
- Organizing
- Beautification
- Participation
Address Neighborhood Crime and Public Safety
- Off Duty Deputy Program
- Neighborhood watch
- Traffic calming projects
- Street lights
- Home security and safety giveaways
- Safety trainings
- Address markers
- Neighborhood signs
• Community Partnerships
  ◦ Orange County Sheriff’s Office
  ◦ Orange County Code Enforcement Division
  ◦ County Commissioner’s Office
  ◦ Non profits
  ◦ Local businesses
  ◦ Civic organizations
Organizing
  ◦ Neighborhood leaders
  ◦ Unified voice
  ◦ Community meetings
  ◦ Community events
- Beautification
  - Demolition of blighted structures
  - Lot clearings
  - Neighborhood signs
  - Home repairs
  - Pocket parks
  - Address posts
  - Community clean-ups
Participation
- Newsletters
- Webpage
- Email lists
- Nextdoor.com
- Facebook
- Canvassing
- Reader boards
• Crime Prevention Trust Fund
  ◦ Fine on criminal activity
    • $50 for felonies and $20 misdemeanors
  ◦ Uses
    • Awareness, education, and participation
    • Community policing innovations
    • Physical projects that reduce vulnerability to crime (CPTED)
  ◦ About $70,000 annually for Safe Neighborhoods Program

• Grants
Creating a Safe Neighborhood

- Application to Orange County (past)
- Sheriff’s Office, commissioner, staff (current)
- Analysis of the area
- Neighborhood survey
- Initial community meeting
- Form committees to address concerns
- Bylaws
- Action Plan
  - Community profile
  - Identifies future projects and programs
- Officers elected
Role of the Leaders

- Recommend annual budget
- Host regular community meeting and events
- Implement the Action Plan
- Project Data Form
  - Application for projects
- Status Updates
  - Submitted quarterly
• Factors to Consider
  ◦ A Safe Neighborhood designation is not always the answer
  ◦ Negative perception of a Safe Neighborhood
  ◦ Budget for projects
  ◦ Too little or too much support
• Need for Safe Neighborhoods

• Safe Neighborhoods Program

• **Successful Projects/Initiatives**
Crime Reduction

Part 1 Crimes are a sex crime, robbery, homicide, burglary to a residence, burglary to a commercial, burglary to an automobile, auto theft, and aggravated persons.

Table 1. Four Year Percentage Change in Part 1 Crimes in Safe Neighborhoods²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safe Neighborhood</th>
<th>4 Year Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azalea Park</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Road</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlo Vista</td>
<td>-11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Castle</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Hills (N)</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Hills (S)</td>
<td>-26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Apopka</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tildenville</td>
<td>-25%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Azalea Park Neighborhood Engagement

- Email list
- Reader board signs

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you today about a story I saw on the Orange County's Safe Neighborhood Program. I appreciate you covering the story and making people aware of the program, but I feel the story was very biased and did not fully explain the program and the benefits.

I feel you could have taken a more comprehensive approach and spoken with the neighborhood leaders, the Orange County commissioners and the Orange County Sheriff's Department to learn more about the program and the benefits of it. I have been the president of the Azalea Park SAFE Neighborhood Association for 6+ years and was treasurer for 2 years prior to that. When I took over the presidency, there were 2 mere gangs in Azalea Park. One of the benefits of the safe neighborhood program is that we have contacts within the county. I immediately reached out to the captain of Sector 2 and worked together with them to force these gangs out. Without the program I would not have had the contacts with the Sheriff's Department to work with them to achieve this.

Prior to having a safe neighborhood association in Azalea Park, there was no contact with Code Enforcement, OCSD, Roads and Drainage, Traffic Engineering, the Commissioners office, etc. These contacts are very important when you are wanting to make your neighborhood a safer, more attractive neighborhood. Azalea Park was becoming a neighborhood that you wouldn't necessarily want to live in, but because of the partnerships created through the Safe Neighborhood program, we are able to get the help needed to make the improvements. We have a wonderful group of residents who attend our meetings every month who have the same goal: make Azalea Park the best place it can be and to be proud to live in the neighborhood. But you wouldn't know this because you didn't reach out to the leaders or residents who are volunteering, putting their heart and soul, not to mention numerous hours in making a difference. The Safe Neighborhood program has allowed us to strengthen our community.

I realize that crime has not decreased in all of the safe neighborhoods as a result of the program; however, the way you carefully worded it made it appear to those watching the news story that the Safe Neighborhood and the Off Duty Deputy programs are neither one effective. This is not the case at all. The Off Duty Deputy program is working in Azalea Park. The Sheriff's Office uses statistics to determine what types of crimes are occurring and when they are occurring so that they know when to have the deputies work. I get a report each month showing me the number of infractions issued, number of arrests made, notices to appear issued, etc. This would not be able to happen without the Off Duty Deputy Program, and we are seeing a decrease in crime.

Thank you for your time in this matter.

Michelle Wright, President
Azalea Park SAFE Neighborhood Association
KaBOOM Playground, Pine Hills
Street Lights, South Apopka
Land Analysis & Strategic Plan, Pine Hills

Figure 25: Vision Plan for Pine Hills
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