

# THE NYPD PLAN OF ACTION AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD POLICING PLAN:

## A Realistic Framework for Connecting Police and Communities

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If I count my years as a military police officer in Vietnam, I have spent nearly 50 years in the policing profession. I have been part of, or witness to, just about every twist and turn in policing philosophies and methodology—from early community policing experiments in the Boston Police Department in the 1970s, to the first large-scale application of “Broken Windows” policing in the New York City subway in the early 1990s, to the development of Compstat in the NYPD in 1994, to the integration of advanced technology into policing and counter-terrorist work in Los Angeles in the 2000s, to the current challenges in New York City. I view what we are trying to do in New York today as the culmination of my long career and an opportunity to put all that I have learned to work in a city I love and have long considered my home.

I have been a change agent in all six police departments I have been privileged to lead. In every case, I have used the vehicle of a plan of action to jumpstart change and reform in the department in question. In these plans, I have tried to define what was needed in the way of resources, staffing, technology, and political will to move from each department’s current state toward a more motivated, more productive and more effective organization. I think we can do it again in the NYPD of 2015; and furthermore, I think we have an opportunity to achieve what has, until now, been an elusive goal: we can establish a truly realistic and workable community-policing plan across the neighborhoods of a large city.

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### THE NYPD PLAN OF ACTION

With our plan of action, the NYPD is undertaking a series of strategic changes in how it performs its critical police mission. Taken together, these changes mark a significant departure from past practice. The Department will define and implement new initiatives in five key areas:

- Tactics – A neighborhood-policing plan that is rooted in local communities and tied to local concerns.
- Technology – A revolution in NYPD technology, bringing its full capabilities to police officers in the field.
- Training – Field training for recruits and recurring training for veterans, imparting the skills to manage the human encounters that are the fundamental business of street policing.
- Terrorism – Strengthened investigative and enforcement efforts with federal, state and local partners, as well as significantly enhanced critical-incident capabilities in response to evolving overseas conditions that have altered the local threat picture.



- Trust – A compact with both the communities and the cops to deal fairly with each other, with people stopped or arrested and, just as important, with the officer who has committed an error of judgment, not a criminal act.

The NYPD calls these categories the Five Ts. They form the framework of our emerging plan to make the city safer than ever before, and to do so by reaching across the divide that still persists in some minority communities. It is a plan to break down, once and for all, the barriers between two parties who should be natural allies: the police and the people they serve.

## COMMUNITY POLICING AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Since my early days in this business I have believed in the vision of community policing—of cops and community members working as a seamless team, of cops really knowing communities, of community members really knowing their cops. But I have also recognized the challenges inherent in operationalizing the community policing idea, especially in a large city. We don't want to deceive ourselves into believing that the department as a whole is engaging with communities and neighborhoods when just a small part of the team has been assigned to specialize in community work. The NYPD has an excellent staff of community-focused officers working with everything from youth programs to block associations to crime prevention, and they have done important work in keeping the department connected with the neighborhoods we serve. They have been a bridge between the community and the police. But bridging the police/community divide is not enough. We want to close it. To do so, we have to undertake community policing on a far larger and more comprehensive scale. And at the heart of the plan must be the patrol officers themselves, the cops who answer calls and patrol the streets each day.

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Since the advent of 911 emergency systems, and the attendant demand for police services in response to 911 calls, police agencies have faced the challenge of staying connected to communities and neighborhoods. We have known since the 1960s that cops running from call to call simply do not have the time to engage with communities and individual residents in any meaningful or problem-solving way. The situation is compounded by the fact that officers assigned to answering calls get in the habit of doing that and nothing else. They become, in effect, call-answering machines, their schedules set and their workdays defined by the radio and the next call.

On the other hand, efforts to establish separate community policing staffs within police departments, to perform the community connection functions that the patrol cops do not, have frequently foundered and failed. The first problem that arises is a bifurcation of the police force and consequent resentments between the cops who are doing the calls-for-service work and the seemingly favored group who are building community relations but have no apparent steady workload. The patrol cops think that the community policing officers aren't really working and they don't become any more attuned to the community themselves because they aren't the ones interacting with community members. In addition, the community officers have often been too few in number to establish any kind of critical mass or around-the-clock presence, or to make inroads with more than a small portion of a typical precinct's many parts. Precinct-based community affairs is



composed of two or three cops working eight-hour shifts, and they scarcely make a dent in the problem. All of these shortcomings were apparent in the Community Police Officer on Patrol or C-POP program that the NYPD attempted to implement in the early 1990s, and the program gained little real traction or purchase.

The second problem is that young officers assigned to the community function may not have skills to accomplish their mandate. Without training or a genuine support system to help them take on these complex roles, they can't be expected to form community alliances and address entrenched community problems. Yet generally, where these kinds of programs have been tried, that is exactly what has happened, with the cops thrust into social mediation and neighborhood organization roles for which they are unprepared. Disconnected from calls for service, these community officers also tend to lose some of their edge, as they stop being first responders and crime fighters and become a kind of hybrid: part police officer, part social worker.

### THE NEIGHBORHOOD POLICING PLAN

Chief of Department James O'Neill has developed a Neighborhood Policing Plan that I believe to be the first truly realistic and comprehensive approach to achieving the community policing goal in a large organization. In my estimation it addresses every one of the problems and failings I outlined above, while delivering a framework for local police/community collaboration. The proposed plan is structured to solve the central problem in implementing the community policing ideal: It keeps our cops engaged with police work while allowing them to embed in our communities as part of a team that works together to improve safety and quality of life for everyone.

How do we avoid the trap of separating patrol and community functions? How do we make the patrol officer who answers calls and the community officer who engages with the neighborhood the very same person? We

can only achieve this by completely revamping how patrol is done in the precincts and establishing an entirely new model of how to staff and execute the patrol function. Chief O'Neill's plan has a number of salient features:

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- Division of each precinct into four to five fully staffed sectors. Currently precincts have as many as eight to ten sectors, but they are rarely if ever individually staffed, and depending on the available staffing, a single patrol car may be covering two to three sectors on a given shift.
- Sector boundaries that conform as much as possible to actual neighborhood borders, establishing a sense of connection between the police patrol team and the local population.
- Permanent assignment of a two-officer patrol car to each sector on each shift, and on some days, two such cars to manage the workload. Unlike current practice, the patrol cars will maintain sector integrity, the policing term for keeping patrol cars in the sectors to which they are assigned rather than sending them to calls outside the sectors during the course of a shift. Under current prac-



tice, officers are pulled outside of their assigned sectors so often that they see themselves as working a shift and a precinct rather than a neighborhood. Under the new plan, the sector officers will serve each day in their assigned sectors, with the same officers staffing the same shifts and rarely leaving the sector while on duty. Each day, they will be answering calls for service and working proactively to correct conditions and otherwise address sector problems.

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- An entirely new set of expectations for patrol officers in addition to answering calls—to follow up on past crimes, meet with community members, and work as active problem solvers in their assigned sectors—and sufficient time in their daily schedules to perform these functions. The officers will be allotted a minimum of 33 percent of their respective tours, or about two hours and 20 minutes each eight-hour tour, to engage in proactive and problem-solving activities. The current patrol system of answering 911 calls handles emergencies but is not set up to address and solve problems. In contrast, the new Neighborhood Policing Plan is designed to promote a strong problem-solving orientation.
- Teams of officers working three shifts with geographic responsibility for each sector and providing 24/7 coverage. The officers will know their sectors, the citizens they serve, the problem areas, and the problem people. Citizens will get to know their cops. The officers will take ownership of their sectors. The public will identify sector officers as their go-to-cops and not just another blue uniform.
- Genuinely collaborative efforts among sector officers and community residents in each of the sectors. They will be sharing responsibility for gathering information, identifying problems, and jointly planning local measures to address crime and other issues in the sector. Officers will help form new community groups that tap more than just the usual attendees at precinct meetings, thereby engaging a wider public. Communities will have a voice, at the most local level, in how they are policed. Officers will have multiple opportunities to engage with community members in non-enforcement, non-response, and non-confrontational situations.
- Neighborhood Coordinating Officers (NCOs) in each sector to identify and manage sector problems. This idea is loosely based on the Senior Lead Officer Program in Los Angeles, where senior lead officers help organize and direct crime-fighting and quality-of-life initiatives in each of the Los Angeles Police Department’s 22 divisions. Two NCOs working as a team will be assigned to each sector, responsible for monitoring crime trends and reporting those trends to the other officers in the sector. The NCOs will be instrumental in identifying problems and conditions, in leading the other sector officers to address problems, and in connecting with neighborhood residents. They will organize efforts



to correct conditions in a given sector, mapping out plans and enlisting sector officers in putting the plans into effect. NCOs will answer calls for service for some part of their shifts to keep them abreast of current conditions in the sector, but their primary functions will be community contact and cooperative planning, intensive analysis of sector conditions, the gathering of intelligence about crime and criminals in the sector, and targeted enforcement efforts.

- Specialty training for NCOs to provide them with a foundation in community work and problem solving. This training includes the Detective Bureau's course for newly assigned investigators and training in such subjects as accident prone locations, CCTV cameras, crime prevention, domestic violence, policing in the public housing developments, nuisance abatement, street narcotics enforcement, subway policing, mediation, working with community residents, organizational skills, public speaking, crime analysis, and managing social service resources through social service agencies and contractors.
- The creation of a sector team, including the sector officers, the NCOs, and engaged community members. Instead of leaving lone community officers to fend for themselves as in many community policing plans, the Neighborhood Policing Plan provides a layered support system that can sustain problem solving efforts from shift to shift, week to week, and month to month, correcting one of the fundamental flaws of most community policing models, which is the lack of sustained follow through.

- Maintaining response times to calls for service. Even as sector officers are sometimes engaged in other activities, the Neighborhood Policing Plan accounts for calls for service by assigning a precinct-wide team of four two-person response cars on each shift. These response cars supplement the sector cars and the NCOs. The response cars will pick up calls in sectors throughout the precinct when the sector workload

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becomes too heavy or when the sector cars are engaged in other kinds of operations, such as working with the NCOs to correct conditions. The response cars are a critical part of the plan because they ensure reliable and timely response to calls for service no matter what other operations may be under way in a given sector. They also make sector integrity possible, as sector officers will no longer be forced to leave their sector to back up other sectors except in extreme situations.

- Use of technology to enable the new sector patrol officers. The NYPD is becoming the most technologically advanced department in the nation, providing a smart phone for every officer and a tablet for every patrol car. With these tools, patrol officers will be able to retrieve vast amounts of data from the NYPD's various databases and perform many administrative functions in the field. As new mobile apps connect officers to other city agencies, the officers will become community



touch points, who can use—and help the citizens use—a wide range of public and private services. Furthermore, in-vehicle GPS technology will allow superior maintenance and supervision of sector integrity and deployment.

- Newly formed, neighborhood-focused work groups. These groups will help guide the NCOs' work and the work of the sector patrol officers during the 33 percent of tour not devoted to radio calls. The NCOs and sector officers will organize informal meetings between sector officers and residents from their respective sectors—genuine working sessions in which neighbors and police officers collaborate on plans and strategies.

As sector officers and NCOs learn about their sectors—and about the people who live in, work in and visit them—they will be able to better distinguish the good actors from the bad and to develop a degree of detailed knowledge about crime and disorder that is largely unprecedented. Where pockets of violence and crime remain in New York City, the NYPD will rely heavily on what these officers can learn from their new community contacts about specific crimes, broader crime patterns, and general criminal activity.

**“ Properly staffed and equipped, the neighborhood-policing plan can form the foundation of a new understanding between police and communities, finding common ground on local ground.”**

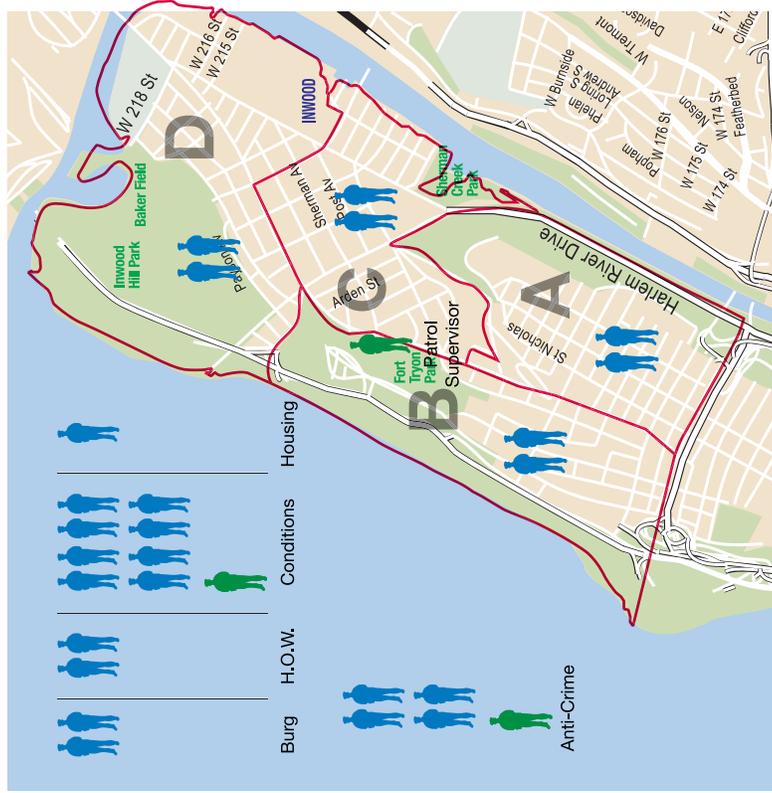
The Neighborhood Policing Plan's emphasis on local policing and citizen participation and satisfaction is a major shift from past practice—a full pivot to policing with and as part of the community, and not just doing things to it. The plan seeks to provide the structure for finding common ground on which to build a safer and fairer future:

- Officers in the same sector every day, with the time to engage
- Officers with data at their fingertips to inform their actions
- Officers working with residents on a regular basis on real issues and real problems

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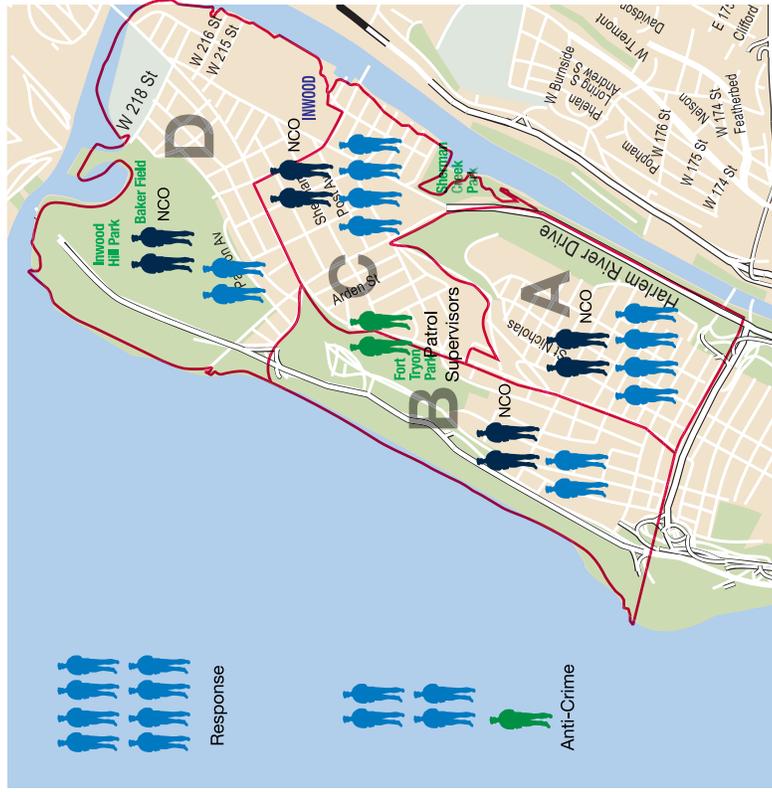


**Typical 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, 034 Precinct: Pre-Pilot**  
28 UMOS



**Pre Plan Map**  
Numerous specialized officers assigned; sectors are not steady; 32% of officers are tasked with nearly all calls for service; officers are not given space to make community connection

**Neighborhood Policing Model – A Cultural Shift**  
Typical 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, 35 UMOS



**Post Plan Map**  
Renaissance cops; steady sectors with sector integrity; 63% of officers working on calls for service, which allows them to distribute that load and find time for non-enforcement, non-response, proactive community interaction