



# WHY COMMUNITY-BASED CRIME PREVENTION WORKS

Case studies of three Ottawa communities

## Preventing crime on community time

**“ Crime prevention is not just a job for the police – it must involve the entire community... agencies, groups, businesses and individuals are now collaborating to develop programs to make our municipalities safer. ”**

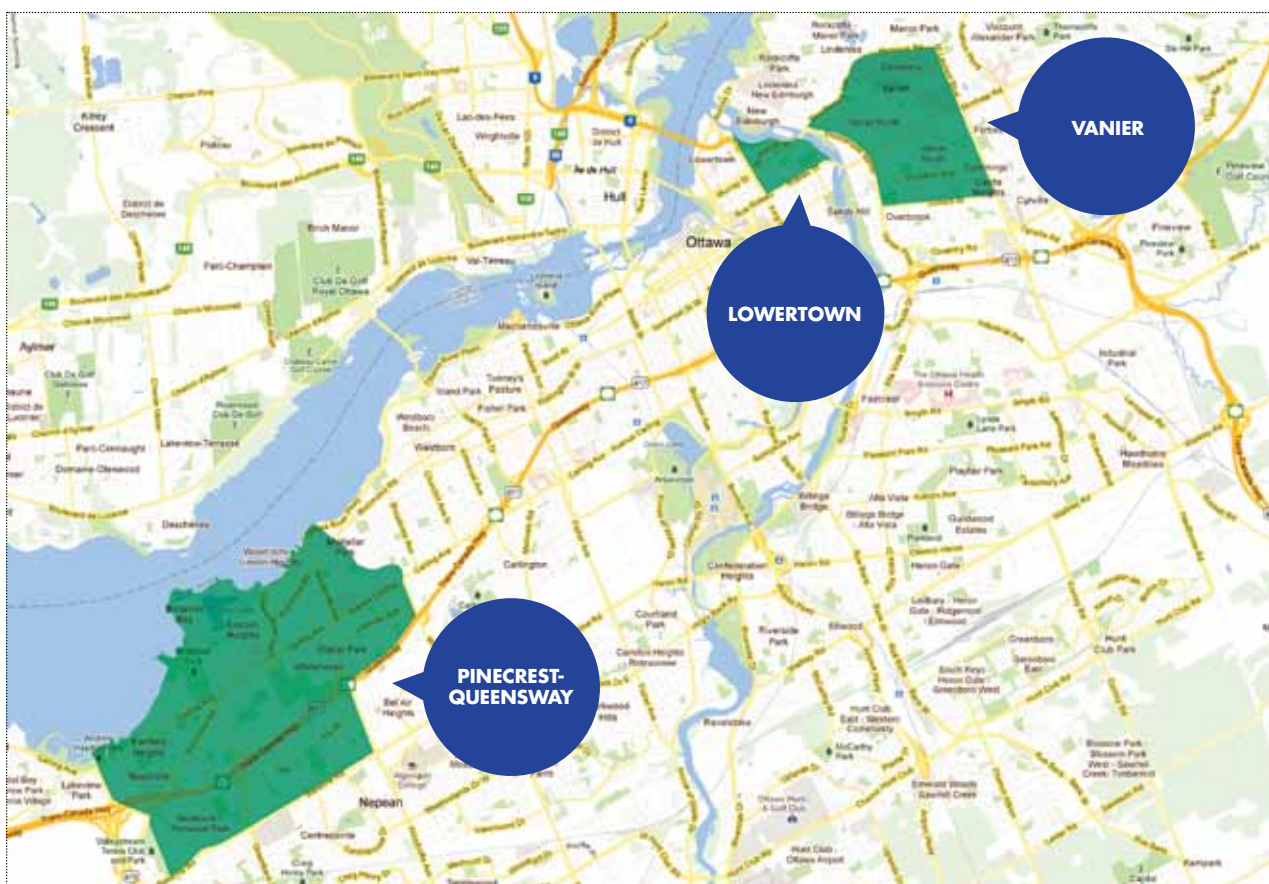
*Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Primer on Municipal Crime Prevention*

Community-based crime prevention brings together a wide range of local stakeholders to focus their energies and resources on developing initiatives designed to increase community safety while building a sense of connection and belonging among residents.

In 2007, Crime Prevention Ottawa provided funding and support to establish three comprehensive, community-based crime prevention initiatives:

- » Lowertown, Our Home, managed by the Lowertown Community Resource Centre
- » Together for Vanier, coordinated by the Vanier Community Service Centre
- » United Neighbours, led by the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre

Four years later, CPO engaged community consultants Ken Hoffman and Melanie Bania to review the initiatives and provide staff involved in those projects help in planning and evaluating their work, with the goal of sharing best practices across communities. This booklet summarizes the report's findings and celebrates the impressive progress made in Lowertown, Pinecrest-Queensway and Vanier.



## Why community-based crime prevention works

**“Community, or locally-based crime prevention... programmes work to increase the sense of safety and security of the residents... to respond to community concerns and crime problems affecting the population and to increase the services and social capital or social cohesion in the community.”**

*United Nations Handbook on the Crime Prevention Guidelines: Making them Work*

Research shows that community-based approaches to crime prevention can have a much greater impact on criminal behaviour than enforcement alone. The wide variety of stakeholders involved results in a vast range of responses to criminal behaviour, community safety and cohesion issues. By taking joint action that brings in expertise and insights from all corners of the community, there is much greater potential for long-term, sustainable solutions. After all, the broad-based support and mobilization of resources from across the community means that everyone has a stake in achieving results and feels pride in the efforts they undertake. This broad base of support makes the initiatives much more likely to be sustained over the longer term.

### ▶ CASE STUDY: MOVIES IN THE PARK

The community of Vanier boasts a blend of recent immigrants, Francophone, Anglophone and Aboriginal residents. Poverty is high. Richelieu Park, in the heart of Vanier, experienced significant problems with sex trade workers and drug dealers, which made the environment feel unsafe for others. In an effort to take back their park, members of Together for Vanier planned a series of fun and free events starting in 2009. Dubbed “Movies in the Park,” the evenings feature activities for children, a barbecue, movies and a chance to mingle with neighbours. The events draw 200-300 people and serve to bring this diverse community together. Just as importantly, they have given residents a sense of ownership over the park. Sex trade and drug activity has dropped, making way for families and dog walkers to enjoy what is rightfully theirs.



## Ottawa communities take action... and win

**“Lowertown, Our Home believes that an integrated, collaborative approach to crime prevention works best. A community that can harness the energy of its residents and then partner effectively with city agencies, the police, social services and service providers can create a sense of momentum and hope which is contagious and sustaining.”**

*Nicole Rhéaume, Community Development Manager (East), Ottawa Community Housing Corporation*

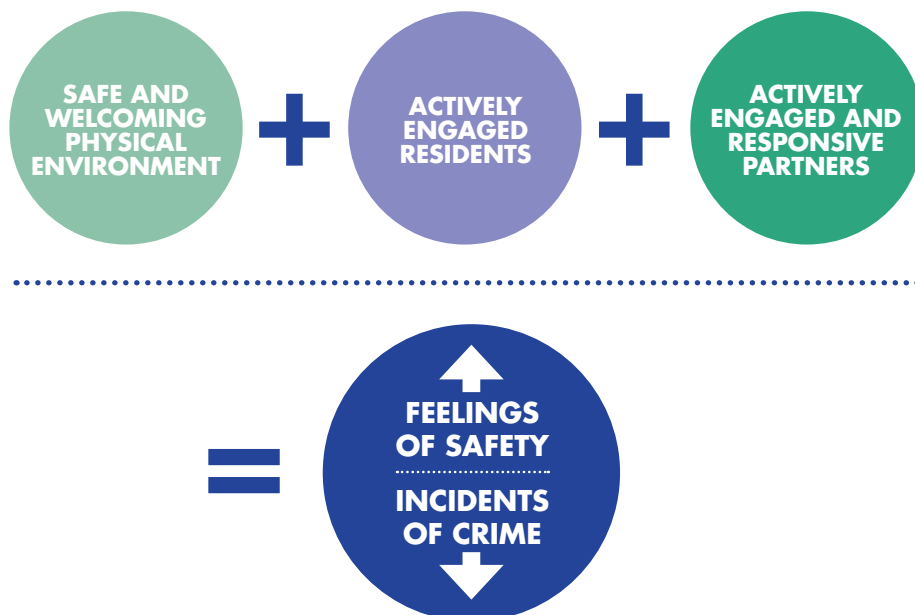
After several years of community-building and crime prevention, the communities of Lowertown, Pinecrest-Queensway and Vanier have been transformed through the focused efforts of local residents and their community partners—people who cared enough to make a difference and to work together to achieve positive change. From social agencies to police, local businesses and community leaders, their combined efforts stand as a testament to the passion for crime prevention and safety that exists in each community.

Whether through Lowertown, Our Home, Together for Vanier or United Neighbours, those involved developed approaches designed to fit with the local context, culture and issues, making optimal use of local resources and volunteer energy. The goal? To create the conditions needed to achieve increased feelings of safety among local residents and decreased incidents of crime. The three communities identified the following conditions needed to achieve change:

- » Safe and welcoming physical and social environment
- » Actively engaged residents
- » Actively engaged and responsive partners

This model, known as the Theory of Change, represents how the communities understand the process of change. It helps them to plan, focus and evaluate the impact of their work.

### Theory of Change



The diversity of the community-based crime prevention initiatives can be seen in the table below (note: UN=United Neighbours, LOH=Lowertown, Our Home, T4V=Together for Vanier):

SAFE AND WELCOMING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		UN	LOH	T4V
Local residents make positive use of public space	Community gatherings, parties, celebrations in parks	✓	✓	✓
	Movies in the Park		✓	✓
	Community gardens	✓	✓	✓
	Development of parks, play areas, basketball courts, etc.	✓	✓	✓
	Public art or murals	✓	✓	✓
Respect for property	Community clean-ups	✓	✓	✓
Space is CPTED-friendly (crime prevention through environmental design)	Safety audits, walkabouts, walking clubs	✓	✓	✓
ACTIVELY ENGAGED RESIDENTS		UN	LOH	T4V
Mechanisms to support engagement are in place and working well	Establishment of residents' committees/community associations	✓	✓	✓
	Support to tenants' associations	✓	✓	✓
New leaders are recruited, engaged, developed and supported	Youth Leadership development	✓	✓	
	Youth arts component (e.g. music, slam poetry, visual art)	✓	✓	
Residents have desire, knowledge and skills for engagement	Community surveys and forums	✓	✓	✓
	Events to help residents connect with each other	✓	✓	✓
	Communications and outreach strategies developed to reach specific groups in each community	✓	✓	✓
	Website developed	✓		✓
	Forums/info meetings on subjects of special interest (e.g. addictions and mental health)	✓	✓	✓
ACTIVELY ENGAGED AND RESPONSIVE PARTNERS		UN	LOH	T4V
Police and other safety services are engaged and responsive	Outreach and info sessions by Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) Safety Services, Ottawa Police Service (OPS)	✓	✓	✓
Safe opportunities to report crime and concerns	Outreach and info sessions by OCH Safety Services, OPS	✓	✓	✓
	Campaign to encourage reporting to authorities	✓	✓	✓
	Support formation of Neighbourhood Watches	✓	✓	✓
	Community Safety Coffee Houses	✓		
Positive engagement by business and politicians	Support and engagement of City Councillors	✓	✓	✓
	Participation of local business association	✓		✓
ACTIVELY ENGAGED RESIDENTS AND ACTIVELY ENGAGED AND RESPONSIVE PARTNERS		UN	LOH	T4V
Residents linked effectively to support services, opportunities and resources	Community health or resource centre staff help connect residents to other programs and resources, as necessary	✓	✓	✓
Balanced/positive image of community	Tracking and responding to unfairly negative media coverage; writing positive news stories	✓	✓	✓
Effective coalitions between residents and partners	Establishment of Steering Committees of residents and key partner organizations	✓	✓	✓

## Building community spirit, making communities safer

**“ People living in Vanier have a strong desire to do something to make this a safe neighbourhood to live in and raise families. We are moving towards this goal each day and I think it’s safer today than it was even 6 months ago. That’s a good feeling. ”**

*Vanier resident*

The good news is that crime is going down in Lowertown, Pinecrest-Queensway and Vanier at a rate faster than the rest of Ottawa. While it is difficult to draw a direct link between crime rates and community-based crime prevention initiatives, research tells us that community-based crime prevention can contribute to reducing crime rates. In fact, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities says that crime statistics are one strong indicator of just how well these types of initiatives are working.

In Ottawa, the numbers tell the story. From 2006 to 2011, reported incidents of crimes against person and crimes against property have decreased at a greater rate in each of these communities than the city average, which is down by 15% overall.

**Lowertown is down 20%** ↓      **Pinecrest is down 27%** ↓      **Vanier is down 20%** ↓

*Source: Ottawa Police Service*

The results are impressive and speak to the valuable work that each of these communities has undertaken to take back its streets and instill a sense of pride and belonging in residents.

### ▶ CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY SAFETY COFFEE HOUSES



For years, residents of Pinecrest-Queensway felt their community slipping away. Their sense of safety was taken over by robberies, drugs and youth gangs. A blended community with longtime residents and new immigrants, people were reluctant to talk about their safety concerns with neighbours, let alone report problems to the authorities. In 2007, United Neighbours was formed to tackle crime and increase feelings of safety and connectedness. The group established Community Safety Coffee Houses to provide an opportunity for residents to come together to talk about crime and safety issues. Each coffee house

features a community partner, such as the police, community housing, health or social services. Residents talk about issues—and they feel heard. They receive useful information and they have a chance to speak directly to service providers. Today, residents are increasingly reporting suspected criminal activity. Their coffee house talks have led to other initiatives, such as spring clean-ups, a community garden and a new playground and basketball court. That’s success!

## ▶ CASE STUDY: YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROJECT

Lowertown is largely a community of immigrants, with 40% of residents living below the poverty line. Lowertown's youth face some real challenges. As visible minorities, many feel unfairly targeted by security and law enforcement. They say there are few opportunities for teens to engage in positive activities outside school. Some are drawn into youth gangs. Lowertown, Our Home established the Youth Leadership Project to address these issues. Youth identified as 'potential leaders' participate in a range of activities, including arts, recreation, skills-building and weekend retreats. They have an opportunity to work side-by-side with the Ottawa Police Service and Ottawa Community Housing Safety Service officers as their mentors. The result? Youth gain important knowledge, group and relationship-building skills. They learn about educational and career options. They develop personal relationships with police and security officers that allow them to see past the badge and respect one another. Most importantly, many go on to become leaders, opening doors to a future full of promise.



## What have we learned?

**“ We plan to continue to work in partnership with community members to help bring safety to our communities. We will partner, build relationships and contribute. We will also participate more in community events, clean ups and anything else to make a difference and work hard to be positive role models in our community. ”**

*Pinecrest-Queensway residents who participated in a United Neighbours retreat*

The Ottawa communities of Lowertown, Pinecrest-Queensway and Vanier have set the bar for community-based crime prevention efforts. Today, they continue to develop and deliver crime prevention initiatives that respond to local needs and address local issues. Together and on their own, they are solid case studies in community-based crime prevention best practices.

To find out more about community-based crime prevention efforts in Lowertown, Pinecrest-Queensway and Vanier, refer to the full Hoffman-Bania report, *Learning from Community-Based Crime Prevention Initiatives: The experiences of three Ottawa communities*, on the Crime Prevention Ottawa website at [www.crimepreventionottawa.ca](http://www.crimepreventionottawa.ca).



## **Crime Prevention Ottawa**

**Partners for a safer community**

---

110 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

Tel: **613 580 2424**, ext. **22454**

Fax: **613 580 2593**

Email: **[cpo@ottawa.ca](mailto:cpo@ottawa.ca)**

**[crimepreventionottawa.ca](http://crimepreventionottawa.ca)**

