

and branch. It starts with creating an environment where a single broken window (whether literal or metaphorical) is treated as the beginning of chaos, and is swiftly repaired.

If that sounds like nothing more than obvious common sense, read on.

Chapter 7

TAKING BACK THE STREETS

AMONG ALL the late '90s headlines about falling urban crime rates, one from the *Washington Post* seemed to signal something less than a consensus about where all this progress was coming from: "FBI's Report of Falling Crime Greeted by Applause, Debate." Actually, what followed seemed more like a collective head-scratching than a real debate. Even as an assortment of pundits and politicians were showering praise on officials in New York and Boston, others were less sure that local engineering played any role at all. Yet they were just as unsure about what *did* play a role. Attorney General Janet Reno took the ecumenical approach: "It's because of more police officers on the streets, tougher sentences, more prosecutions, better prevention programs, a healthy economy, and a new approach to crime-fighting that involves a close working relationship between communities ... and local law enforcement." Yet at the same time, the FBI, which reports to Reno, said that it had "no idea" why crime rates were falling so fast.

This could not have pleased the attorney general's boss, President Clinton, who was at that moment taking credit for more cops on the street, tougher sentences, the robust economy, and tighter control of handguns brought about by the new Brady law. And in what could only be seen as a setback for the whole concept of social "science,"

progress and investment that cities need, besides preserving destructive stereotypes. But here again, the New York story is encouraging. Because perception is finally catching up with reality in New York City, tourism and business investment, and consequently the city's economy as a whole, are booming. And at least one TV network can even claim some of the credit for this perceptual turnaround. One of America's shrewdest urbanists, Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, often says that NBC's *Today* program, by opening up its broadcasts "to the street"—training its cameras on throngs of smiling tourists from middle America—has done as much for the image of New York and other big cities as anything those cities could have done for themselves.

Yet even in the midst of these amazing achievements, local police and public safety activists now face the same academic caviling as the community development pioneers we described in Part 2. Thus far, at least, scholarship cannot or will not confirm that their activities are the independent variable (or even one among several) that's turning the tide. Wider trends, say the learned skeptics, may account for whatever progress cities claim to have made—it could all be the result of social zettegeists, shifting demographics, an upbeat economy, the peetering out of the crack trade, the El Niño weather system, whatever. Their corollary argument is that other, contrary trends may shortly engulf the cities' meager efforts and throw the whole public-safety parade into reverse.

Thus have cities and their crimefighters borne a load of carefully reasoned condensation from the thinking classes. Yet the idea that the turnaround in urban crime is merely a fantastic coincidence of favorable vapors stretches the imagination. To begin with, the cities that have made the most far-reaching changes in their police strategies are also the cities with the best results. That certainly doesn't *prove* that their changes were the main cause of falling crime rates, but it hardly points to El Niño, either. Everyone, surely, has benefited from a stronger economy and all the other universals. Yet cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore that came late to the anticrime party have meanwhile suffered from crime rates that stayed amazingly resistant to all the positive ions in the social atmosphere.

In any case, like activists in any field, the advocates of better crime-fighting refuse to be deterred by the alleged global inconsequentiality

of what they *do*, or the diffidence of the academy. Animated by passion, confirmed by anecdote, they soldier on.

In that light, the experiences of Boston and New York particularly commend themselves to closer examination, for several reasons. First, as we have seen, these two cities accomplished the biggest and fastest reduction in crime in the 1990s—an achievement that appears to have flowed at least partly from comprehensive new approaches to law enforcement that were dramatic departures from the past. Second, the Boston and New York strategies, though different, both represented the application of giant doses of common sense and pragmatic good judgment. Third, both cities unwittingly borrowed an enormous store of insight from the on-the-ground experience of the grassroots community development movement.

In our view, a national obsession with the experience of these two cities is in order. What they have done, and the parts of it that can be applied or adapted elsewhere, seem to offer the best hope of sustaining most of the recent progress in reducing urban crime—pending, of course, a big shift in those pesky wider trends.



It is now enshrined in lore and legend that the New York policing revolution began, of all places, in the highbrow magazine *Atlantic Monthly*, which in March 1982 published an article by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling called "Broken Windows." Sixteen years later Wilson self-effacingly told the *New York Times* that he didn't consider the piece his "finest literary moment." But few magazine articles have had more influence on social policy.

The article's title refers to an experiment conducted by Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo thirteen years earlier, in 1969. Zimbardo left two cars on city streets, one with a single broken window and the other intact. The first was quickly stripped and destroyed, but the second remained untouched for a week. When the researcher broke a window on the second car, it too was promptly vandalized.

Kelling and Wilson used the "broken windows" metaphor to stand for a set of broader observations about the relationship of all manner of physical disorder and crime on city streets. "At the community

level,” they wrote, “disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence.” Deteriorating physical conditions, they believed, spawned further disorder, which in turn licensed certain kinds of antisocial behavior, which in turn actually attracted more serious crimes.

We suggest that untended behavior ... leads to the breakdown of community controls. A stable neighborhood of families who care for their houses, mind each other's children, and confidently frown on unwanted intruders can change, in a few years or even a few months, to an inhospitable and frightening jungle. A piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, a window is smashed. Adults stop scolding rowdy children; the children, emboldened, become more rowdy. Families move out, untended adults move in. Teenagers gather in front of the neighborhood store. The merchant asks them to move; they refuse. Fights occur. Litter accumulates. People start drinking in front of the grocery store; in time, an inebriate slumps to the sidewalk and is allowed to sleep it off. Pedestrians are approached by panhandlers.

According to Kelling and Wilson, disorder produces fear, and the inevitable response to fear is withdrawal and often flight from the neighborhood. “Such an area is vulnerable to criminal invasion. ... The citizen who fears the ill-smelling drunk, the rowdy teenager, or the importuning beggar is not merely expressing his distaste for unseemly behavior; he is also giving voice to a bit of folk wisdom that happens to be a correct generalization—namely that serious crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked.” In other words, there goes the neighborhood.

The striking thing about this is that it is precisely this “spiral of decline” that in most cases activates the citizens who have formed the thousands of community development corporations across the nation. These groups are alive to the negative multiplier of blight, in both perception and reality, and so they focus their development efforts on those targets.

It may be that few of the grassroots activists who founded community development corporations ever read “Broken Windows,” or Northwestern University Professor Wes Skogan's important book, *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American*

Neighborhoods. But their street-level tactics represent an implicit and overwhelming confirmation of those authors' theoretical insights. Skogan writes:

This condition, which we will term *disorder*, has a social and a physical dimension. Disorder is evident in the widespread appearance of junk and trash in neighborhood lots ... in decaying homes, boarded-up buildings, the vandalism of public and private property, graffiti, and stripped and abandoned cars in streets and alleys. ... What these conditions have in common is that they signal a breakdown in the social order. ... Sometimes, disorder propels people to act—if they are fortunate enough to realize it is evidence both that their community is in decline, and that it will cause further trouble in the near future. [emphasis in original]

Most CDCs are born with the understanding that disorder is both a symptom and a cause of neighborhood decline. Evidence of decline is in fact what prompted many of them to form in the first place. Since the blight often manifests itself first in abandoned or neglected housing (with its rich store of literally broken windows), CDCs have often concentrated on building or renovating affordable housing first—not necessarily out of a primary concern for sheltering needy people, but rather to fight decay and disorder. Reasonably enough, they regard boarded-up buildings, blighted housing, and weedy vacant lots as sores on the body politic. Seeing a neighborhood as a living organism, which it is, makes it easier to identify these open wounds as a breeding place of social infection that in time takes the whole community down.

In effect, thousands of CDCs have proceeded on these assumptions without ever having the benefit of a thoughtful articulation like “Broken Windows.” It has been based mostly on intuitions or “folk wisdom” that are obviously widely shared. The policing revolution, on the other hand, is far more traceable to a body of theory, first glimpsed publicly in the *Atlantic Monthly*. One of the authors, James Q. Wilson, has written and been influential on a wide array of subjects. George Kelling, on the other hand, has devoted himself, as both researcher and consultant, to the policing implications of “Broken Windows” with the single-minded energy of a zealot.

Many think of Kelling as the father of “community policing” or “problem-oriented policing” or “order-maintenance policing”—all of which derive intellectual fuel from his work. (“Community policing” aims at building more responsive connections between local police and residents at the street level; “order-maintenance policing” concentrates on controlling minor crimes that create a climate of menace and disorder; “problem-oriented policing” focuses on crimes of whatever level that approach a critical mass in certain places. The three approaches are all distinct in some ways, but all of them upend the longstanding strategy of concentrating most police resources on “serious” or violent crime, to the relative neglect of everything else.) But perhaps Kelling’s greatest achievement lay not in the purely intellectual sphere, but in recruiting a tough and ambitious Boston cop, William Bratton, to his ideas.

That alliance between theoretician and practitioner proved to be the “Broken Windows” idea’s big break—eventually giving Kelling’s ideas a tryout on Broadway. Bratton also, incidentally, provides the critical link between the two flagship cities: At pivotal moments he was head of transit police and chief of police in both Boston and New York.

Bratton describes his arrival in New York to be interviewed for the transit job, beginning with a seminal ride across the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway into Manhattan:

In 1990 I can recall coming in from the airport ... and coming down that highway. It looked like something out of a futuristic movie in terms of graffiti on every highway wall, dirt on rubber tires that looked like they had not been cleaned in years, burned-out cars, litter everywhere. Welcome to New York. Then when you reach the first stop light in New York City, you see the official greeter for the City of New York. You know, the guy out there in baggy dirty clothes with a rag. Or the more sophisticated might have a squeegee. ...

Then there was the subways. ... I can remember going through the first turnstile array and watching people leap over turnstiles, crawl under them, anything but pay the fare. Every platform had a cardboard city on either end of it where the homeless had taken up residence. This was a city that had really lost control of itself and its subways.

Bratton aptly captures the feel of New York in those days, and the palpable sense of menace that went with it. He and his boss, transit

chief Bob Kiley, set out to recapture the subways. Their first assault was an unstinting commitment to eliminate all graffiti from subway cars, and keep it off, and to end fare-beating—the two loudest signals of disorder in the public view of the subway system. The graffiti came off, and fare beaters were relentlessly arrested, usually by plainclothes cops. (Meanwhile, Kiley and metropolitan transit chairman Richard Ravich were engineering less visible infrastructure improvements that eventually brought about a monumental turnaround in the whole system’s performance, including the literal elimination of its many broken windows.)

Bratton soon got an unexpected bonus from his crackdown on “nuisance” crimes—and a perfect illustration of the Broken Windows hypothesis that “little,” “cosmetic” things can lead to big changes. Collaring “petty” offenders suddenly led to a harvest of arrests of serious criminals. One out of ten fare beaters turned out to be wanted on a felony warrant, and many others were carrying illegal firearms. In one stroke, Bratton had not only eliminated an appalling spectacle that was frightening the public and costing the transit system tens of millions in lost revenues annually, he was bagging large numbers of wanted felons in the bargain. As a billiard player would say, a three-cushion shot. Crime in the subways fell off a cliff. Between 1990 and 1994 felonies dropped 75 percent, robberies by 64 percent.

After cleaning up the subways, Bratton briefly returned to Boston as superintendent of police (the Number 2 position) where he began Boston’s transition to Broken Windows policing. But he was quickly summoned back to New York by newly elected Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, where he would have a chance to try in the wide-open city an approach that worked so well in the closed system of the subways.

As the world now knows, his approach worked the same rapid wonders all over New York. “Order policing” was applied with a vengeance against the whole spectrum of antisocial behaviors, not only the famous squeegee men (who often proved a good deal more violent than the cute name implies), but also public intoxication and urination, and even playing loud boom boxes in residential neighborhoods after dark. Orthodox policing had said: Don’t sweat the small stuff, go after “serious” crime (of course, after it was committed). Giuliani and Bratton turned that orthodoxy on its head by deliberately obsessing over the small stuff. In so doing they transformed the whole

environment, which according to Kelling and Skogan was causing the serious crime to occur in the first place. And they reaped the dual benefit of safety and the appearance of safety.

Bratton did two other revolutionary things: He devolved real authority and accountability to the precinct level, and he developed a now widely copied crime-tracking system called Compstat, which produced twice-weekly updated crime statistics at the neighborhood level, to replace the three- to six-month-old data the department had grown accustomed to. Compstat data formed the basis for the new precinct level accountability for visible events on the street. From that platform, Heather MacDonald of the Manhattan Institute argues convincingly that the real revolution Bratton and Giuliani worked was one of rising expectations. No longer would the reigning idea be that all the police could do was contain crime, which after all was really due to “root causes”:

The real Giuliani crime revolution consisted of rejecting this fatal quiescence even more than in launching the celebrated quality-of-life and “zero tolerance” campaigns. The police would and could defeat crime, declared William Bratton. ... Only commanders committed to double-digit crime reduction could hope for promotion; those who did not succeed were out. The rest is history. From 1993 to 1998, homicides in New York dropped 70 percent, and major felonies 46 percent, transforming the city.

Most people want to make a difference; Bratton and Giuliani convinced New York and its police department that the police could actually reduce crime, and then did it. The morale of the department and the whole city soared.

On January 15, 1996, New York’s police chief was on the cover of *Time* magazine, and shortly thereafter departed for a lucrative private-sector career. New York, one of the world’s largest cities, had proved too small for the outsized egos of the police commissioner and his boss the mayor, who regarded showcases like the *Time* cover as his own exclusive real estate. Bratton’s rising national acclaim didn’t help their relationship.

But the positive trends Bratton set in motion continued under his successor. Unfortunately, a troubling new trend also turned up: a series

of highly publicized cases of excessive force, particularly among officers of the elite Street Crimes Unit, the Green Berets of Bratton’s crime-reduction campaign. The public reaction highlighted Giuliani’s failure (or unwillingness) to build the kinds of bridges to minority leaders that should have carried him through the rough patches. Kelling soon worried, on the opinion page of the *Wall Street Journal*, that the bad publicity might cause the NYPD “to revert to the ‘stay out of trouble’ mentality. ... [I]f a new [police] commissioner backtracked on maintaining order, ... control of public spaces could quickly be lost.” At this writing, Kelling’s fears appear to be justified, even without a change of commissioners. A few unofficial reports in 1999 (some apparently originating with the police officers’ union) suggest that officers were starting to hold back—whether for fear of condemnation, or from mere pique over recent scandals—from making difficult arrests in potentially controversial circumstances.

Yet the connection between undue force and street-crime enforcement is neither universal nor necessary. Boston achieved nearly identical eye-popping crime reductions while actually *improving* police-community relations in minority neighborhoods. It is no accident that, when *Newsweek* did a major 1998 story on Boston’s crime success, it was neither a cop nor a mayor, but a black minister who appeared on the cover. Gene Rivers, an alumnus of a Philadelphia street gang who went on to attend Harvard, was one of the several hundred ministers who met in the wake of the tragedy at Morning Star Baptist Church. Out of that group a few leaders emerged: Rivers, Bruce Wall, Jeffrey Brown, and Ray Hammond. Most were ministers from the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods, where Boston’s African-American population and much of the youth violence were concentrated. They proceeded to form what they called the Ten Point Coalition, dedicated to taking their ministries to the street to meet the kids where they were, and to forging a new relationship with the criminal justice system. This became the basis of a remarkable, and now justly famous, police-community partnership.

A 1999 article in the *Public Interest* argued that the coalition had played a critical role in Boston’s sharp drop in youth violence ... by changing the way the police (and other elements of the criminal justice system) and Boston’s inner-city community relate to each other. In its

intermediary role ... the Ten Point Coalition balances the community's desire for safe streets and its reluctance to see its children put in jail. It has created ... an umbrella of legitimacy for fair and just policing.

That legitimacy permitted, among many other things, an intense and unrelenting pressure by law enforcement on the gangs. Unrepentant gang members who perpetrated violence felt the weight of the law round-the-clock, a campaign in which all segments of law enforcement were marshaled in coordinated action—another novelty for fractious big-city crime bureaucracies. Not only police, but probation officers, youth workers, justice officials from all three levels of government, and even Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government joined with the ministers.

According to Orlando Patterson and Christopher Winship, Harvard sociologists who analyzed the program, there were four principles at work. First, the Bostonians, like their New York counterparts, rejected what they called "root-cause liberalism." Violence was to be dealt with as crime, and not excused away by the usual litany of urban ills. Second, virtually all players agreed that the lion's share of the violence came from a tiny group of hard-core gang members, and that the community had a duty to help law enforcement identify them. Third, the church leaders were given a behind-the-scenes but material role in determining which youths would be arrested, and which ones slotted into programs that might help them. Finally—and this was critical—the principle of zero tolerance applied not just to criminals but to the police: There would be no tolerance for excessive force and indiscriminate stop-and-frisk tactics based on racial profiling.

The whole process was helped immeasurably by the conciliatory personalities of Mayor Thomas Menino and his police chief, Paul Evans, a self-effacing street guy who came up through the ranks. Their lack of flamboyance and their willingness to share credit helped create the right atmosphere for unprecedented cooperation among agencies, jurisdictions, and constituencies. And Menino, unlike Giuliani, had built strong political support from the ground up in the black community.

The achievements were remarkable. Among all the gaudy statistics, one stands out: for an astonishing twenty-nine-month period that ended in January 1998, there was not a single teenage murder victim in the whole city, and only four since.

The acclaim has been widespread. The *National Journal* said in early 1999, "Boston's experience sets a resounding example that crime deterrence can indeed work where agencies cooperate extensively at all levels of the criminal justice system and with community organizations." The same year, the *Economist* pointed out that citizen complaints against the police in Boston were dropping almost as fast as the crime rate.

By contrast, in New York at that point, complaints were headed in the opposite direction. Urbanist Fred Siegel, despite being one of Mayor Giuliani's more persuasive fans, had to concede that the "undeside of the Giuliani-Bratton-Kelling achievements was that the flush of success obscured the ongoing problem of excess police force used against minorities."

It should be pointed out that if positive police community relations can be achieved in Boston, it probably can be done anywhere. Harvard scholars Patterson and Winship again:

Given Boston's less-than-perfect race relations—and the deep distrust rooted in the school desegregation battles of the 1970s—its recent success is especially telling. ... It helps prove that there is no inherent conflict between effective police work and respect for the freedom and dignity of individuals.

"Order policing" and the creative, systematic use of timely management data pioneered in New York, combined with the unusually sensitive community partnership displayed in Boston, are, or at least ought to be, the twin waves of the future. But there is another, as yet almost wholly unacknowledged aspect of both the New York and Boston stories. Through the same period of dramatic crime reductions, *both cities were making more progress than virtually any others in eliminating blight in their toughest inner-city neighborhoods.*



Shortly after his tenure as New York's police chief ended, William Bratton was invited to address a group of grassroots housing activists. He opened his remarks by graciously applauding their progress in refurbishing New York's abandoned housing. But practically in the same

breath he went on to add: "Of course, absent what we did in reducing crime, fixing up the housing would have relatively little positive effect on the city." Even forgiving a human tendency to put one's own efforts at the top of any list, Bratton's remark missed the main point by a mile. He had overlooked, apparently, some of the fundamental implications of the very theories that had propelled his own meteoric career.

In the purest version of the "Broken Windows" argument, it is the physically deteriorated environment that licenses antisocial behavior—which then begets more serious crime. The boarded-up houses, vacant lots, and abandoned cars provide the spawning ground; physical rot is the fundamental precipitating condition. For all their effectiveness in cracking down on a wide range of antisocial behaviors, the New York City police never repaired a single broken window, fixed up a single house, or cleaned one vacant lot. They could deal only with the social manifestations of the deteriorated community. That was indispensable, and it went a long way toward implementing the more general notion of "Broken Windows." But by itself, better policing alone might not have brought about the phenomenal success accomplished in New York.

Fortunately for Bratton and the police, they didn't have to fix up houses, because it was being done for them, big time, courtesy of Mayor Ed Koch's massive housing investment program. Launched in 1986, the city committed \$4.2 billion of its own money over ten years to build or renovate 150,000 houses and apartments. Continued subsequently (though on a shrinking basis) by Mayors Dinkins and Giuliani, the effort has thus far carried on for thirteen years and amounted to well over \$5 billion. Annual expenditures reached their zenith in 1989 at \$850 million and have since tapered off to about \$250 million a year. The *New York Times* likened the scale of the undertaking to the construction of the Pyramids. By 1997 16,000 new homes had been completed, 44,000 abandoned apartments "gut" renovated, and another nearly 100,000 units "moderately" renovated.

We described the effect of Koch's program on the South Bronx in Chapter 1. But other damaged areas of the city—notably Harlem and central Brooklyn—have been massively altered as well. Many of these communities resembled limitless oceans of blight in the late 1970s and early '80s. Now in some places there is scarcely an abandoned structure or a buildable house lot to be found. In the first ten years of the

plan, according to Alex Schwartz of the New School for Social Research, New York's city-owned inventory of abandoned housing units went from 48,987 to 8,177—a cut of 83 percent.

Over this period, New York outspent the next fifty largest American cities combined on housing. Boston didn't have the benefit of that kind of investment, but it's a much smaller place. And more to the point, Boston was the first city to be fully committed to a strategy of supporting community-based development corporations. Now after nearly twenty years of patient, methodical effort, the CDCs of Boston have virtually ended blight. Only Dudley Square, in the heart of Roxbury, still contains a significant collection of abandoned buildings, and all of these are slated for renewal. Indeed, the main housing problem in both cities today is a terrible scarcity of *any* kind of housing—and rapid price escalation in both the home ownership and rental markets.

Can it be just a coincidence that the two cities that did the best job rejuvenating their neighborhoods also lowered crime the most? Logic suggests that the "Broken Windows" theory works both ways. That is, if physical deterioration leads to crime, physical revitalization may well be making its own distinct contribution to pushing crime back. By that light the thoroughly uncredited crime-fighting heroes are Ed Koch in New York and the CDCs and nonprofit housing groups in both cities.

Even if rebuilding neighborhoods makes its own contribution to public safety, it is still just one element of the crime-fighting equation, not the whole story. Bratton might have been closer to the mark if he had said, "neither our crime-fighting work nor your housing work would have been as effective in isolation." Implicitly acknowledging that truth, many CDCs in both Boston and New York were pushing beyond bricks and mortar into direct crime-fighting efforts of their own.

A survey of nonhousing activity by CDCs, undertaken by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation in the early 1990s, revealed how far these organizations were reaching into the social cleanup of their neighborhoods, even as they were fixing crumbling houses. Besides organizing block clubs and citizen crime watches, these groups were carrying on a dizzying variety of so-called "community building" efforts: refurbishing pocket parks, planting community gardens, organizing arts festivals, and creating sports leagues and other youth activities.

Some were reengaging, or trying to, with their local public schools. And a few others were starting charter schools of their own (a topic

covered more fully in Chapter 12). All this activity was so widespread that it belied the image of CDCs as “developers” concerned just with housing and other physical construction. Instead, the pattern showed a keen appreciation that you can’t save a neighborhood with buildings alone. *Social organization had to accompany physical revitalization* if there was going to be any lasting success.

In 1990, about the time William Bratton was riding down the highway to an interview for his first job in New York, a seminal community organization in the South Bronx was making its first overture to the local police station for what would become a historic partnership between a precinct and a CDC. Ralph Porter, president of the MBD Development Corporation (formerly Mid-Bronx Desperadoes) re-members calling together the heads of nonprofits, youth programs, government agencies, churches, and block associations to meet with the local police brass—one of those routine public-relations meetings police hold all the time, jawing about local problems with little long-term effect. But this one, dubbed the 174th Street Leadership Council, turned out to be different.

This time, for starters, the major community organizations weren’t merely mouthpieces of local discontent. They had *done* things of monumental importance in the neighborhood—built housing, brought in business, helped rein in delinquency and vandalism—things that in turn had made the police’s work more effective. Meanwhile, police had come a long way from their embattled “Fort Apache” days, and were prepared to believe—well before Bratton’s arrival, and ahead of much of the city—that the decline in “broken windows” and progress against crime were intimately connected.

Second, residents were prepared to overcome years of distrust of the Bronx police, and to furnish valuable information, at considerable personal risk. The Leadership Council arranged secret meetings with narcotics officers, for instance, at which residents could furnish information on the still-flourishing drug trade. Getting vulnerable people to turn in heavily armed neighbors took courage and trust—things the New South Bronx was still getting used to. But as Porter put it, “people know what destroyed their community in the past, so therefore their tolerance level for crime and negative activity is much shorter.”

The Leadership Council’s story is still unfolding—a fact that is remarkable in itself. A police-community conversation that in most places

would have lasted (at best) a few months has instead carried on and expanded throughout the 1990s, and shows no sign of winding down. “They’ve seen concrete solutions,” says Porter about both the police and the neighborhood’s residents. “Where there used to be a drug den, now there are two-family homes. And people feel they were a part of that.”

On Chicago’s embattled South Side, a community group joined forces with police in a different way: by literally taking back a street that police complained was the epicenter of neighborhood crime. Father Michael Pfeiffer, longtime pastor of St. Sabina’s Catholic Church, made the first foray to precinct commanders in 1993, the peak year for violent crime. As he recalls it:

We went to the commander of the district at that time and asked “what is the worst time for crime, and where in this district?” He told us, “79th Street, Friday nights between 9 at night and 4 in the morning, it’s just open fire and anything goes.” So, we went to the church the next Sunday morning and told [the congregation] that’s the greatest time for crime and that’s the greatest area, then *that’s where we need to be*. We started the following Friday night, meeting [at the church] at 9 o’clock, and we would be out on 79th from Ashland to Vincennes. We would be out there every Friday night from 9 p.m. until about 12:30 a.m.

The congregation poured out onto the sidewalks every Friday night, in numbers ranging from 100 to 300 people at a time, approaching young people with information about available jobs and training programs, offering rewards for information on guns and drug-trafficking, and passing out a hotline for kids who want to escape the gang culture. They stopped in every store, encouraging shop owners to call the police with information on drug sales and other illegal activity in the area. To the gang leadership, it must have looked like an invasion. Within eight weeks, crime was down 50 percent on the 79th Street beat.

The gangs fought back, of course, increasing their own numbers on the street at times, and operating on the edges of the volunteer phalanx. To prove there would be no “give,” Father Pfeiffer and his troops persisted *for years*, maintaining an incontrovertible community control over 79th Street. It was a beachhead—a strategic victory, but not complete. In 1998, a full-scale gang war erupted, affecting the whole neighborhood. Father Pfeiffer turned up the heat:

We went to the gang leader's houses. One night we had 300 men, plus the alderman, the local police commander, the superintendent of police, and the attorney general, and we all went to their houses and called them from megaphones, saying that this was not acceptable that there had to be a cease-fire. We wanted to help them and work with them, but we were not going to tolerate violence or the loss of life. We went to their mothers. We went to their girlfriend's houses. Eventually they came to us. I met with a number of them first, and then we brought in the police commander of this area as well as the alderman, to sit down and work out some cease-fire truces.

From that point, it became clear who was in charge in the Saint Sabina's area, and it was not the youth gangs. The community had been willing to fight for years (and continues to exert a visible presence on the streets) to regain control of their streets.

If that were the end of the story, it would be an encouraging little epic of local determination and pluck (plus singular leadership). And it would surely confirm the part of the "Broken Windows" doctrine that Bill Bratton embraced in his remarks to the New York housing activists: Crack down on street-level crime, and many other things become possible.

But in fact, the story did not begin and end with community crime fighting and better cooperation with law enforcement. In both these neighborhoods, as residents tackled crime, they were also repairing the physical environment. Ralph Porter's nonprofit organization built and restored so much real property that it is now among the biggest and most respected development companies in the city. In the Saint Sabina's community, the anticrime campaign coincided with a period, first, of strategic demolition of abandoned and unsafe structures, and later, of new investment, including \$7 million worth of new housing for the elderly, a new police station, and half a dozen new businesses, in just the church's immediate area.

At the core of the "Broken Windows" strategy are two complementary messages: a negative one—making clear what will not be tolerated—and the positive message that (in Kelling and Wilson's phrase) somebody "cares what happens" and is fixing things up. In this strategy, the methods of development and crime-fighting converge.



Crime is a particular concern for CDCs, not just because it undermines the community and endangers its residents, but also because CDCs have become major-league property owners, thanks to their taking over so many apartment and commercial buildings. They are now responsible not only to neighbors, tenants, and new home owners, but to expanding ranks of private and public investors and lenders who underwrote all these projects. Though the CDCs are nonprofit, they are not immune to financial failure. And a number of venerable CDCs in New York, Chicago, Indianapolis, and other places did collapse—most often because they had not been able to re-create a civic realm that kept pace with their development successes. So the problems of the chaotic streets invaded the newly fixed-up buildings: tenants who didn't pay their rent, vandalism, drug-dealing, and then, sometimes, violence.

So CDCs had powerful incentives to make the *people* side of the equation work. Often they took preemptive steps: They would rent apartments only to tenants they deemed "responsible," by conducting thorough interviews and even home visits. This struck some as heartless.

"You mean you *turn people away*?" one foundation executive asked incredulously.

"You bet we do" replied Genny Brooks, the founder of the Mid-Bronx Desperados, which played so central a role in saving the South Bronx. "We're doing enough, turning this neighborhood around. Don't ask us to take people who won't contribute."

The executive persisted: "But what happens to them?"

Brooks's reply: "I don't care."

This exchange took place during a foundation tour of the South Bronx in the early 1990s. While applauding the housing accomplishments, the visiting philanthropists were clearly discomfited by the CDC's hard-nosed approach to tenant screening. Brooks was unapologetic—even to an audience she had every reason to please.

Among this crowd were some of the richest and most consistent of Brooks's private supporters. Some of them, she knew, were losing interest in the South Bronx, a cause some considered by now happily

ended. And to be fair, it was easy to see how someone might feel that way: Streets bustled, buildings sparkled, flowering trees lined tidy sidewalks. One longtime contributor publicly worried that further grants to the South Bronx could be akin to “gilding the lily.” Brooks therefore needed this meeting to convey how fragile the Bronx’s progress against social disorder—and therefore *all* disorder—still was. In building after building, she pointed out, lived the children of single working mothers, many of them newly off welfare and some still on it, dependent on scarce day care to supervise their children while at work or in training. In the children’s world, popular music glorified violence and sex; drugs could still be bought in school, and negative peer pressure was everywhere.

The community was fantastically calmer and more upbeat than at any time in the past two decades; but the journey back from oblivion was only half over. Brooks wanted them to understand that the consequences of chaos engulf the poor first, and are not conquered solely because the environment becomes attractive again. Just as Bratton seemed to believe that police tactics alone could restore public order, the foundations seemed to believe that physical reconstruction alone built stable communities. The CDC was seeking to reestablish civic norms in a community that had been shattered, physically and socially, and had to be reconstructed almost literally from the ground up.

Hence Brooks’s dangerously tough—but thoroughly sound—answer to the foundation officer’s question. In the first instance, rebuilding the social order means insisting that people living in fixed-up buildings must behave themselves. More ambitiously, it means refashioning what political scientist Richard Nathan calls a “mutual obligation society”—the web of reciprocal responsibilities and expectations that mark any stable, healthy community. Like the Boston ministers who founded the Ten Point Coalition, CDCs like Brooks’s widely believe that compassion dare not take the form of indulging destructive behavior, or the whole community unravels.

□

Given that CDCs are such an effective force both for social cohesion and physical revitalization, with such obvious implications for crime

fighting strategies, you’d think they might have come to the notice of at least those urban police departments that are the most committed to “Broken Windows” policing. Not so.

In June 1993 the Police Executive Research Forum (a leading trade organization of big city police chiefs), the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and the Criminal Justice Program at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government brought together a select group of police chiefs and some of the CDC directors from their respective cities. The chiefs had to be introduced, not just to the people representing the community groups, but to the concept of the CDC itself. They had no idea such a thing existed.

When the CDCs began to explain themselves—how they could turn crack houses into home ownership opportunities for first-time buyers, for example—the chiefs got interested. And from that interest a fascinating experimental program was born—an idea that just may describe the next frontier for community policing nationwide.

CDCs have for years forged informal working relationships with local police at the street level. That part wasn’t particularly new. What made the demonstration ambitious and important was that it would test whether *formal* cooperation between CDCs and police—cooperation that would affect how both parties did business—could make a bigger difference. CDCs would bring their street savvy, knowledge of neighborhood problems, and ability to redevelop troubled property to the community-policing table. The parallel universes of community development and community policing would for once converge.

So would the sometimes divergent schools of police reform traveling under the respective banners of “community” and “order.” Critics of “community” policing sometimes complain that close relations between law enforcers and neighborhood groups make for good public relations, but don’t necessarily reduce crime. Many of these critics feel more warmly toward “order” policing—pursuit of lower-level criminals who contribute to an atmosphere of chaos that invites more crime. But as the Harvard conference made clear, the two elements are mutually dependent. Good “order policing” needs the cooperation of residents to identify trouble spots and root out criminals and gangs; good “community policing” needs the accountability and concreteness that come from measurably cleaning up disorderly, crime-ridden streets. Kelling emphatically embraces both, as did the Harvard conferees.

Dubbed the Community Security Initiative, the resulting program got under way in target neighborhoods in Kansas City, New York City, and Seattle. There were many difficulties—in creating a common vocabulary between the two sides, in building trusting relationships, and in overcoming decades of disillusionment. But all three partnerships persevered, and appear to have generated important results. Other cities are now adopting the approach.

In each of the three pilot cities, the community and the police worked out a set of mutual responsibilities that reflected a strong perceived link between physical and social disorder and crime. Under Seattle Police Chief Norm Stamper, the results were particularly significant: a 39 percent crime reduction in the target area, compared to a citywide reduction of only 9 percent. (Stamper resigned at the end of 1999, after Seattle hosted a ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization, and massive street protests drew what some considered an intemperate response from police. Nonetheless, his effectiveness in the CDC partnership remains a national model.)

Beyond the nose-diving crime statistics, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* summed up the social consequences this way:

To see how a partnership between police and community can change a neighborhood, hit the streets of the International District [the partnership's target neighborhood]. Start at Hing Hay Park, where the aromas of roasted duck and steamed dumplings have replaced the pungent odors of urine and booze that once dominated. Seattle police and community members got merchants to voluntarily stop selling high-alcohol wine and fortified beer. They put in tree lights, a restroom, and game tables in the park and reduced public boozing, brawls, and urination. These days, the park is a place where the elderly play Chinese chess and residents practice Tai-Ch'i.

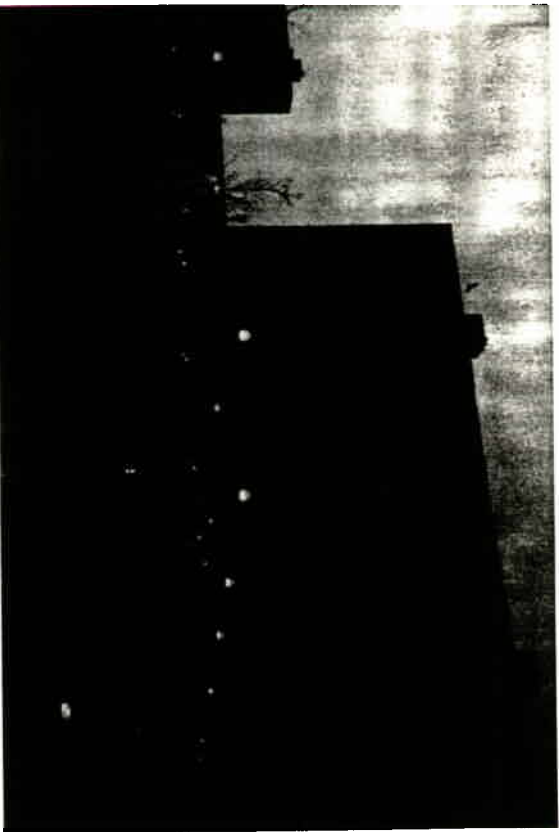
The Seattle police and the local CDC, the Chinatown/International District Preservation and Development Authority, put their policing and community development programs together, and the result was a transformation—both in the community and in the cultures of the two organizations. They concentrated police resources in the right places, cracked down on disorderly behavior, and fixed up derelict

properties. No one should underestimate the organizational and personal commitments required for such a partnership. As the *Seattle Times* described it: "Magnifying the accomplishment is the fact that it follows decades of troubled relations between Seattle police and the Chinatown International District, because of real and perceived transgressions and cultural and language barriers."

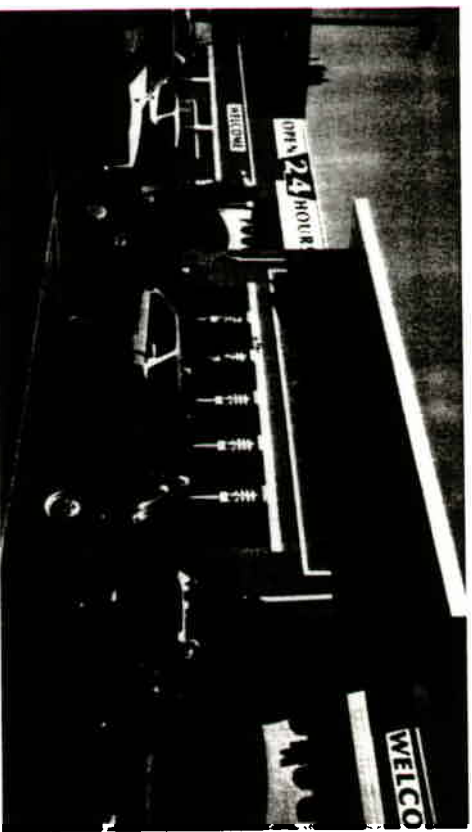
The kind of alliance forged in Seattle's International District, however difficult, could make the most of both community policing and community development. Do that in more cities, and suddenly the idea of stability in low-income neighborhoods becomes more than just a pious ideal. For too long, supporters of grassroots organizations (including the foundations to whom Genny Brooks gave a dose of reality) have referred to this dream of "stability" as if it could be accomplished by goodwill, compassion, and civic beautification alone. Law-and-order types, meanwhile, tend to speak of "stability" as if it were something that can be achieved solely by force. No one at the front lines takes either point of view seriously any more—least of all police and CDCs. Yet in the policy-making arena, the rhetoric lives on. And the two sides' political allies consequently tend to speak past one another.

That these two movements have accomplished so much separately is already cause for optimism. But as in so many other fields (including those in the coming chapters), their successes have tended to be heralded separately, in unrelated news accounts or policy analyses that look narrowly at one set of achievements and ask, in effect: "How much farther can this go?" The answer may often be: "Not much farther—unless it starts making connections to the other advances in other areas."

Better policing is a remarkable achievement. By itself, it won't save the cities. CDCs are an invaluable engine of redevelopment. Alone, they won't save the cities either. On the other hand, strategic alliances between these two—and with other forces detailed in the coming chapters—just might. From here, we turn to those other necessary elements, where remarkable progress is also under way—mostly, still, in isolation.



A new park fronts one of the remnants of Chicago's Cabrini-Green public housing project. The high-rise is slated for demolition to make way for smaller buildings. (Helen Berlin)



The transformation of Cabrini-Green quickly gave rise to neighborhood improvements. This new shopping center is directly across the street from the public housing site. (Helen Berlin)

PART V

Deregulating the City

THROUGH MOST of the twentieth century, cities have been both blessed and cursed with powerful friends in Washington bearing bold solutions to all their worst problems. And quite often, the older, more cash-strapped cities were just desperate enough to take the bait—to welcome any dollar, and embrace any corresponding regimen, that came wrapped in the promise of a turnaround in their toughest areas.

But time after time, the promised solutions turned out to be rigid, uniform, abstract, unyielding, and—even in the face of proven failure—pretty much irremovable. Time after time, individual cities discovered that their latest team of rescuers had given barely a thought to the distinctive circumstances of each place, were uninterested in the unintended difficulties they were causing, and had no time for suggestions and changes based on actual events.

Now and then, these schemes were colossally destructive: roadway plans that obliterated historic residential communities; transportation, infrastructure, and mortgage programs that subsidized suburbs and effectively redlined inner cities; welfare and housing schemes that made social leper colonies out of formerly mixed neighborhoods. Each of these things was cooked up in some laboratory or academic