



PUBLIC SAFETY

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

for Safer Neighborhoods

HELEN PUTNAM AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE – PUBLIC SAFETY

OVERVIEW

The City of Menlo Park is located in southern San Mateo County. Our community is home to 32,000 residents and considered one of the most culturally and economically diverse populations in Silicon Valley. The nation recognizes Menlo Park as the epicenter of venture capitalism; yet one area within our city, the Belle Haven neighborhood, has been the focus of revitalization and redevelopment efforts since 1981. For many years, the Belle Haven neighborhood has continually been plagued with gang-related violence. A comprehensive analysis of crime data (2010-2013) indicated that a vast majority of the shootings originated at three properties within the neighborhood. Furthermore, the owners of all three locations lived out of the area and were unaware of the ongoing problems. By working with the property owners, their management companies and the tenants, the families found suitable alternative housing within six months. There have been no shootings in the city since November 2013. Once the gang shootings subsided, our police department had more opportunities to focus on traffic concerns, juvenile issues and building community relationships.



PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

One of the first steps for the Menlo Park Police Department was to connect more closely with the community. Therefore, the department formed a “Community Advisory Group,” which was made up of residents and business owners from throughout the city. This group meets monthly and is a forum for open lines of communication for residents to identify crime and community issues affecting their area, and develop comprehensive and coordinated plans, which target each neighborhood’s most pressing concerns. Like in many communities, traffic is always a primary concern. This group took the lead in formulating the department’s strategic plan on traffic safety. The Strategic Traffic Plan includes traffic enforcement around all schools in Menlo Park, with each area specifically identified by the group. Each school receives targeted traffic enforcement multiple times in the morning and afternoon to ensure a consistent presence. The administrators, teachers and students are very appreciative of our continued efforts. The Advisory Group also helped us identify residents interested in being Block Captains for Neighborhood Watch Programs and these partnerships have generated great community involvement.

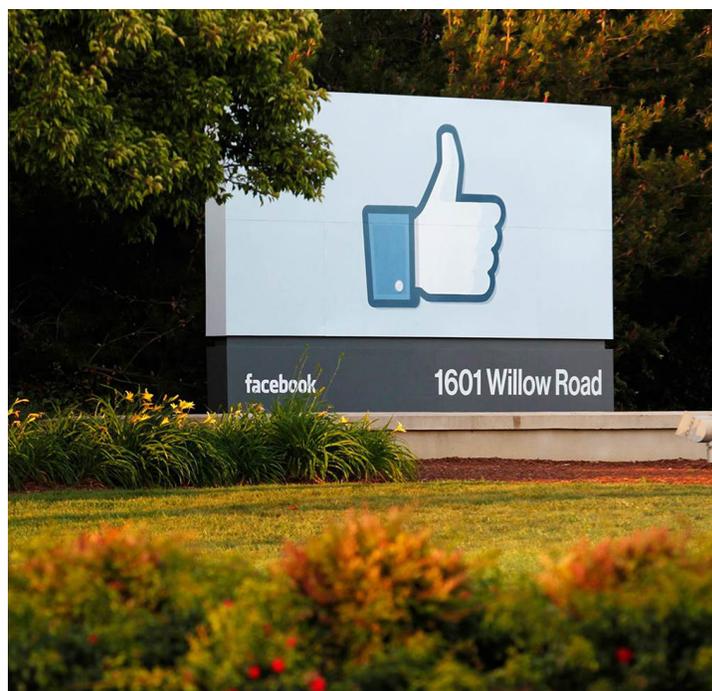
In April 2014, the department presented a “Citizen Academy” to ensure that residents understand MPPD’s community policing philosophy. Residents attended the nine week academy (one night each week) and learned how the local government works, how services are provided, and how each entity (including the community) needs to work together in order to make the city a better and safer place to live. Currently, 23 residents have graduated from the “Citizen’s Academy” and are now actively engaged in their neighborhoods. The program’s success led to the development of a Youth Academy, which recently graduated 17 teenagers.



RESULTS

In addition to the dramatic increase in community participation throughout the Belle Haven neighborhood, the crime rate decline has been impressive. When compared to the past two years, the overall number of crimes at the end of 2014 within the Belle Haven neighborhood declined 42 percent over 2013, and 12 percent throughout the entire city. Reductions in traffic collisions were equally impressive. By sticking to the strategic traffic plan and enforcing violations most important to the community, we saw a 15 percent reduction in collisions during 2014.

The City of Menlo Park is a prime example of how a small agency, collaborating with residents and private entities, can work together to create a city government committed to serving our community. Over the past two years, it is clear that everyone is becoming an active participant in making Menlo Park a safer place to live, work and play.



PARTNERING WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS/AGENCIES

The police department is very committed to public/private partnerships. Staff works very closely with every public safety agency within our general area. However, over the past year the department has been a pioneer in developing a true public/private partnership with the largest employer within the city – Facebook.

Facebook has become a major factor for much of our success in reconnecting with the community. For over 10 years, staff had been trying to build a service center within the east portion of the city. However, finding a suitable site location and funding for the project made it difficult. Yet, once Facebook heard the department was considering a site near the gateway into the Belle Haven neighborhood, they offered to fund the project. Not only did they agree to pay the three-year lease on the property, they built it out to create a secure law enforcement facility with the comfort of a Facebook lobby. The relationship with Facebook has expanded and they now fund a full-time police officer to work with at-risk youth.

The Menlo Park Police Department is the first law enforcement agency in the country to have a full-time officer position funded by a private company. With more and more constraints being placed on local economies, city staff believes true public/private partnerships will be instrumental for the smaller agencies to implement nontraditional programs.

Without this partnership, the department would not be in a position to have an officer work specifically with at-risk teens. However, since the position has been in place, the officer has arranged to meet with the “at risk” 6th- 8th graders every week at Belle Haven Elementary School. During this time, the officer addresses issues these students face on a day-to-day basis. They discuss techniques for choosing the right life path. Furthermore, the officer meets with every class at the elementary school a minimum of three times during the semester. In March 2015, the Peninsula Lions Club honored this officer her outstanding service working with schools and “at-risk” youth.



POLICE STATION TOURS

45 to 60 minute tours of the police station for families, school groups and organizations.



POLICE EXPLORER PROGRAM

A volunteer program for youth and young adults between the ages of 14-21 who want to learn about law enforcement.



CHILD SAFETY SEAT INSPECTION/INSTALLATION

Is your child's car seat installed correctly? More than 85% of all car seats are not.

Make an appointment online at menlopark.org/safetyseatinspection

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Monitor crime in your neighborhood at menlopark.org/crimestats.
- Interact with your neighbors online using Nextdoor at menlopark.org/nextdoor.
- Visit menlopark.org/communitypolicing
- Call 650-330-6300



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2015 Building Relationships