



"Our Neighborhood. Our Choice."

BMHA Perry Choice Neighborhood

The Neighborhood-Based
Safe Neighborhood Initiative
Working Plan Component

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The UB Center for Urban Studies
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The BMHA-Perry Choice Neighborhood: The Safe Neighborhood Initiative

The Need

The Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA) Perry Choice Neighborhood Planning Initiative is designed to transform the Perry Choice Neighborhood (PCN) into a great place to live, work, and raise a family. To make this happen, the neighborhood will be revitalized and turned into a platform that enables residents to become economically self-sufficient, children to graduate from high school ready for college and/or entry into the workforce, and to help all residents realize their full human potential.

This type of neighborhood cannot be built without making it a safe and secure place in which to live, work, and raise a family. Neighborhood development and public safety must march in tandem. However, turning the PCN into a safe and secure neighborhood will not be easy. Over 50% of the working age population is jobless, with most people living on the economic margins. The resident's low-levels of educational attainment and lack of training is what keeps them on this economic margin. In metropolitan Buffalo, there are few economic opportunities for workers with less than a high school education, as well as for those with only a high school diploma, or "some college, but no degree." Given this reality, finding good jobs and opportunities in the formal sector of the economy is difficult.

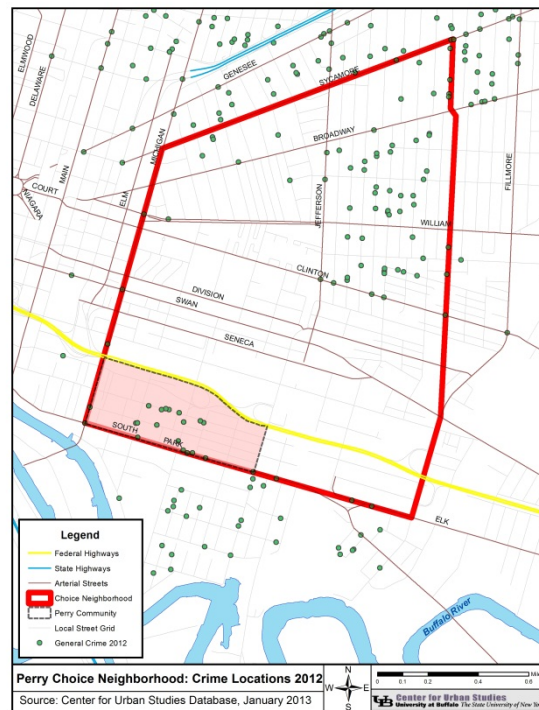
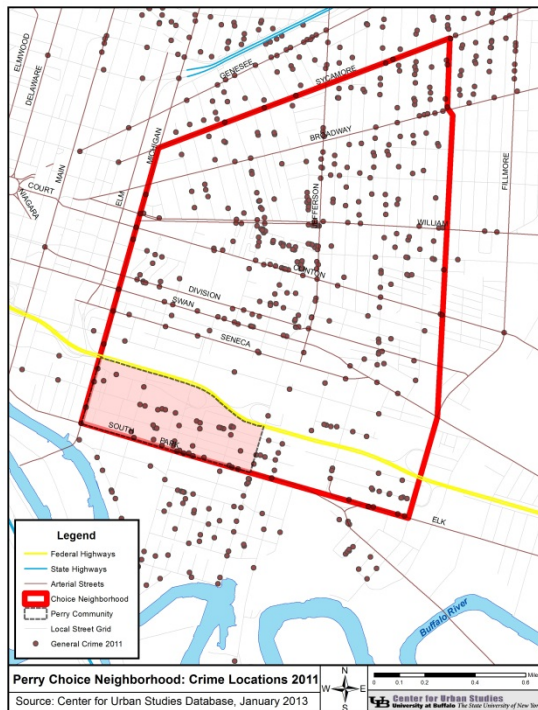
In this environment, many workers give up hope of obtaining a job that will elevate them to middle-income economic status. Not surprising, in this setting, some residents will seek opportunities in the informal sector of the economy, with a small number becoming gang members and/or urban outlaws. Although small in numbers, these groups can nevertheless create a neighborhood environment that is unsafe and foreboding. For this reason, crime and neighborhood distress walk hand in hand. Not surprising, then, the PCN community has noticeably higher rates of violent and property crimes than the City of Buffalo and Erie County. In 2011, PCN crime rates per 1000 persons for violent crimes included 9.9 assaults, 0.3 rapes, and 7.6 robberies in the PCN. In 2011, property crimes per 1000 persons included 21.1 burglaries, 33.0 larcenies, and 5.8 vehicle thefts. The rates for the first six months of 2012 were comparable to the patterns observed during the first six months of the previous year. These figures reinforce the notion of the PCN as an unsafe and dangerous community.

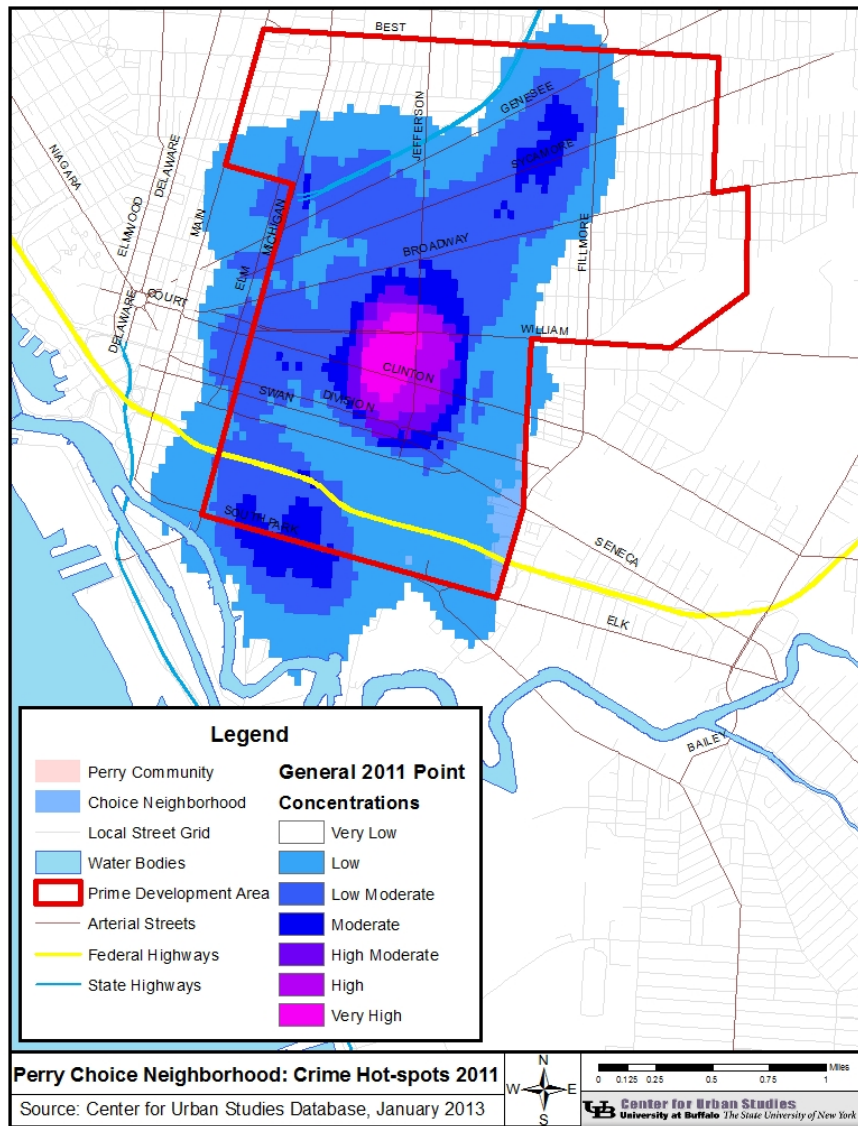
Young people are the most at-risk for becoming involved in outlaw culture and criminal activities, especially jobless youth who are not in school. In a distressed neighborhood, where hopelessness is combined with consumerism, the temptation of "easy money" and outlaw culture seem to be viable options for many inner city youth. Therefore, in the PCN, youth development and the Safe and Secure Neighborhood Initiative must be interwoven.

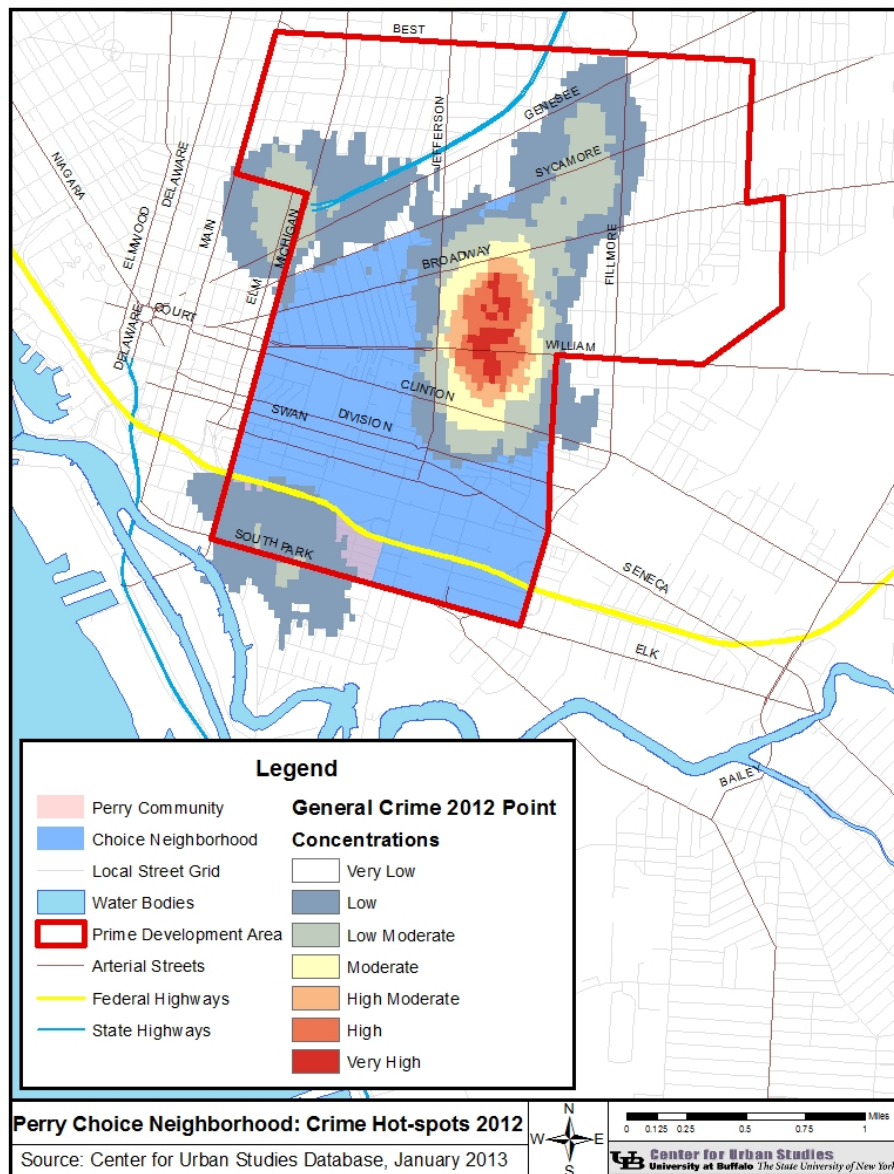
The goal of this report is to describe the *PCN Safe Neighborhood Initiative*, which is

designed to turn the PCN into a safe and secure community. The program is modeled after the highly acclaimed Cure Violence, formerly called CeaseFire Program, in Chicago, Illinois and the Non-Violent Street Workers Program in Providence, Rhode Island.

Although the Safe and Secure Neighborhood Initiative focuses on the entire PCN, it also recognizes that the BMHA housing developments have realities that differ from the larger neighborhood, although there are great similarities between the two. With this in mind, the plan will have two, highly interactive, components. One component, the Interventionist Program, will focus on the entire community, including the BMHA developments, while the second component, the Community Policing Initiative, will focus exclusively on the BMHA developments, Commodore Perry, A.D. Price, and Frederick Douglass.







The Safe Neighborhood Initiative

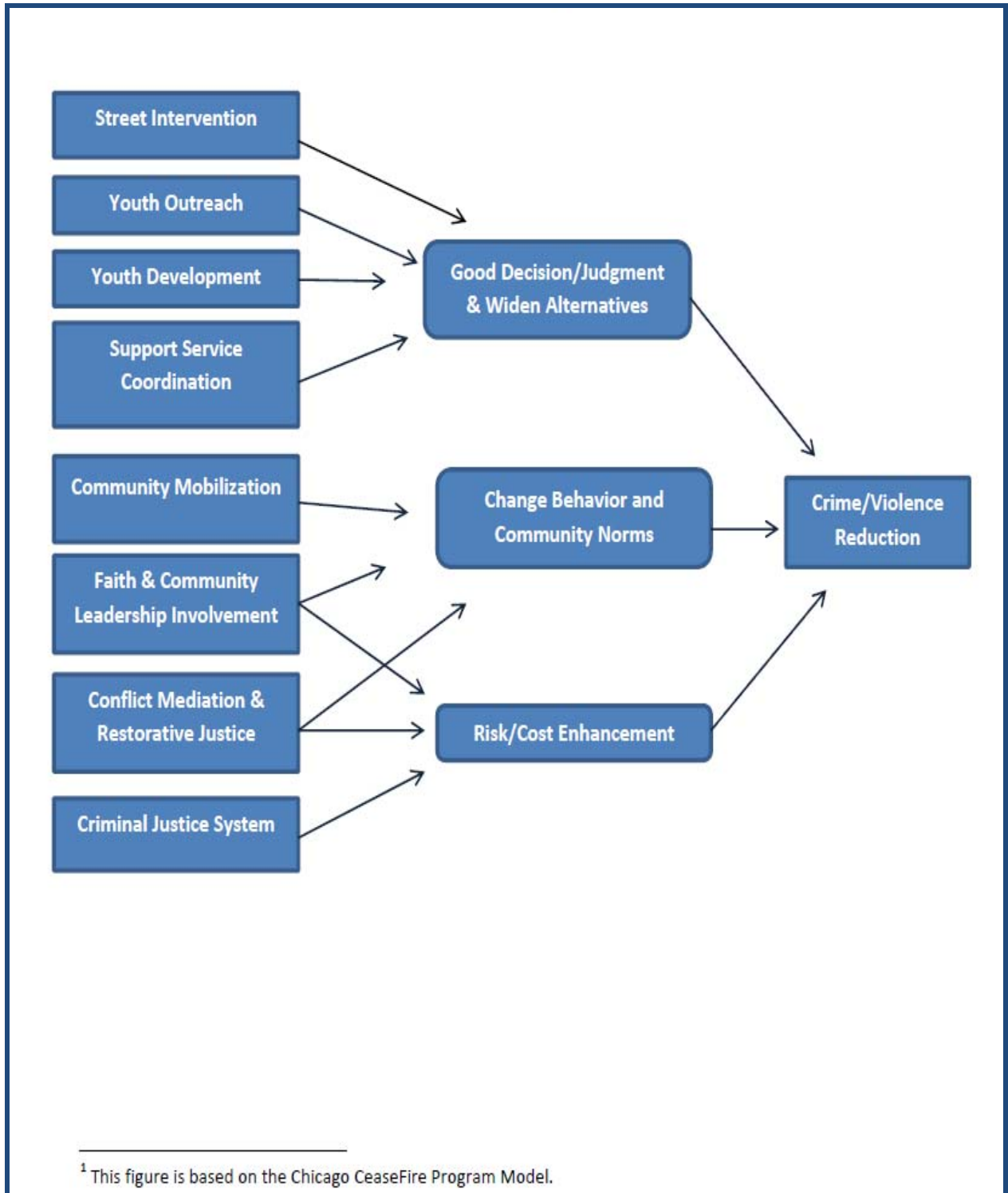
The transformation of the PCN into a safe community will not happen without the optimization of collaboration and cooperation among neighborhood residents, non-profit organizations and the Buffalo Police Department (BPD). The Safe Neighborhood Initiative must also recognize that problems causing crime are interconnected issues. Therefore, the continuum of solutions aim at reducing crime and violence must also be interconnected. The Safe Neighborhood Initiative (SNI) will consist of two interactive components, the Interventionist Program and the BMHA-PCN Community Policing Initiative, which are informed by the same strategy of neighborhood change.

1.0 The *Change Strategy*

The SNI is informed by a strategy of bringing about neighborhood change on the basis of the interplay of four elements. The first is to work with young people so that their judgment and decision-making are enhanced and that they are given alternatives to “street life.”¹ The second element focuses on using neighborhood mobilization and public education to change values, beliefs and community norms about violence across the neighborhood and within young people, especially the most at-risk youth. The last element involves raising the knowledge of at-risk youth about the risks and costs involved in crime and violence. The idea is to increase the awareness of young people about the consequences of crime and violence. In most inner city communities, including the PCN, many young people have been desensitized to violence. A goal of the SNI is to bolster the sensitivity of PCN residents, especially youth, to the consequence problems of violence, especially the dangers of being disabled, increased stress levels on families, young children being traumatized and the triggering of a contagion of aggression within the community. The goal is to make young people realize that crime and violence is a road to nowhere, while simultaneously providing them with opportunities to complete their high school education, go to college, or enter the workforce. Neighborhood crime and violence will be reduced if the programs and activities designed to impact these three areas are operationalized (Figure 1).

¹ The term “street life” involves the participation in gangs, crime and the engagement in risky behavior such as unprotected sex, drug use and excessive use of alcohol.

Figure 1: The Safe Neighborhood Model of Change



1.1 Neighborhood Safety Committee

The Safe Neighborhood Committee will oversee the SNI and will operate under the auspices of the Community Action Organization (CAO) of Erie County. The committee will communicate with the Westminster Foundation's Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, a 2012 Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation grantee. The committee will be composed of twelve individuals including social workers, health professionals, judges, lawyers, community safety officers, non-violent street workers, ministers, residents and representatives from the three BMHA Tenant Associations. The committee will have oversight responsibility for the SNI and they will also have prime responsibility to prescribe a program of "rehabilitation" for young people who consistently run into problems in the community. This will be a volunteer organization that is convened by the program coordinator of the SNI. The Safe Neighborhood Coordinator will be hired to coordinate and guide the activities of the Safe Neighborhood on a day to day basis. The Safe Neighborhood Committee will also provide a venue where representatives from the BMHA Community Policing Initiative and the Interveners can interact and discuss common issues.

1.2 The Interrupters Program

The Interrupters program is designed as a collaborative initiative led by the *Stop the Violence Coalition, Back to Basics, the Peacemakers and Big Brothers and Sisters of Buffalo, the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority and the Buffalo Police Department*. The program will target severely at-risk young people and those young people, age nineteen to twenty-four –years, who are transitioning to adulthood. The goal is to reduce violence and crime in the PCN by interrupting the cycle of violence, providing young people with an alternative to street life, and redirecting the lives of the most at-risk young people in the community. The Interrupters are modeled on the Chicago Cease Fire Program and the non-violent street workers program sponsored by the Providence Institute for the Study and Practice of Non-Violence.

The strategy is get young people to gain deep insight into the risks and consequences of a lifestyle characterized by crime, violence and extremely risky behavior and to get them to imagine a world filled with opportunities and greater possibilities. Within this context, the strategy will be to teach high at-risk youth to improve their judgment and make good decisions, while creating opportunities for them to complete their high school education and/or go to college, or receive vocational training and enter the workforce.

1.2.1 Program Components

The program will be based on eight core components: community mobilization, youth outreach, conflict mediation and restorative justice, Faith-leader involvement, criminal justice participation, peer leadership development program, support service program, and the mentoring program.

1.2.1.1 Community Mobilization

Community mobilization focuses on residents, local businesses, service organizations, and members of the faith community to build a safer and more secure neighborhood. The purpose of community mobilization is to build and energize a base of support for the initiative, to involve more residents in the fight to reduce crime and violence, and to work together to end the underlying causes of neighborhood distress. The program will use non-violent street workers to build neighborhood-based coalitions of local law enforcement, youth organizations, faith leaders, block clubs, and residents.

The street workers will be responsible for identifying high risk neighborhood youth and developing an engagement strategy for that cohort. The engagement plan will involve getting these young people to meet regularly to discuss issues and resolve conflicts before they erupt.

1.2.1.2 The Non-Violent Street Workers

The Interventionist program will be anchored by a team of non-violent street workers who will work directly with at-risk young people, including those in the critical nineteen to twenty-four year age cohort. There will be two full-time street workers and five volunteer street workers, who will be paid an honorarium for their involvement in the program. The street workers will mostly come from the ranks of former gang members and many will have spent time in prison, but who have rejected outlaw culture and crime. In this program, they will use their experience and knowledge to seek out and build relationships with troubled youths and young adults. The volunteers may be neighborhood or Buffalo residents who are street wise and comfortable working with troubled young people. The street workers will operate under the supervision of the Safe Neighborhood Program Coordinator and the Stop the Violence Coalition and Back to Basics.

1.2.1.3 The Neighborhood Peace Makers (NPM)

The NPM will support and reinforce the activities of the non-violent street workers. The NPM will be a collaborative of neighborhood-based organizations and faith-based institutions that will work closely with the street workers. Back-to-Basics and Stop the Violence Coalition will oversee the NPM program.

1.2.1.4 Youth Outreach

The non-violent street workers will reach out to young people in the PCN and build relationships with them. The street workers will identify youth

who are gang members and those at-risk for joining gangs, and will intervene in their lives through a form of “social work” mentoring within a case management framework. In this capacity, the street workers will help the young people set goals, explain to them the risks and cost of gang life, crime and violence. Working with these young people will also help the street workers learn more about the community, the tensions between groups, and places where violence is in danger of erupting. The street workers will encourage their clients to redirect their lives by becoming involved in the PCN Youth Council and/or returning to school, getting their GED or becoming involved in a job training program.

The street workers will reach out to youth in non-traditional settings, such as parks, street corners, and other places where they gather. Also, they will engage them during non-traditional work hours, especially those hours when violence is most likely to occur. Within this context, each street worker will develop a caseload of “clients” with whom they will work with regularly. Their task is to coach, advise and motivate these young people, as well as connect them to services and opportunities that will redirect the lives of the young people.

The street workers will respond to neighborhood shootings, and in the event of the possible consequent- killings, will work with the family of the victims, and will assist in mediating potentially violent situations, including retaliations. Here, the idea will be to gain information on the shootings, which might be helpful in preventing future incidents. A key objective of the program is to identify and diffuse “hot spots” for shootings and violence (e.g., conducting eyeball surveys with residents and community based organizations to identify areas frequented by potential offenders) and provide documentation. The program will also document the likely prevention of shootings and other acts of violence, and will respond to violent situation outside of the immediate PCN.

1.2.1.3 Conflict Mediation and Restorative Justice

Conflict mediation and restorative justice will anchor the SNI. Non-violent street workers will be taught the principles of conflict mediation and restorative justice, so they will be able to interrupt potentially violent situations by helping the parties resolve their differences peacefully.

The non-violent street workers will work with these young people and focus on changing the behaviors and thinking of high-risk youth. Each street worker will have a caseload of young people and will work closely with them. By working with these young people, they will learn about volatile situation and potent conflict and interrupt them. Not only will they mediate the conflicts, but also they will seek to repair and rebuild

relationships among those people involved in the conflict. Most important, the street workers will attempt to steer individuals away from “street life” to participation in more positive endeavors, such as education and employment opportunities.

1.2.1.4 Faith-Based Leader Involvement

Faith-based leaders are in a unique position to influence the thinking and behavior of community members and those who are at risk of involvement in shootings and killings. Many people turn to their church, mosque, or synagogue for comfort and strength, seeking a higher power to guide them to a path that will lead them away from a destructive lifestyle to one that is positive and constructive. The Interventionists will work to engage members of the faith community to assist in the work. These faith leaders will open safe havens, talk to high-risk individuals, participate and provide leadership in shooting responses, preach nonviolence, and urge congregants to work to stop shootings and killings.

1.2.1.5 Criminal Justice Participation

The ability to deal effectively with crime and violence cannot be done without the active participation of the criminal justice system. A positive, interactive partnership will be established with the police department. The plan is to work closely with them in developing the PCN violence and crime reduction strategy. For example, it is anticipated that the police will notify the Interventionists about shooting and killings in the PCN and in the sharing of crime data for the PCN GIS program.

1.2.1.6 Peer Leaders Youth Leadership Development Program

A major goal of the Interventionists will be to identify leaders of at-risk young people and recruit them. A program will be established to train them as peer leaders, who will assist the street workers in redirecting the lives of young people. The “peer leaders” will be assigned to work with a specific street worker, and they will assist him or her in expanding their caseload. The strategy is to use the peer leaders to expand the influence of the street workers within the neighborhood and to integrate them into their role as violence interrupters.

The young people accepted into the peer youth program will be paid a stipend for their participation. The peer leaders will be drawn from young people in the sixteen to twenty-four year old age groups, with a focus on those young people who have dropped out of high school and are not working. They will be paid a stipend of \$70 per/week until the training is

completed.

1.2.1.7 Support Service Coordination

The SNI will develop a partnership with the BMHA-UB Case Management Field Unit. The field office will work closely with the Interventionists and other partners and will identify young people who need assistance and then get them the help required to solve their problems. Case managers will be assigned to work with these youth and to follow up them until their issues have been resolved.

1.2.1.8 The Mentoring Program

The mentoring program will consist of individual and group mentoring components. Big Brothers and Big Sisters will work with the youth development team to establish a mentoring program for a select number of program participants. Big Brothers and Big Sisters will work with Back to Basics, the Stop the Violence Coalition, and the CAO of Erie County to identify and select mentors for the program and to match them with program participants. The goal will be to set-up mentoring relationships with ten youth during the first two years of the program and to increase the one-on-one mentoring to twenty-five students over a five-year period.

The one-on-one mentoring will be augmented by group mentoring sessions, which will be led by Back to the Basics. These group sessions will involve the young people in group discussions over a spectrum of issues dealing with everyday life and culture, including life management skills, time management, self-awareness, public policy, neighborhood development strategies, and career options. These sessions will be held on a weekly basis and will include field trips, guest lectures, movies and other thought provoking discussions.

1.2.1.9 The Training Program

The Stop the Violence Coalition and the Peacemakers will be responsible for developing a training program for non-violent street workers and other personnel. The training program will be based on the CeaseFire program and centered on (1) developing an understanding of the PCN initiative and the Safe Neighborhood program and the role of the non-violent street worker in bringing about neighborhood change; (2) how to identify, engage and build relationships with program participants, how to help participants change their thinking and behavior through motivational interviewing (which requires prior mastery of strong listening skills) as it relates to creating and implementing a risk reduction plan; 3) preventing

the initiation of violence or using mediation and conflict resolution to prevent initiation or retaliation when violence occurs; and 4) working with key members of the community, including residents, faith leaders and service providers through public education, responses to shootings and neighborhood building activities. Street workers will also spend at least two evenings in the community, walking the target area to become familiar with the area. Stop the Violence and the Peacemakers will build on this core base to develop an extensive training program that will provide the non-violent street workers and other key staff and volunteer

1.3 *The BMHA Community Policing Initiative*

The community policing initiative will be operationalized only in the Commodore Perry Homes and Extension, Frederick Douglass Homes, and A.D. Price. Although conditions inside the BMHA housing developments are similar to those found throughout the PCN, there are important differences between the two places. These distinctions must be taken into consideration in developing a strategy to make the PCN a safe neighborhood. Therefore, in addition to the neighborhood-wide crime and violence reduction strategy, a program will be established to make the BMHA PCN housing developments safe and secure. The BMHA Community Policing Initiative will be based on four interactive components: *community policing unit, the camera surveillance system, smart card entry system, and the silent complaint system.*

- 1.3.1 *The Community Policing Unit--* This unit will be staffed by a team of three community safety officers (CSO) who will work full-time in the BMHA housing developments located in the PCN. The community safety officers would be modeled after the officer programs used at Canisius College and Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI), but they will operate within the context of a community policing model. They would operate out of 312 Perry Street, where the existing BMHA security office is located, and will operate under the leadership of the security unit. Oversight for the unit will be provided by Resident Services and representatives from the Tenant Councils at the three PCN BMHA housing developments.
 - 1.3.1.1 All community safety officers will be required to attend regular sensitivity training workshops designed to make them aware of and understand the population with which they are working. Both the community safety officers and the resident trainees will be required to take this training.
 - 1.3.1.2 The CSO will be responsible for attending neighborhood meetings, both in the PCN and in the BMHA housing developments, and they are expected to integrate themselves fully into everyday life and culture within the neighborhood.

- 1.3.1.3 The CSO and the resident trainees will patrol the BMHA developments on foot, especially during those peak crime areas.
- 1.3.1.4 A crime analysis and GIS crime mapping system will be established in partnership with the University at Buffalo Center for Urban Studies to guide the neighborhood's foot patrolling.
- 1.3.2 *Camera Surveillance System* -- The BMHA already has a camera surveillance system in place, and its operations will be upgraded and made part of the Community Policing Unit. An assessment of the location of these existing cameras will be made and additional ones strategically installed, if needed, in all three BMHA developments in the PCN. For the camera surveillance system to be functional, the cameras must be monitored, especially during those hours when crime is mostly likely to occur. Therefore, to determine the best operating hours for the system, using both data from the Buffalo Police Department (BPD) and the BMHA, an analysis will be made of the times in which reported crimes occur. Then, based on this analysis, the operating hours of the police surveillance system will be established. To fully operationalize the surveillance, two police surveillance systems operators will be hired, along with four police camera surveillance systems trainees. The trainees will be residents with an interest in the developing the skills needed to view surveillance camera systems. The hours of camera viewing will be based on analysis of the time when crime incidents are the greatest.
- 1.3.3 *Smart Card Entry System for High Rises and Multiple Family Units* – a complaint that is constantly heard among residents is regarding the presence of unauthorized persons in the high rises and multiple-family dwelling units. A cost efficient way to solve this problem is through the use of a Smart Card Access System. The obvious value of Smart Cards over keys is that they cannot be duplicated, but even more importantly, the Smart Cards identifies the “users” entering the building, as well as the time(s), they accessed the facility. Even if the “user” allows a non-resident to use their card to access the facility, it is still possible to monitor that “user’s” card, so that multiple entries at unusual times can alert the development security team to possible problems.
- 1.3.4 *The Silent Complaint System and Hot Line*— the goal of this activity will be to identify serious neighborhood problems, gain information on crime and domestic violence, or to gather information on any incidents that threaten the safety, security and life in the BMHA-PCN developments. The goal of the “silent complaint” system is to provide an easy and anonymous way for residents to provide the PCN Security Team with information that will help them resolve issues and make the neighborhood a better place to live, work and raise a family. The security team will follow-up on all

complaints, as well as use them to monitor safety and security issue in the neighborhood. Three methods will be established for residents to make “silent complaints.”

1.3.4.1 A “silent complaint” form will be developed and distributed among residents. The form can be mailed or dropped off at the BMHA-PCN Planning and Information (P&I) Center.

1.3.4.2 A “silent complaint” hotline will be established, which residents can call and provide the security team with information about a crime or safety and security issue.

1.3.4.3 The “silent complaint” form will also be placed online, so that residents can fill them out electronically, both at the P&I Center and in remote locations.

1.4 GIS Crime Mapping and Research Unit

The University at Buffalo Center for Urban Studies in partnership with the BMHA will establish a crime mapping and research unit to study crime patterns in the PCN and BMHA housing developments, based on data gathered from Central Police Services, the BMHA Security Office, residents and from the non-violent street workers. The data will be used to determine the locations of crime, especially hotspots, and to determine patterns of criminal activity. The research team will also investigate causality and other issues that contribute to crime and violence in the neighborhood and formulate recommendations to guide the work of the SNI.

Role of Partners

| Work Area | Collaborating Unit |
|--|--|
| 1. Community Mobilization | <i>Back to Basics Outreach Ministries, Peacemakers, CAO, Mad Dads, Citizens Alliance, BMHA, and Non-Violence Street Workers</i> |
| 2. Youth Outreach | Peacemakers Coalition, CAO, |
| 3. Conflict Mediation & Restorative Justice | Peace Center, Back to Basics, Stop the Violence Coalition |

| | |
|---|--|
| 4. Faith-based Leader Involvement | Back to Basic Ministries |
| 5. Criminal Justice Participation | Stop the Violence, BMHA Security, CAO |
| 6. Peer Leadership Program | Stop the Violence, Peach Centers & Back to Basics |
| 7. Support Service Coordination | BMHA-UB Case Management Field Unit |
| 8. Mentoring Program | Big Brother, Big Sisters, Stop the Violence, Mad Dads, Back to Basics |
| 9. Non-Violent Street Workers | Stop the Violence, Mad Dads & CAO |
| 10. Coordination of the Initiative | The Community Action Organization of Erie County |

Performance Indicators and Metrics

The Safe neighborhood Initiative (SNI) will have a twofold purpose. First, it will be concerned with the development programs and activities that focus on the social development of young people. Here, the idea is to provide them with experiences that separate them from “outlaw” culture and the negative dynamics of street life. The second, and highly interrelated goal, is to reduce significantly crime, violence and the pervasive influence of outlaw culture. A collaborative under the leadership of the Community Action Organization (CAO) of Erie County, will oversee this effort. The target population for this initiative is young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty years who are not in the labor force or only marginally attached to it, and have no high school diploma. A secondary target is those young people who are the children of ex-offenders, who attend school sporadically, and/or who are members of gangs. The third target is youth who have lost interest in school and tend to loiter aimlessly within the neighborhood. The SNI performance indicators are constructed to provide information relevant to the two purposes and three target areas of this aspect of People component.

Youth Development

1. All youth without a high school diploma will complete GED or return to high school and successfully complete high school degree.
2. The PCN will establish a Mid-Night Basketball League for neighborhood youth and a summer sports league.

3. Youth will obtain an associate's degree, advance work skills training, or go to college.
 - a. Number enrolled in job training or other workforce development programs
 - b. Number completed job training or other workforce development programs
4. Youth, not in college or a training program, will be members of the "official" labor force.
 - a. Number/percent that are employed
 - b. Number/percent that are unemployed
5. Youth will participate in high quality youth programs in the PCN.
 - a. Number of youth involved in positive youth development activities
6. The PCN will be a "gang-free" community

Safety and Security

1. The crime rate (violent and property) in the PCN will be below the average for both the City of Buffalo and Erie County.
 - a. Number of residents reporting that they were victims of crime in their home or their neighborhood
 - b. Residents report feeling safe in their homes
 - c. Original Residents report feeling safe in their homes
 - d. Residents report feeling safe in their neighborhood
 - e. Original Residents report feeling safe in their neighborhood
 - f. Number and percent of students who feel safe at school
 - g. Number and percent of students who feel safe traveling to and from school
2. A neighborhood court system will be established to provide sentences for misdemeanors in the PCN by youthful offenders.
3. An intervention team will monitor youth activities and work with young people to reduce violence and gang activities in the PCN.
4. A Neighborhood-based Community Watch will work with the interventionist in monitoring criminal and anti-social activities in the neighborhood.
5. Youth and residents with drug problems will receive treatment and comprehensive care for their addiction in a high quality clinic.
 - a. Number and percentage of residents reporting stress or psychological distress

Metrics Table

| Program/Strategy | Agency/Organization | Major Issue/Challenge | Performance Metrics |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Youth Council | Boys and Girls Club, 4-H Club | Youth Development | # of youth in positive youth development activities |
| Non-Violent Street Workers | Stop the Violence Coalition, Back to Basics | Criminal Activity | #/% decrease in violent and non-violent crimes |
| Neighborhood Peace Makers (NPM) | Stop the Violence Coalition, Back to Basics | Criminal Activity | #/% decrease in violent and non-violent crimes |
| Community Policing Initiative (CPI) | Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA) | Criminal Activity | #/% decrease in violent and non-violent crimes |
| Research and Crime Mapping Unit | UB Center for Urban Studies (CUS) | Identifying Crime Hot Spots | #/% decrease in violent and non-violent crimes |