



## Successful Practices & Strategies

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# Bellwood Police Department

Bellwood, Illinois

[www.vil.bellwood.il.us](http://www.vil.bellwood.il.us)

Community policing element

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Problem/issue

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Community partnerships

Strained relationship between police and public

Problem description

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Many residents were reluctant to engage with or assist law enforcement because they felt that law enforcement agents were not sensitive or understanding when interacting and communicating with community members.

Community policing strategies implemented

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The department realized that repairing the mistrust and misunderstanding between the public and police would require moving in a different direction, meeting with one another, and using methods outside the realm of tradition. The Bellwood Police Department decided to use a three-pronged approach involving community leaders, community engagement, and community policing. It reintroduced foot patrols in designated “hot spots.” As a result, residents and officers were able to engage in a more meaningful and friendly way outside of the police station and on the streets where the officers patrol and the people live, work, and play, all while keeping the police decorum professional and prominent and the public’s concerns personal and pronounced.

Another key approach is the monthly neighborhood watch meetings where roll call was occasionally held at troubled spots and at the Village Hall. This engagement involves department heads and local, state, and federal agencies along with community-based organizations that provide the audience with relevant information and resources to assist them in their everyday lives. Having one-on-one dialogue between elected officials, the police, and the public about citizen complaints and concerns allows both the public and the police to listen, understand, and interact with one another while respecting their individual roles and responsibilities. We also learned that leaving public safety to law enforcement and public policy to elected officials helped us to create a cohesive community and not a divisive one.



This engagement is further demonstrated at the Village of Bellwood’s Annual Family Day Picnic. Thousands of residents come to enjoy the food, fun, and festive occasion while interacting with elected officials and officers—not only seeing them as men and women in uniform but also putting a face to individuals who put their lives on the line every day to serve and protect them.

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

In 2015, Bellwood did not have a homicide, and since 2011 we have seen a 26 percent decrease in crime. This decrease is significant and is due in part to the leadership of the department—Director Andre Harvey and Chief Jimenez Allen—in addition to the elected local government under the leadership of Mayor Frank A. Pasquale and Village Clerk Lena M. Moreland. The leadership has not only been proactive but has also been strategic in forming partnerships between the police and the public along with promoting police accountability. The leadership has taken this innovative approach to community policing, and the approach has resulted in much-needed resources being delegated in areas that require additional human resources and strategic tactics. Having leaders who are proactive, responsive, and professional has increased the overall success of the department, which has gained the respect, admiration, and support of the public at large.

### Lessons learned through program implementation

We learned that not everyone was keen on change, but through collaboration, perseverance, understanding, and patience, the majority of the community came on board and the entire community has benefited. We learned that we have to accept criticism while remaining courteous to effect change and work collectively in changing the public’s perception of our commitment to provide a safe, secure, and stable community for all residents. As a community, the greatest lesson was collaboration, resulting in a team approach that benefited all key stakeholders.

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