

## "SUPER AGENCY" IS KEY TO COMMUNITY POLICING

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Georgia State University professor Robert R. Friedmann, author of "Community Policing: Comparative Perspectives and Prospects," advocates the creation of a super agency to support community policing. It would facilitate, coordinate, enhance and support those actions needed to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods and thus help prevent or reduce crime.

In the fight against crime, attacking the factors and motives behind it is as important as making a dent in criminal behavior itself. That is a key principle of community policing. But the police cannot carry this burden alone, nor should they. Instead, the full agenda of community policing can be best achieved through creation of a "super agency." This agency would be, in effect, a board of directors for community policing. It would facilitate, coordinate, enhance and support those actions needed to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods and thus help prevent or reduce crime.

The super agency would comprise members of a range of public and private organizations - important local and state government departments like Housing and Children and Youth Services, key business or civic leaders, educators and community representatives. Under this model, the police are the first to identify problems, both criminal and social. For example, a beat patrol officer might report a potential child-abuse problem. The super agency would work with police, child-welfare services, neighborhood organizations, schools and other groups to address the problem. This process formalizes the otherwise loose relationships police now have with other agencies. It helps to get things done - to repair a malfunctioning street light, secure an abandoned house, identify an at-risk child.

By providing greater cooperation between citizens and police, the process also transforms the way services are provided in our neighborhoods. Under this model, citizens and police work together to fight crime at its roots. Some cities have already begun experimenting with such a model. Savannah has established a super agency called the Crime Prevention Collaborative.

Portland is near the end of a five-year plan to establish a Bureau of Community Policing. Certainly, a super agency is not the final answer for turning back the tidal wave of crime. But as an important part of the community policing concept, it offers the best promise for empowering citizens to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood.

It is essential that such an approach be formalized, rather than dependent upon a specific police or city leader who "knows how the system works." Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell has embraced the community policing concept. President Clinton has put weight of the federal government behind it, providing funding in the new federal crime bill. Atlanta is currently participating in a federal program designed to increase community policing. Atlanta has never been in a better position to embark on such an ambitious effort with realistic chances for success. Community policing - and the super agency - offer not only the hope for better policing, but also for a better society.