



## Successful Practices & Strategies

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# Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles

Los Angeles, California

[www.hacla.org](http://www.hacla.org)

### Community policing element

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Community partnerships

### Problem/issue

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Trust and community safety

### Problem description

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In the more than five decades since the Watts Riots of 1965, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) and other public sector agencies in Watts offered only partial solutions to the lack of safety in three gang-entrenched housing developments: Nickerson Gardens, Imperial Courts, and Jordan Downs. Similarly, a lack of investment and relationship building by law enforcement had compounded the issues of Ramona Gardens in East Los Angeles. The lack of violence within Ramona Gardens, also a HACLA housing development, masked the level of fear gripping residents, who were afraid to report crime because of gang intimidation and a lack of civic engagement.

### Community policing strategies implemented

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The Advancement Project (AP) is a community-based organization that promotes justice and equity in communities. The AP and Connie Rice were a major influence working with Chief Charlie Beck and HACLA leadership to implement the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) program. The concept was to deploy 10 officers and a supervisor in each of the four housing developments to begin building relationships and addressing quality of life issues and concerns.

The Training Division of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) developed 40 hours of training unique to the CSP program. This specialized training was designed to teach the concept of community policing and partnerships; to enhance the ability to work as a team; and to cultivate the ability to plan, establish, and manage multiple scenarios that may arise in public housing developments. HACLA provided 20 hours of training to teach the CSP officers about the role of HACLA, how the public organization functions and resources that officers could utilize when working in these communities.

The areas impacted by the CSP program are Southeast and Hollenbeck Community Police Stations. The program began on October 9, 2011, with the training, and the officers deployed in the community on November 6, 2011. This was not an enforcement-focused program. The officers were directed to avoid making nonessential arrests and to focus on innovative ways to create trust and humanize themselves in



the community and the community to the officers. They were tasked with developing relationships with residents, developing programs to support the residents with their primary focus on youth and addressing quality-of-life and violent crime issues.

Over the next four years some programs that were developed and implemented include the following:

- A football program coached by officers and each program has a tutoring and mentoring component
- An aggressive Safe Passage program partnering with community volunteers and grassroots community organizations to get kids to and from school safely
- The first Girl Scout Troop in Watts as well as a Girl Scout Troop in Ramona Gardens
- Camping trips provided and funded by the Harold Robinson Foundation at Canyon Creek Camp for more than 200 youth and their parents, with CSP officers participating, the purpose being to build family, humanize the police and community to one another, establish communication skills, and erase gang lines through team building
- Educational programs implemented to include providing scholarships (K-four years of college) funded through Operation Progress (OP), which was founded by a CSP officer and focuses on providing a solid education in private schools for promising youth living in violent communities
- Tutoring programs partnering with students from USC, UCLA, and East Los Angeles College
- Partnership with Children's Institute Incorporated (CII), which has become a significant partner addressing many social and mental health issues
- Alternatives to arrest and booking programs such as Sunburst Youth Academy
- Consistent communication and outreach with the Mayors Gang Reduction and Youth Development-intervention workers
- Ramona Gardens Senior Club in which CSP officers and funding provide different activities, educational seminars and quarterly field trips

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

Every CSP program implemented has a point and is focused on solving a specific social issue. In addition, each has created a relationship and improved relationships. However, the most significant accomplishment of this effort has been the reduction in violent crime in the Watts community. In 2014, Southeast Area documented 10 homicides in Watts compared to 22 in 2011, a 54.5 percent reduction. Between 2002 and 2011, there were 70 homicides in Jordan Downs, Nickerson Gardens, and Imperial Courts (an average of 7 per year for 10 years). From 2012 through 2104, there have only been five homicides (an average of 1.6 per year for 3 years), and because the relationships built between community members and CSP officers, four of the five were solved within two weeks. Across the city of Los Angeles, communities have witnessed an increase in violent crime. In the communities of Watts,



homicides have decreased 38.5 percent and part I crime has shown a 6.1 percent reduction from 2014 to 2015. In the community of Ramona Gardens there has also been a continual decrease in crime. It is clear that the CSP program has prevented many homicides.

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