

**Sharing Information, Building Relationships, Increasing Safety:
Models for the Police/Neighborhood Partnership for a Safer Binghamton**

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Introduction

In his *2011 State of the City Address*, Mayor Matthew T. Ryan launched the Police/Neighborhood Partnership for a Safer Binghamton (The Partnership). The Partnership seeks to enhance the relationship between the Binghamton Police Department and the City of Binghamton's underrepresented communities, namely communities of color, recent immigrants and English Language Learners, the LGBTQ community, residents of public housing, crime victims, youth, students at the area's institutions of higher education, the mentally ill and the formerly incarcerated. As Mayor Ryan stated in his Address, "While communication between our Police Department and the community has improved in great ways, there are still gaps to bridge." The Partnership is co-chaired by Police Chief Joe Zikuski and Youth Bureau Director Ana Shaello-Johnson, and includes representatives from various organizations that work with the aforementioned communities.

The Partnership's participants meet on regular basis to discuss the issues that concern the relationship between the BPD and these communities, as well as possible solutions. This report highlights the possible solutions that the Partnership can adopt.

I have based this report on my analysis of best practices, academic literature and internet searches. . For best practices, I consulted the US Conference of Mayors' (USCM) website. For academic literature, I searched J-STOR, an archive of academic journals. For my general internet research, I consulted the search engine *Google*.

On balance, my *Google* searches produced far and away the most information that would be relevant to this report, while the U.S. Conference of Mayors' website yielded some, and the academic journals none at all. In my *Google* searches, I found information on three different cities that have developed initiatives in a spirit similar to that of the Partnership. In my review of best practices on the USCM website, I found discrete practices in several other cities that can aid the Partnership. This report will discuss the three municipal initiatives, the USCM information on best practices and how the City of Binghamton can use all this information to structure the Partnership such that it fulfills its mission.

Community-Police Partnership Initiatives

Champaign, IL

Champaign Community and Police Partnership (C-CAPP)

C-CAPP is a partnership initiative that is located in Champaign, IL. The City of Champaign was approached by various civic leaders in the 1990's who felt that the relationship between the African-American community and the Police Department was strained and wanted to work with the Office of the City Manager to create a Police-Community Relations Committee. This Committee has since evolved into the Champaign Community and Police Partnership.

Mission: To create a partnership between the African-American Community and the Champaign Police Department

Guidelines: Encourage the review, monitoring and resolution of issues that affect the interaction between the Police Department and the African-American community of the City of Champaign. Assist the African-American community in understanding (a) the rationale behind police policies and procedures, and (b) challenges that are faced by police officers in the line of duty.

Membership & Action Items: There is a committee of 27 members, with representatives from the Office of the City Manager, Champaign City Council Members, the Champaign Police Department, and organizations that work with the African-American community.

In addition to holding its monthly committee meetings, C-CAPP holds quarterly community meetings where citizens may comment on any concerns/issues pertaining to the Police Department.

Challenges & Accomplishments: In 2009, well after C-CAPP's formation, an incident transpired between Champaign police officers and two teenage African American males that ended with one of the young men losing his life. This incident left the African-American community and the City of Champaign as a whole with mixed emotions. While C-CAPP

responded to the incident in a particular fashion, many community members¹ felt that they were being “left out of the process, and some called for C-CAPP to be disbanded (Vest, 2009). The members of the C-CAPP committee approached this challenge by holding a community forum during which facilitators asked the concerned community residents for input on how to improve the then-strained relationship between the African-American community and the Police Department (City of Champaign, 2010).

Seattle, WA

Seattle Police Department Community Outreach Program

The Community Outreach Program is operated by the Seattle Police Department under its Community Programs Section, a division within the Seattle Police Department. The Outreach Program started in the 1980s through Precinct Advisory Councils, which brought together communities and the Police Department in different neighborhoods across the city. In the 1990s, the Police Department replaced the Precinct Advisory Councils with Demographic Advisory Councils, each of which were based around a particular minority identity, namely race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion..

Goals:

- Create and strengthen programs and communication efforts that build trust between the Police Department and minority communities.
- Engage more minorities in Police Department’s efforts to ensure public safety.

Focus Areas & Objectives:

- *Relationship Building:* Break down negative perceptions of law enforcement in minority communities.
- *Education and Training:* Improve officer training regarding cultural norms that may impact police and citizen interactions.

¹ In addition to members from the community, community advocates from the C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice also called for C-CAPP to be disbanded.

Membership: There are nine Demographic Advisory Councils (African-American, East African, Filipino, Korean, Latino, LGBTQ, Native American, South East Asian, and Muslim-Sikh-Arab.) At least one police officer, one member of the Command Staff, and one staff member from the Police Department work as liaisons with each of the Demographic Advisory Councils. There also is one Citywide Advisory Council, which includes representatives from each of the Demographic Advisory Councils and the Chief of Police.

Hopkins, MN

Joint Community Police Partnership (JCPP)

The Joint Community Police Partnership is a collaboration among the cities of Hopkins, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, and Richfield, as well as the Northwest Hennepin Human Service Council (NHHSC), a non-profit organization. Representatives from the four cities and the NHHSC meet monthly to compare notes, undergo training and avail themselves of other resources that will help each city meet the Partnership's mission. Each city has its own Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC) through the Partnership's lessons are applied.

Mission: To enhance communication and build better relations between law enforcement and multicultural communities

Strategies:

- Training for community members about police procedures and laws in order to improve community members' knowledge
- Training for Police Officers, including in regard to underrepresented cultural groups in their cities
- Spanish Language Instruction for police officers

Membership:

- Each of the liaisons are county employees² but are embedded in the police department and reports to high level police personnel.

² The liaisons are paid by Hennepin County but are located in their respective city Police Department.

- In addition to the liaisons and police representatives, the Multicultural Advisory Committees (MAC) are composed of long-term and new residents of the city.

Action Items:

- Latino Immigration Presentation
- Face2Face teen event with police officers
- Q&A events with English Language Learner classes
- Presentations to civic and neighborhood groups about JCPP

Challenges & Accomplishments: The JCPP’s central challenges pertain to cultural barriers between police officers and the four cities’ community of recent immigrants. One of the issues in play is that many recent immigrants—and especially those who have emigrated from conflict areas—have little trust in law enforcement officials based on their experiences outside of the United States. Nonetheless, the JCPP has succeeded in breaking down these barriers to some extent by creating venues for relationship building between police and underrepresented communities.

Best Practices by the USCM

The common theme in the USCM articles that I reviewed was the importance of evaluating how a Police Department interacts with its diverse communities. Many mayors across the country stated that they would have their Police Officers attend diversity training programs so that they could better serve the community. Many also stated that citizens should have opportunities to learn about police practices.

Another common theme in the USCM articles was the importance of police departments interacting with underrepresented communities in both a social context and an educational context. In the social context, the Rochester Police Department has strengthened its relationship with the local LGBTQ community by participating in the Annual Pride Parade and by having a column in the gay and lesbian community’s monthly newspaper, *The Empty Closet*, “to inform readers of upcoming events, crime prevention tips and editorial comments.” (United States Conference of Mayors, 1999). In the educational context, the Houston Police Department

worked to combat negative portrayals of police officers in particular and law enforcement in general by giving a presentation to youth at the Prejudice Awareness Summit.

Conclusion

The City of Binghamton's Police/Neighborhood Partnership for a Safer Binghamton can apply many lessons from similar initiatives as it establishes a structural framework. Nonetheless, Binghamton—and every city—must tailor this framework to its particular situation, e.g. its local issues, population size, number of police officers and staff, and other variables that make Binghamton unique. What is most important is that the Partnership remains proactive rather than waiting for an incident to spur action. The Partnership can hold monthly or quarterly forums that will allow the communities to give direct input on their relations with the Binghamton Police Department. Such forums would promote transparency and accountability, as well as help the Partnership develop additional ways to forge a closer relationship between the Police Department and Binghamton's underrepresented communities.

Of course, forums are not a cure-all. A large open forum may not work for every underrepresented community as there may be some whose culture discourages public speaking in general, and public speaking about concerns regarding law enforcement in particular. Rather than not receiving input from those particular communities, the Partnership could solicit input from them in smaller, perhaps more comfortable settings. Like the JCPP, for example, the Partnership could send representatives from the Police Department to speak with students in different religiously-affiliated and/or ethnically-affiliated institutions, e.g. a church, synagogue, mosque or ESL class. .

I also recommend that the Partnership adopt the Rochester Police Department's practice of incorporating itself into the events and culture of local underrepresented communities. While it may not be feasible and necessary for our officers to attend every community event, the relationship of the Police Department and underrepresented communities could benefit greatly if the department wrote articles in newsletters from such communities, participated in sporting events with teenagers, took part in a cultural cooking competition or helped with a community garden. Like the initiatives mentioned above, the Partnership may have to deal with some challenges. In order to overcome challenges, the members of the Partnership and everyone else

involved must stay committed to the task at hand. In this way, the Partnership can help make Binghamton safer and more enjoyable for all citizens.

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Appendix

Contact Information on Community-Police Partnerships

Champaign Community and Police Partnership C-CAPP

- Website: www.ci.champaign.il.us
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- Walls, Joan: Deputy City Manager for Community Relations, joan.walls@ci.champaign.il.us

Joint Community Police Partnership-JCPP

- Website: www.hopkinsmn.com
- Das-Sulc, Mercy: Hopkins-JCPP Community Liaison, mdas-sulc@hopkinsmn.com

Seattle Police Department Community Outreach Program

- Website: www.seattle.gov
- Olsen, Maggie: Community Outreach Program Manager, Margaret.olsen@seattle.gov