



The Westgate Initiative “A Coalition for Community Policing”

Statement of the Problem

Civic engagement is the benchmark of true community sustainability, and true civic engagement is filled with many unspoken bilateral agreements. Acts of civic engagement - voting, attending city council meetings, forming community associations, and engaging with law enforcement are all good faith efforts that imply an expectation of reciprocity of service from local government.

Where we see distressed communities we find too many disengaged citizens who for various reasons no longer expect services from local government or no longer realize the level of citizen engagement required to restore those services. The most neutral view of this problem can point to an eroded social contract between our communities and the civic agencies missioned to serve them, especially law enforcement.

Cast in terms of service-delivery, law enforcement has been a one-way service to our communities with no real “end user” in the process, except for our court systems. In other words, policing has been something done to distressed communities for the court system and on behalf of other communities in the city. Communitywide dissatisfaction looks solely to law enforcement for solutions, which results in even more law enforcement, more mutual distrust, more community disengagement, and still with no one in these communities making beneficial use of law enforcement services. Breaking the current cycle of distrust and disengagement between communities and law enforcement that serves them requires a new social contact between our communities and civic agencies.

The Westgate Initiative articulated below seeks to begin that important process. This is a basic service level initiative in which our community becomes the “end user” and our law enforcement agency becomes the provider of services valued by the community and beneficial to the entire city.

Statement of the Initiative

Responsibilities of Law Enforcement:

In response to a request by the Westgate Coalition, the Greenville Police Department will, to the extent allowed by law, provide to the Westgate Coalition the names of any young persons between the ages of sixteen (16) and twenty-six (26) who have been arrested by the Greenville Police Department in the West Zone. The names will be provided via email at least once every two (2) weeks to _____ of the Westgate Coalition at the following email address: _____.

Responsibilities of the Westgate Coalition

The Westgate Coalition, (comprised of service professionals including but not limited to organizers, community based organizations and fraternities, behavioral health specialists, educators and mentors, faith groups, social service agencies, as well as other “ad hoc” community support groups) will assume responsibility for coordinating remedial services around the individual, the family and the environment of issue.

This initiative is intended to invoke the restorative powers of sincere community involvement, and establishes a single-minded consciousness for the groups committed to the work.

Benefits

- Law Enforcement in heavily policed communities acts again under the expressed authority of its citizens.
- Our Community accepts responsibility for our desired outcomes.
- Our Young People stand a better chance of being able to look back at an officer encounter and view it as a defining moment that began a positive change in their life - over time changing the perceptions of law enforcement in our community’s culture.

