## Successful Practices & Strategies          Vol. 2 | No. 9

# Sacramento Police Department

Sacramento, California
https://www.sacpd.org/

### Community policing element

Problem solving, organizational transformation

### Problem/issue

Neighborhood safety

### Problem description

As the Sacramento Police Department began its geographic policing transition, it sought technology solutions that would enable the department to greatly expand its ability to communicate online with the community.

### Community policing strategies implemented

After extensive research, our department decided that Nextdoor was the perfect social media platform to advance community communication and geographic policing. Nextdoor allows law enforcement agencies to target communication to geographically distinct areas of the city, which perfectly supported our geographic policing model. Moreover, Nextdoor connects neighbors to one another, which fosters community connection and empowers residents to feel responsibility for the safety of their neighborhoods. In the "new normal" of limited resources, it is important for our residents to take an active role in keeping their neighborhoods safe. Furthermore, Sacramento residents were already using Nextdoor. In fact, 50 neighborhoods and 1500 residents had signed up for the service before the Sacramento Police Department joined. Instead of foisting yet another application on the community, our department decided to embrace a tool that was already working for our residents.

**Nextdoor.com**

Nextdoor is different from other social media sites in several ways that make it an appropriate social media solution for a police partnership. First, it was built from the ground up to support neighborhoods and to help facilitate strong community relationships. In addition, Nextdoor verifies that its members are actual residents of the neighborhood and requires them to use their real name. This creates a culture of accountability and civility that is less common on sites that allow people to post anonymously, like the majority of most mainstream social media platforms.

Nextdoor is also unique in how it has intentionally designed the interaction between the police and the neighborhoods. Historically, when officers in Sacramento wanted to communicate online with neighborhoods, they had to join various neighborhood e-list servers or Facebook groups or share information with one neighbor in the hopes that he or she would share the information with the whole neighborhood. With Nextdoor, our officers have one site they can use to interact with representatives from 86% of all neighborhoods in the city of Sacramento. Officers can push important updates to all Nextdoor neighborhoods across the city or to select neighborhoods. They can share crime updates and safety tips and invite residents to neighborhood watch trainings. However, while police can post information to one or many neighborhoods and neighbors can respond back either publicly or privately, our officers do not have direct access to the neighborhood sites on Nextdoor.

**How is the Sacramento Police Department using Nextdoor?**

The police department accesses Nextdoor through four command pages and one headquarters page. Approximately ten members of each command have access to that command's page. Through the use of Nextdoor, the geographic policing officers, detectives, and management staff are able to post timely and relevant crime and safety information directly to all of their neighborhoods in one consistent message post. Posts generally range from information on a crime in their neighborhoods that occurred the night before to a newly identified crime trend or series and tips neighbors can utilize to avoid becoming a victim. Though the headquarters page, the Public Information Office and the neighborhood watch program have access to the entire city and can use Nextdoor to send media releases, alert residents of critical missing persons, and send out information on neighborhood watch training.

Our department also makes extensive use of the map and metrics features of Nextdoor, which allow our area commands to view which areas have Nextdoor sites, the number of residents on each site, and how active those residents are online. With that information, our staff is better prepared to target specific areas in which neighborhood watch groups and neighborhood watch trainings may be needed to better encourage community involvement.

## Change and/or impact as a result of these community policing efforts

Our commitment to geographic policing and community engagement is already paying dividends. Our 2013 Part One crimes, as defined by the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, have dropped 10.1 percent from 2012 levels; in 2014 Part One, they have dropped an additional 15 percent. Our ability to reach out and communicate directly with our residents has increased dramatically. In June of 2013, there were 1500 existing Nextdoor users in our city. In July 2014, just 13 months after our partnership with Nextdoor was

established, Sacramento Nextdoor membership has grown to over 20,000 members. We firmly believe that connected communities are safer communities, and the use of Nextdoor as an additional communication medium has helped us to market and expand our neighborhood watch groups by 14 percent.