

# City of Cincinnati



Interdepartmental  
Correspondence  
Sheet

Date 2/26/07

To	Colonel Thomas H. Streicher, Jr., Police Chief
From	Lieutenant Colonel Richard Janke, Patrol Bureau Commander
Copies to	Captain Kenneth Jones, District One Commander
Subject	District One 4th Quarter Problem Solving Report 2006

Category: Program / Project      Case #: Not entered      District: 1      Neighborhood: OTR

Coordinating Personnel: CPD (D1 Violent Crimes Task Force, Vice, Vortex, Uniform Patrol)  
OTR Chamber of Commerce  
Keep Cincinnati Beautiful  
3CDC

Description of Problem: See below

Phase of SARA: Assessment

SARA Documentation

## Scanning (state problem):

### 1. What is the Problem?

The problem is the high level of violent crime, disorder, and drug trafficking in Over the Rhine. The Over the Rhine neighborhood has had the highest number of calls for service – more than twice the next highest neighborhood – for six years. The calls for service represent the need for citizens, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to call police to address ongoing crime and disorder incidents. From 2000 to 2005, the neighborhood generated an average of 7633 calls for service per year, with the highest years being 2004 and 2005, with 7968 and 7967, respectively.

The Over the Rhine neighborhood experienced more violent crime in 2005 than any other Cincinnati neighborhood (606 violent crimes in OTR; no other neighborhood exceeded 243; the average for all other neighborhoods was for the year 2005 was 65 violent crimes). This violence peaked at the end of 2005 and beginning of 2006 when ten shootings occurred in less than two weeks.

Over the Rhine experienced 350 robberies in 2005 – the average for all other neighborhoods was 38.

### 2. Who is it a problem for?

Everyone in the Over the Rhine neighborhood is affected by the level of violence, disorder, and drug trafficking that exists. Residents, businesses, schools, visitors, and all persons who travel to and through the neighborhood are at risk and adversely affected.

### 3. Where is the problem?

Over the Rhine is a relatively small neighborhood, approximately ten blocks square, bordered on the east by Reading Road, on the south by Central Parkway, on the north by Mulberry Street, and on the west by Central Parkway. Over the Rhine is a densely populated community.

The following streets experience the highest levels of violent crime, drugs, prostitution, and disorder:

Vine Street, Twelfth Street, Thirteenth Street, Fourteenth Street, Fifteenth Street, Race Street, Green Street, Republic Street, and Pleasant Street. Drug trafficking was determined to be segregated, with Vine Street experiencing predominantly marijuana trafficking; Race, Green, Republic, and Pleasant Streets experiencing cocaine and crack trafficking; and Walnut Street experiencing predominantly heroin trafficking.

### 4. How long has it been a problem?

Over the Rhine has experienced higher levels of violent crime, drug and vice activity, and disorder than all other Cincinnati neighborhoods for many years. The violence and calls for service peaked in 2004 and 2005.

## **Analysis (identify factual support):**

### **Response (define action taken):**

#### **1. Who is/was available to assist in the CPOP/problem-solving effort? What did they add?**

Cincinnati Police District One personnel have a long standing and solid relationship with Over the Rhine community members and stakeholders. In partnership with the police, the Over the Rhine Chamber of Commerce created Safety Sectors within Over the Rhine to promote economic vitality and safety. The Safety Sector concept – a partnership between community stakeholders and police that involves regular meetings, information sharing, and problem identification and response - is used successfully in the Central Business District neighborhood and the OTR Chamber of Commerce adopted the concept. There are five Safety Sectors in Over the Rhine: 1) the Brewer District and Findlay Market, 2) Mulberry and McMicken, 3) Washington Park and Art Academy, 4) Main Street, and 5) Pendleton. Community members and police meet once a month to collaborate, share information, and address issues and problems.

District One worked in partnership with Keep Cincinnati Beautiful (KCB) on the Vine Street Lab Project, a focused use of enforcement and abatement resources along Vine Street, the core street in the OTR neighborhood.

The Vine Street Lab Project provided the impetus for the City's Building Department to barricade 49 buildings and issue 820 building code violation citations. The Lab Project also addressed blight: Community youth produced 14 murals for abandoned buildings and painted 30 recycled garbage cans, improving the appearance of Vine Street; 561 complaints of litter and weeds were investigated and resolved.

The Police Department worked with the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) to implement an effective housing and economic development strategy in the Over the Rhine neighborhood. 3CDC was created to increase effectiveness and efficiency of development activities as recommended by the Cincinnati Economic Development Task Force. The primary responsibility of 3CDC is implementation of real estate development projects that strengthen the core assets of downtown Cincinnati.

#### **2. What are your goals or what are you hoping to accomplish with your response?**

The goals of the problem solving effort were to reduce violent crime, reduce illegal drug activity, reduce disorder, reduce calls for service which are indicative of crime, drugs, and disorder, and create a perception of safety among residents, stakeholders, and community members in the Over the Rhine neighborhood.

#### **3. What precisely is your response or responses?**

The following crime problems were identified as being most prevalent and harmful:

- Felonious assault, primarily shootings, related to drug trafficking
- Prostitution
- Drug trafficking

Two common themes were voiced by community members and stakeholders as police and the community worked to identify problems and needs: the community wanted more police presence and visibility to address street level drug activity, prostitution, and disorder, and the community wanted blight – in the form of abandoned buildings, litter, and weeds – addressed by the city.

As a result of the analysis of data and information and input from community stakeholders and partners, the Police Department designed a multi-faceted strategy designed to reduce violent crime, disorder, and drug activity in the Over the Rhine neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

The following were components of the strategy and the action taken in support of the strategy:

#### **1. Creation of the Over the Rhine Task Force**

The Police Chief established the Over the Rhine Task Force and directed resources from Districts Two through Five to be deployed by the District One Commander to address crime and violence in Over the Rhine. The OTR Task Force served as the coordinating unit for implementation of components of the strategy. The additional resources enhanced focused enforcement efforts.

#### **2. Legal Remedies: Civil and Criminal**

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<sup>1</sup> See David Weisburd and Lorraine Green Mazerolle, Crime and Disorder in Drug Hot Spots: Implications for Theory and Practice in Policing, *Police Quarterly* Vol. 3 No. 3, September 2000, for research information which supports CPD's comprehensive analysis and strategy. Note pp 342- 346 for relevant conclusions, including, "...we know that highly organized and specified crackdown efforts can reduce drug market activity without displacement of crime; we know that civil remedies such as citations for building code violations, housing violations,....work effectively to reduce drug problems, and we know that working closely with place managers shows much promise in reducing street-level drug activity."

Data indicated that the Over the Rhine neighborhood experienced significant harm as a result of non-resident people coming into the neighborhood to solicit prostitution and buy illegal drugs. To combat this phenomenon, City Council enacted new ordinances (civil impoundments Cincinnati Municipal Code (CMC) sections 759.3 and 759.4) which created civil authority to impound vehicles used to commit crimes of solicitation and drug trafficking and to collect fees associated with impoundment of the vehicles.

City Council enacted CMC 910.23 which made possession of marijuana a fourth degree misdemeanor, elevating this crime from a minor misdemeanor which entailed only a payout citation for the violator. Implementation of this enhanced criminal charge enabled police officers to physically arrest and jail repeat offenders significantly and immediately reducing the prevalence of disorder in OTR as drug users who previously stood and sat on milk crates on the sidewalks throughout OTR were either jailed or moved off the sidewalks. Additionally, through physical arrest and its associated legal authority, police officers were able, in many cases, to develop information on buyers and sellers and develop probable cause for search warrants as a result of interviews and searches incident to arrest.

OTR Task Force members worked with the Cincinnati Building Department to board up 14 open and vacant buildings. These buildings were havens for prostitution and drug abuse.

The OTR Task Force worked in partnership with Keep Cincinnati Beautiful (KCB) on the Vine Street Lab Project, a focused use of enforcement and abatement resources along Vine Street, the core street in the OTR neighborhood.

The Vine Street Lab Project provided the impetus for the City's Building Department to barricade 49 buildings and issue 820 building code violation citations. The Lab Project also addressed blight: Community youth produced 14 murals for abandoned buildings and painted 30 recycled garbage cans, improving the appearance of Vine Street; 561 complaints of litter and weeds were investigated and resolved.

### **3. Informing and Training Community Members**

Police attend all Safety Sector meetings. Police attend regular monthly meetings with the following community groups and collaborate with community members: Over the Rhine Community Council, Brewery District Community Council, Washington Park Advisory Committee, 3CDC Over the Rhine Safety Committee, Over the Rhine Business Exchange, and the Main Street Business Committee. All of these groups were informed regularly on the progress of the Task Force and activities of the Vortex Unit and the progress of the Vine Street Lab Project. All groups expressed great satisfaction with the plan, the results, and the actions of the Vortex Unit.

Keep Cincinnati Beautiful and the City created and distributed the Citizen's Guide to Community Action; a guide for citizen's to address nuisance and blight in their neighborhoods.

The Vine Street Lab Project trained 32 community groups to conduct the "Blight Index" to assess blight and disorder in neighborhoods.

The Vine Street Lab Project worked closely with the Washington Park/Art Academy Safety Sector group to identify blight and disorder.

### **4. Focused enforcement effort**

The OTR Task Force, comprised of 42 police officers and five supervisors, provided high visibility patrols in cars, on foot, and on bicycles, throughout OTR. The patrols created a safe environment for residents and people doing business in OTR and disrupted drug trafficking and reduced incidents of violence related to drug trafficking.

The following summarizes the results of the Task Force enforcement efforts:

- 1080 arrests in 28 days (172 adult felony arrests, 863 adult misdemeanor arrests, 13 juvenile felony arrests, 32 juvenile misdemeanor arrests)
- 24 firearms confiscated
- 26.4 pounds of marijuana seized
- 12 ounces of crack seized
- 2.6 ounces of cocaine seized
- 2 ounces of heroin seized
- 156 illegal pills seized

As a result of the success of the OTR Task Force, Vortex was created as a permanent unit. Vortex is comprised of 50 police officers, five sergeants, and one lieutenant, under the command of the Patrol Administration Commander. The following summarizes Vortex enforcement activities from June through December 2006:

- 3,891 arrests
- 101 firearms confiscated
- 300 grams (.6 pounds) of heroin seized
- 18.5 pounds of cocaine seized
- 2.3 pounds of crack seized
- 70 pounds of marijuana seized

Throughout 2006, SWAT assisted the District One Violent Crime Squad, the Central Vice Control Section, and the Vortex Unit in the service of 27 search warrants in areas of Over the Rhine most plagued by drug crime and disorder. The following is a summary of that activity:

The SWAT Team conducted 27 search warrants in the Over the Rhine during 2006.

Search Warrant Locations:

- 1/14/06 218 West 12th Street, 3rd floor
- 1/20/06 1833 Vine Street #1
- 2/1/06 1905 Race Street #3
- 2/1/06 1905 Race Street #6
- 2/16/06 1812 Race Street #5
- 2/17/06 1674 Central Parkway #401
- 3/8/06 1317 Republic Street #2330
- 4/7/06 21 West 13th Street
- 4/11/06 1606 Pleasant Street #288
- 4/11/06 1608 Pleasant Street #1
- 4/11/06 1608 Pleasant Street 3rd floor
- 5/30/06 1435 Walnut Street #5
- 6/7/06 108 Green Street #270
- 6/22/06 1309 Walnut Street #113
- 6/22/06 1309 Walnut Street #213
- 6/28/06 1709 Vine Street 3rd floor
- 8/25/06 1319 Republic Street #2333
- 9/1/06 31 West 13th Street #17
- 9/23/06 1814 Race Street #22
- 10/17/06 108 Green Street #5
- 10/24/06 26 E 15th Street #2F
- 11/1/06 1406 Republic Street
- 11/1/06 259 W. McMicken Street
- 11/9/06 1705 Race Street #302
- 12/2/06 1209 Main Street
- 12/14/06 105 Green Street 1st floor
- 12/29/06 2027 Dunlap Street #2

During the 27 operations, SWAT encountered 62 adults and 7 children and secured for confiscation 19 illegal firearms. Subsequent searches of the locations resulted in the recovery of 430 grams of crack cocaine, 1,084 grams of marijuana, 163 grams of heroin, 70 grams of powder cocaine and \$5,300.00 U.S. currency.

## 5. Economic Development

As the community and the police address crime, safety, and blight, a key factor in sustaining improvement in Over the Rhine is economic development.

The City of Cincinnati and the Police Department have worked in partnership with the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) to implement an effective housing and economic development strategy in the Over the Rhine neighborhood.

3CDC was created to increase effectiveness and efficiency of development activities as recommended by the Cincinnati Economic Development Task Force. The primary responsibility of 3CDC is implementation of real estate development projects that strengthen the core assets of downtown Cincinnati.

The following Over the Rhine development and collaboration activities are listed in 3CDC's 2006 progress report:

### **“OVER-THE-RHINE**

3CDC continues to work with residents and community leaders in order to gain their support for implementing an effective housing strategy aimed at bringing life back into the landmark community. Our objective to revitalize OTR as a vibrant, economically and racially diverse mixed-use community was strengthened this year by the following progress made toward that goal. Specifically:

1. Phase I of the Gateway Project on Central Parkway, a 26 unit condominium project with underground parking spaces, was completed in January 2006. This \$6.4 million project represents the first market rate, new construction residential project in OTR in at least two decades.
2. Phase II of the Gateway Project consisting of 48 condominiums, 12 rental apartments that will provide housing for 27 first year students of the Art Academy of Cincinnati and over 20,000 square feet of commercial/retail space has begun construction. This \$16.8 million project will be completed no later than August, 2007.
3. The financing plan developed for the Gateway II project will be replicated for properties owned elsewhere in OTR. 3CDC has invested over \$8 million in private funds to purchase over 100 vacant and/or abandoned buildings and lots in OTR—and spent hundreds of thousands more to clean, board, secure, light and fence these blighted properties until they can be redeveloped.
4. 3CDC is working with the City of Cincinnati to invest \$3 million in Community Development Block Grant funds from the Federal government in projects that will have an immediate impact on the development landscape in OTR. Along with construction financing provided by CEF and CNMF, the City funds will allow a July 1, 2006 construction start on at least

30 additional homeownership units--both market rate and affordable. In addition, up to 50 more units will be made ready for full re-development by addressing pre-existing environmental remediation needs.

5. 3CDC is working as the construction advisor to the Corporation for Findlay Market to rehabilitate 5 vacant buildings on Elder Street, just south of the historic Findlay Market. The project will include the full restoration of the buildings' facades, as well as the build out of approximately 8,000-10,000 square feet of first floor commercial space that will be leased by the Corporation for Findlay Market. Construction will be complete by October, 2006.

6. Working with the Cincinnati Police Department, as well as other City agencies charged with enforcing health and building codes adopted to protect the public welfare, 3CDC has convened monthly meetings to target nuisance properties which have been abandoned by their owners and promote criminal activity.

7. 3CDC has made good its promise to work with other housing providers in OTR, including market and affordable developers. We provided development expertise to major residential and commercial projects underway or planned in the neighborhood, from the Findlay Market area to Main Street.

8. 3CDC has refined its plans for Music Hall Square, a mixed use project adjacent to Music Hall that includes a 630 space public parking facility, 5,000 square feet of office space for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and a 4,000 square feet restaurant. Conceptual designs of the new structures have been prepared and reviewed by Music Hall stakeholders. Development of Music Hall Square will be conducted in parallel with the proposed reconfiguration of the Music Hall's performance space.

#### **4. What were the dates that each element of the response was implemented?**

The OTR Task Force began in April 2006. Revisions to the Cincinnati Municipal Code were finalized in the first quarter of 2006. The Vine Street Project began in the first quarter of 2006. The development activities of 3CDC were a continuation of activities that began as early as 2004 and continued into 2006.

#### **5. Are you selecting solutions that will remain after the police no longer focus resources on the problem?**

The Police Department will continue to focus resources in the Over the Rhine neighborhood because although the problem solving efforts in 2006 have had a positive effect, Over the Rhine continues to experience crime and disorder to a greater degree than other communities. The economic development component will continue in Over the Rhine and this effort provides the greatest potential for sustained improvement in the neighborhood. Police will continue to work closely with all stakeholders and community groups. Police will continue to use legal (criminal and civil) tools to reduce crime and disorder.

#### **Assessment (document measurement):**

The following assessment measures attest to the success of the comprehensive approach to crime and disorder in the OTR neighborhood.<sup>2</sup>

Reduction in reported Part I crime: Reduction of Target Offenses

Part I crime in Over the Rhine declined 14.4% in 2006 compared to 2005. Violent crime (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault – the primary targeted offenses and the impetus for this comprehensive initiative) declined 31.5% (606 violent crimes in 2005, 415 violent crimes in 2006).

Blight Index: The Blight Index assessment revealed a 30% decrease in blight along Vine Street in Over the Rhine.

Reduction in Calls for Service: Calls for service in OTR declined 8.51% in 2006 compared to 2005 (7967 CFS to 7289 CFS).

Reduced Number of Reporting Areas Identified as Hot Spots in OTR

Seven hot spot areas in Over the Rhine were positively affected (four moved from "hot" to advisory and three moved off the map from advisory. Advisory indicates top 50 status in 1 -3 areas, violence, disorder, drugs, and crime). These positive hot spot effects are indicative of a greater perception of safety and less perception of disorder by OTR residents, businesses, and visitors.

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<sup>2</sup> See Michael S. Scott, "Using Crackdowns to Address Specific Problems" on the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing website, [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org), which supports CPD's assessment measures. Scott writes, "The measurement of your effectiveness should be tailored to the particular problem you are trying to address ...there are several measures of effectiveness.... [including] reduced number of target offenses, evidence that the [effort] has the support of the general public and the communities it most directly affects, increased perception of people directly affected by the problem that the situation has improved, increased perception of offenders and potential offenders that they are at higher risk of arrest....and altered their behavior."

## Community Testimonials

To date, District One has received more than 15 letters, more than 10 e-mails, and four Reports of Favorable Police Conduct from OTR residents, businesses, arts organizations, schools, and Community Councils, all commending the success of the OTR initiatives and the visibility and enforcement efforts of the OTR Task Force and Vortex. Positive testimonials continue to be received by District One.

District One Violent Crimes Squad members have interviewed subjects who have been arrested in OTR for drug trafficking and they have stated they recognize the high risk of arrest and have stopped drug trafficking activity in OTR. This is corroborated by data that shows the number of repeat offenders is declining – behavior is being changed. The civil impoundment of vehicles used for solicitation and drug trafficking peaked and has begun to decline as non-residents change their behavior.

The following are excerpts from letters which convey what the community has said about the efforts in Over the Rhine:

“Dear Captain Jones, [District One Commander], Tender Mercies and its Board of Trustees, residents, and staff are truly grateful for the wonderful job your department has done in the last year in Over-the-Rhine. Until 2006, Over-the-Rhine was devastated by crime of all kinds, with drug dealing leading the pack. Thanks to all the police initiatives, nine months later Over-the Rhine is a totally different neighborhood. We no longer have shoot-outs in our parking lot, and drug deals going down outside my office. As a resident of Over-the-Rhine as well, the increase in safety has been obvious. Kindest Regards, Bren Blaine, CEO, Tender Mercies, Inc., January 23, 2007.”

“...in April 2006, the Cincinnati Police launched the Vortex operation. My wife and I saw an immediate change....we felt safe again.” – from Jeffrey Brandt, resident, OTR.

“Dear Captain Jones, On behalf of the entire Cincinnati Opera Family I am writing to thank and congratulate the Cincinnati Police Department for the aggressive efforts and impressive positive results your team has achieved in fighting crime in Over-the-Rhine....we urge the Department and the City to continue its strategic support for enhanced OTR patrols, including special programs such as Vortex....Sincerely, Patricia K. Beggs, General Director & CEO, Cincinnati Opera.”

“Dear Captain Jones, I would like to express our company’s absolute support for the actions of the CPD over the last year....[we] have been a stakeholder in OTR since the 1980’s....People are again coming back to the neighborhood to live, work and play like never before...Sincerely, Bobby Maly, Vice President of Development, Model Group.”

“We have watched as many [of] the low income law abiding residents have given up from fear of the violence and fled the area after the riots leaving the streets to the criminals. Since the introduction of the vortex unit the open air drug dealing and the prostitution is significantly decreased. Make no mistake the law abiding residents of Over the Rhine welcome and need the increased police presence. Regards, John Donaldson, OTR resident.”

### Police Participation

#### Specific Feedback:

City Department Participation	Specific Feedback
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Buildings and Inspections

Community Development & Planning

Fire Department

Health

Metropolitan Sewer District

Parks

Public Services

Recreation

Transportation & Engineering

Water Works