

# Choice Neighborhoods and the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program



**Pictured** A view of Marble Street. At its dead end are the red-brick buildings of Marble Street Apartments, slated for demolition. The street will be extended as a through street and a new South End Community Center will be built near the present site of the basketball court, within Emerson Wight Park.

## Choice Neighborhoods are Safe Neighborhoods: *Tackling the Drivers of Crime in the South End of Springfield, MA*

Safety is one of the most important building blocks of successful neighborhood revitalization. Safe surroundings allow businesses to attract customers, children to play freely and neighbors and visitors to come and go without fear, adding vitality and life to a community.

Often the reverse is also true. "Deteriorated, abandoned and poorly managed housing leads to higher crime. That leads to cycles of disinvestment in neighborhoods," said Mindy Turbov, director of the Choice Neighborhoods Program at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In cities across the country, local government and nonprofit agencies, residents, and other partners are seeking to create the more positive cycle – one in which physical and economic development promotes safety, and crime reduction creates stability for revitalization efforts to take hold. A number of jurisdictions are pursuing this mutually reinforcing approach using resources from both HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Program and the U.S. Department of Justice Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program (BCJI).

The South End of Springfield, Massachusetts, is one of those places. This guide details the work of grantees there to transform a neighborhood long notorious as a center of dilapidated housing and dangerous streets into a place where people choose to live, work, and raise their children. The Springfield story also illustrates how Choice Neighborhoods and BCJI grants can build on each other for better collective outcomes.



**Pictured** A streetscape within the Outing Park Historic District.

## Synergy: People, Place, and Crime

The Choice Neighborhoods Program directs the bulk of its resources to redevelopment projects that replace or renovate public and HUD-assisted housing to create quality mixed-income developments. But it also directs substantial funds to supporting related “people” strategies—services that enhance community members’ educational and job opportunities, for example—and “neighborhood” strategies that improve physical conditions in the surrounding area, including by making it safer. The BCJI Program’s goal, in turn, is not merely to crack down on crime through enforcement, but to integrate public safety improvements into all neighborhood revitalization strategies and empower neighbors to take part in keeping their communities safe. The two programs’ goals overlap and reinforce each other by design.

And here’s why: over recent decades, experience and research have increasingly shown that crime is inherently place-based. Criminal activity is not distributed randomly across an area but tends to cling stubbornly to certain spots. Pockets of poverty and joblessness are vulnerable. Building and street design are key; chaotic, dark, isolated, and deserted spaces invite crime. Conditions influence crime, too, with littered, abandoned properties, and decaying structures signaling opportunity for illicit activity. Relationships matter a great deal; residents who feel connected to their neighborhood, to one another, and to law enforcement and other organizations serving the area create a tight-woven community that discourages crime.

## Springfield’s South End: Choice Neighborhoods and BCJI Unite

Springfield lies along the eastern bank of the Connecticut River in western Massachusetts, the state’s third-largest city. Once a center of metalworking and machine manufacturing with a median household income above the national average, the city fell into decades of decline in the late 20th century, with sharp job losses and climbing poverty and crime rates. During these same years a majority white non-Hispanic population became far more diverse as whites left and Hispanics, mainly Puerto Ricans migrating for jobs and housing, settled in Springfield.

The city’s South End is a small, walkable neighborhood that abuts downtown Springfield and is linked to it by Main Street. Thirty years ago, middle-class Italian-Americans defined the area, many owning homes and operating businesses with an Italian flavor. But the neighborhood has since become an area of concentrated poverty (median income is about half the citywide median) and high crime stemming principally from the drug trade (the rate of violent crime is roughly three times the city average). Approximately eight in ten residents are people of color, mainly Latino. In June 2011, a tornado cut a mile-wide swath through the South End, destroying housing units along with two vital institutions: the South End Community Center and Square One, an early childhood learning center.

## Changing the Environment to Reduce Crime and Revitalize the South End

By the time Springfield and its partners began Choice Neighborhoods planning in early 2012, robust planning and revitalization had been under way in the South End for six years. Much of that early work set the stage for the comprehensive approach to crime reduction that would eventually garner BCJI resources. It began when the nonprofit Urban Land Institute (ULI) recommended that the city make the South End its number-one priority for revitalization. A city bond issue raised \$6.6 million for improvements. A 2007 ULI report on the Hollywood section recommended making its street pattern more orderly, creating more open space, and stimulating business development on Main Street. It also proposed stepping up police patrols and code enforcement to address the “war zone” atmosphere prevailing in the neighborhood.

The ULI process led to the establishment in 2008 of the South End Revitalization Coalition, a multi-stakeholder group that carried forward this planning. After the 2011 tornado, an influx of federal disaster relief stimulated another intensive planning effort from October 2011 to February 2012 resulting in the Rebuild Springfield Plan, including recommendations for the downtown and South End area.

As a result of these efforts, a process of change was afoot in the neighborhood that proceeded alongside Choice Neighborhoods planning, creating momentum and a cross-pollination of ideas. By the end of 2012, a year into Choice Neighborhoods planning, streetscapes had been redesigned for attractiveness and improved flow, changes well aligned with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). The modifications addressed disorder that previously signaled an environment conducive to crime and cleared sightlines for the “eyes on the street” that 1960s urbanist Jane Jacobs heralded as essential for safe urban spaces.

In addition, the seven-acre Emerson Wight Park, the heart of the neighborhood, had been opened up by the demolition of several buildings along its perimeter. Park renovations created clean, better lit spaces, enhancing a sense of safety and openness. And First Resource Development Company, a responsible low-income housing owner, had in cooperation with the city bought up buildings in Concord Heights and Hollywood Apartments to consolidate these complexes under single ownership. Using state and federal low-income housing monies, First Resource launched a major three-phase renovation, rebranding the area as the Outing Park Historic District. First Resource installed improved lighting and surveillance cameras, and landscaped the open spaces to beautify them and send a signal about caring ownership. On-site management staff helped to work with residents to maintain these gains over time.

The activities of revitalization - from property renovations to streetscape improvements - can be powerful tools for crime prevention. They signal that caring eyes are watching, making places less appealing for criminal activity.

The City of Springfield and its co-grantee the Springfield Housing Authority won a HUD Choice Neighborhoods planning grant in late 2011 to create a “transformation plan” for the South End, beginning at its troubled center—a 46-unit, two-building public housing development called Marble Street Apartments and, a few blocks away, a cluster of some two dozen HUD-assisted apartment buildings known as Concord Heights and Hollywood Apartments.

Backed up against a wooded hillside at the end of a dead-end road, its basements subject to recurrent flooding and its rooms of substandard size, Marble Street was seen as so dangerous and undesirable that units routinely remained vacant despite an urgent demand for public housing in the area. Locals knew Concord Heights and Hollywood Apartments collectively as the “Hollywood” section, a once-proud designation for the handsome brick buildings of varying styles built in the 1910s and ‘20s that by century’s end had become shorthand for crime, drugs, and long-term neglect.

The two-year Choice Neighborhoods planning process in the South End, which took place from 2012 through late 2014, led directly to the City of Springfield’s application for a BCJI grant, awarded October 2013. This three-year grant was both to plan and to implement strategies to disrupt and displace crime in the same area as the HUD-assisted housing developments, with a focus on eliminating the open-air drug market locals identified as a menace and an obstacle to progress.

The earlier revitalization efforts seeded the ground for Choice Neighborhoods planning and pointed to public safety as a high-priority issue. They also started a pattern wherein places that were historically havens for criminal activity were reclaimed – not by heavy-handed law enforcement action, but by changing the physical environment.

## Getting Neighbors Involved to Create Safety

But none of these earlier efforts had managed to engage in a meaningful, representative, and sustained way the people actually living in the community—a largely poor, Latino population of renters. “In the beginning the city met with people who came to meetings, and at that point that was largely the business community and the older Italian community, many of whom don’t live in the neighborhood anymore but feel very connected to it,” explained Geraldine McCafferty, director of Housing for the City of Springfield, the Choice Neighborhoods lead grantee. “I think with Choice there was a shift from, ‘OK, we’ll do a bunch of things to the physical environment’ to saying, ‘Well, what about the people part of it?’”

Kelvin Molina, a bilingual Springfield native of Puerto Rican descent who joined the Choice Neighborhoods effort as community engagement coordinator for his then employer HAPHousing, described the shift in similar terms. “I think sometimes people have checklists about what community engagement means,” he said. “You take out that relationship building and just sort of check a box: I had a meeting, I published it in the newspaper, when people were there I answered questions—I checked the box, so I engaged. Choice Neighborhoods started to challenge that.”

Indeed, the Choice Neighborhoods planning grant required substantive and continuing participation by the hard-to-reach people living in and around the targeted housing. Of course this participation was also exactly what Springfield Police needed to combat crime, more specifically in the form of community members willing to report crime, share information during incident investigations and proactively work with officers and other neighbors to solve problems. Getting there would require building bridges between community members and the police, but helping people feel comfortable and connected in the neighborhood had to come first.

For the first time, McCafferty pointed out, the Choice Neighborhoods planning grant provided the funding to support the intensive work needed to welcome people into a process of improving the community on multiple fronts, including tackling crime.

### *Finding the Tools to Engage*

The outreach strategy, in a nutshell: a lot of legwork. The city engaged organizers from HAPHousing and another organization to help broaden participation for the more than 20 neighborhood meetings, focus-group discussions, surveys, and community events involved in the Choice Neighborhoods planning process between 2012 and early 2014. City staff went door to door in the Marble Street and Outing Park (formerly Concord Heights and Hollywood) developments in April and May 2012, ultimately reaching 70 percent of households for an hour-long survey in English and Spanish.

To get neighborhood people to meetings, organizers distributed fliers in Spanish and English and knocked on doors to explain what was going on. They provided translation at meetings so everyone could have a say and understand the proceedings. And get-togethers

featured amenities that lightened residents’ burdens and made the gatherings something to enjoy with neighbors—music, raffles, and familiar food, from barbecue to Puerto Rican favorites to Italian pastries. In the survey, nearly one in five residents cited lack of childcare as a barrier to employment, so childcare was also made available at Choice events.

“In the beginning there were not many neighbors that would come out,” said Crystal Smith, a lifelong resident of the South End and mother of three who engaged in the

Choice Neighborhoods planning process and is now an outreach worker in South End’s BCJI Program. “Little by little they were trickling in,” she said. “The more we got the word out, the more they came.”

This was data gathering and planning, but it was also old-fashioned community building, drawing together the neighborhood’s “old guard” Italian-American

**Involving people in the process of charting a new course for their community is key to success. In high crime communities, fear and distrust can add another layer of difficulty to an already hard job. There is no silver bullet, but persistence and creativity can yield results.**

## About the Choice Neighborhoods and Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Programs

residents and members of its Latino majority to air different perspectives on what was behind neighborhood problems and uncover shared interests. “One of the biggest shake-ups that Choice had was bringing the two worlds together in public meetings,” said Molina. “You could feel the divide. It was like, ‘OK, we’re seeing it now, people have said it, but look at what’s happening. And then Choice started really dusting everything off and saying, let’s have those conversations.”

Engagement strategies and values – like working with credible local leaders, doing more listening than talking, and showing respect for people’s needs – cross-cut safety and other kinds of community development efforts. Early outreach in Choice Neighborhoods planning sets the table for strong crime prevention work.

In addition, the planning process engaged dozens of service organizations throughout the area—from Square One Early Childhood Center to the federally qualified Caring Health Center to the YMCA to the Hampden County Sheriff’s Department—through interviews, working-group meetings, electronic surveys, and regular email updates.

### *Safety Emerges as a Cross-Cutting Neighborhood Priority*

Input from all these people, especially the South End’s residents, pointed to a near desperate need for more early childhood education and enriching activities for older kids, and job training and access to living-wage work for adults.

But one immediate thing that came up repeatedly across old guard and new, in various forms and from nearly all parties, was the problem of crime. People living in this part of the South End

**A thriving neighborhood is an intricate system of interlocking, moving parts.** There’s a lot going right in a good neighborhood, from quality housing and good schools to safe streets and busy, attractive commercial zones. Distressed high-poverty neighborhoods, conversely, are typically beset by a multitude of dynamic and interrelated problems. Efforts to address these problems in isolation are bound to meet with frustration. What’s needed is a coordinated, multi-pronged, persistent approach that is grassroots-oriented and consistently place-based.

This is the essential insight behind the White House Promise Zones Initiative, which builds on a federal partnership launched in 2008 to help neighborhoods of concentrated poverty remake themselves into places of choice and opportunity using resources of the departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Education, Health and Human Services, Justice (DOJ), Agriculture, Interior, and Treasury. The signature place-based programs of these agencies come to the job of neighborhood revitalization from somewhat different angles, but are holistic in their methods and goals and designed to mesh on the ground in ways that multiply benefits to a community. The Choice Neighborhoods and the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Programs – the two programs featured in this guide – are particularly well aligned.

HUD’s **Choice Neighborhoods** Program enables communities to revitalize struggling neighborhoods with distressed public housing or HUD-assisted housing. Local leaders, residents and stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits and private developers, create a plan that revitalizes distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. Through these grants, communities are replacing obsolete, distressed housing with vibrant mixed-income communities, and are leveraging investments to develop new retail and businesses, turn around failing schools, strengthen early education, prevent crime, improve transportation, ensure basic neighborhood assets and increase access to jobs.

DOJ’s **Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation** (BCJI) Program, administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), seeks to reduce crime and improve community safety as part of a comprehensive strategy to advance neighborhood revitalization. BCJI targets crime hot spots – typically micro places in communities that have struggled with crime for years. BCJI leaders convene cross-sector partnerships including residents to work with researchers to analyze drivers of crime and develop data-driven, evidence-informed solutions. In pursuing these plans and implementing chosen solutions, BCJI sites are achieving crime reduction, reclaiming troubled places in ways that spur economic development, and enhancing collective efficacy and collaboration between communities and police. LISC, a national non-profit community development organization, provides coaching and expert consultation as the technical assistance provider for BCJI.





**Pictured** Jennifer Rivera, left, and Crystal Smith stroll through Outing Park. At right, the development's attractive new on-site management building.

were disturbed by the drug dealing, violence, and prostitution going on in their midst. More than that, they were afraid. In the housing resident survey, more than 70 percent said they were unlikely to let their kids play outside. Nearly 80 percent reported feeling unsafe walking alone at night. Well over half said they had heard gunshots.

And the residents wanted change. More than nine in ten said they wanted to see safety-enhancing physical changes to the neighborhood—better lighting and security systems—but also a more robust and visible police presence and a crime-watch program that would enlist community members in deterring crime. In a June 2012 community meeting to discuss public-safety priorities, participants identified three that speak to the intersection of people, place, and crime: proactive “community policing,” demolition of vacant homes, and efforts to keep the neighborhood clean.

None of this came as a surprise. People had been talking about crime in the South End for years. But often it was outsiders looking in at a “problem” neighborhood. Due to the intensive outreach that brought residents’ voices to the fore, the priorities laid out in Choice Neighborhoods planning had a new legitimacy, which paved the way

for a deeper dive on crime reduction through BCJI. As resident Smith said, “It’s not just what you see on paper, it’s what we see in real life every day. When we would go to these meetings and there would be different agencies, city officials, that don’t live in this neighborhood and they’d say, ‘well, we think...,’ residents would be saying, we know. You know what I mean? It got things rolling.”

## The Transformation Plan: Where to Next?

Under the Choice Neighborhoods Program, HUD provides two types of grants—grants to plan neighborhood revitalization strategies, and grants to implement them. By the end of its planning process in late 2013, Springfield had decided not to seek an implementation grant.

This is because it turned out the city could not propose a project that would match the program’s central aim—to replace or rehabilitate distressed public and HUD-assisted housing in order to create a viable mixed-income community. The rehabilitation of HUD-assisted 316-unit Outing Park (which includes some market-rate rentals) was proceeding apace and did not require supplemental funding.

**Authentic community engagement lends legitimacy and urgency to plans for a broader approach to tackling crime that puts the responsibility for safer streets in many hands - police, property owners, service agencies and neighbors.**

As for the severely distressed Marble Street Apartments, a consultant report commissioned by the city had concluded that any effort to replace the 46 units of public housing with a mixed-income development of similar scale in the neighborhood would likely fail, due to the difficulty of attracting families who can pay higher rents to fill such a small number of units. Instead, the consultant said, the city should consider market-rate rental development to achieve income diversity in the neighborhood. Meanwhile, plans for an \$800 million MGM casino abutting the South

End received voter approval in July 2013, raising hopes for jobs and economic development but also boosting land values and making potential sites for a new development harder to come by. So the plan for Marble Street evolved: it will be demolished in 2016 as originally envisioned, but not replaced—a potentially controversial plan firmly supported by its residents. Tenants will

receive enhanced rental-assistance vouchers to help them secure other homes and, for those who want to stay in the neighborhood, guidance in finding an apartment nearby.

Springfield's decision not to move ahead with the housing strategies that came out of the Choice Neighborhoods planning process threatened to orphan some of the "people" strategies also included in the plan. Yet partly thanks to disaster relief funds, the city and its partners have been able to carry forward many important initiatives, including job training programs and the reopening of Square One Early Childhood Center on Main Street in the summer of 2013. In addition, the South End Community Center is slated for reconstruction in the refurbished Emerson Wight Park, marking a major, intentional "win" for public safety. Siting a vital community institution in the park will help ensure regular positive activity, deterring criminal or disorderly uses of the public space.

To bring even further life to a centerpiece of the Choice Neighborhoods plan—a major public safety initiative for the South End—the city sought and, in the autumn

of 2013, received a \$1 million BCJI grant from the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. During the Choice Neighborhoods process, according to McCafferty, residents made it clear they wanted stepped-up community policing, but the Springfield police commissioner at the time said the department didn't have the resources to provide it. "My thinking was, with the mayor's blessing I was going to get other money and bring the police into the neighborhood," McCafferty said.

## BCJI: A Deeper Dive into Community Safety

In late 2013, fortified with the legitimacy, information, and techniques developed during Choice Neighborhoods planning, the city and its partners kicked off a six-month research and planning process

to fine-tune strategies for a South End public safety program. The BCJI-funded initiative would also draw on lessons learned through Choice by involving some of the same people—residents like Smith, as well as McCafferty, who would be a key member of the South End Public Safety Steering Committee, and Molina, who would spearhead the effort as the full-time South End public safety coordinator.

This continuity was important because Springfield's BCJI grant application proposed adapting for the South End a homegrown community policing strategy that relies heavily on relationship building, the Counter Criminal Continuum (C3) Program. Developed with great success over the last several years in Springfield's own North End, a neighborhood with demographics similar to those in the South End, C3 disrupts and displaces criminal activity by three related means:

- Developing an active, trusting give-and-take between residents and police officers, with a special patrol assigned to walk the streets and interact with community members.
- Building a sense of efficacy among residents, a belief that they can come together to take ownership of their neighborhood and suppress crime.
- Allowing law enforcement to do its job more effectively by providing officers with fine-grained intelligence from the community about where, when, and how crime occurs.

BCJI can help drive forward Choice Neighborhoods plan elements related to both people and place.

This policing approach reflects the priorities of Police Commissioner John Barbieri who is seeking to build greater trust between residents and officers. "We're not law enforcement officers. We're public service officers," Barbieri said to applause at a public forum in January 2015. "We're not the warriors on patrol in your neighborhood, we're the guardians."

### *The 411: Studying the Drivers of Crime in the South End*

But first, the federal BCJI Program called for a thoroughgoing look at the patterns of neighborhood crime, an effort coordinated by Molina and led by the South End safety initiative's research partner, Windsor Woods Research Associates.

This information gathering allowed planners to drill more deeply into the public safety issues raised during the Choice Neighborhoods planning, and included:

**Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**, pronounced sep-ted) is a multidisciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior that focuses on changing how places are laid out, and how they look and feel. Criminologist C. Ray Jeffrey coined the term in the 1970s around the same time that architect Oscar Newman's ideas about "defensible space" took hold.

CPTED suggests that you can change how people act in a place by altering its design. The goal is to reduce crime and fear, and improve quality of life. Basic principles include "natural surveillance," which harkens back to Jane Jacobs' ideas about the positive power of eyes on the street, described in her influential 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and "territoriality," which looks at how signage and maintenance suggest that a space is cared for. These principles often get people talking about windows, lighting, fences, and landscaping, which can reduce opportunities for crime in relatively cost-efficient ways.

More advanced principles go a step further and look at how people come into the picture. For example, "activity support" encourages bringing intended users to a space to make it less hospitable to criminal activity – like youth sports programs in a park. "Movement predictors" factor in how pathways, benches or other features of a space affect how people use it – such as where they enter, linger or exit.

BCJI and Choice Neighborhoods leaders around the country have used CPTED to inform renovations of residential properties, parks and streetscapes. Some lessons from their experience include:

- Good use of CPTED requires input from multiple people, including users of a space who might have varied perceptions of what makes it feel scary or safe. Property managers, community developers, and law enforcement personnel bring different information and resources to conversations about crime.
- Context matters; different problems and locations require different interventions.
- CPTED is best used as a tool in a problem-solving or planning process, not as an independent intervention. Analysis of how the environment affects people's behavior can uncover opportunities not just to reduce risk of crime, but also to create social connections and spur economic activity.

More on CPTED is available via the International [CPTED Association](#) and [LISC](#).

- Stakeholder meetings with individuals in local law enforcement, social service, housing, and city management.
- Bilingual community meetings (with childcare and refreshments) held in spring 2014 to learn from residents about specific concerns and crime hotspots.
- Sophisticated analysis of local crime statistics, including arrests, calls to the police, re-entry of ex-offenders into the community, and geographical patterns.
- Observations of key locations identified by the police or community members as crime hot spots, to document patterns of activity and environmental conditions.

The research certainly confirmed there was illegal drug activity going on in the area. After assault and battery, the most common arrest offenses during the first six months of 2014 were drug possession with intent to distribute and drug violation near a school. The drugs in question included heroin and cocaine/crack.

**Combining different types and sources of information creates a full, textured, actionable picture of crime and other community conditions. Knowledge gained from Choice Neighborhoods planning can inform BCJI efforts, and vice versa.**

But the research also painted the picture of a disconnect between official data and what residents (and police) experience, suggesting a lack of the very communication C3 aims to foster. Though the South End has a higher crime incident rate than the city overall, it had fewer calls for service. And the top reasons for calling were for ambulance services, domestic disturbances, and business alarms, while

the top concerns residents expressed in meetings were drug dealing, prostitution, and fighting. Police also were aware of this nexus of problems, observing that assault and weapons charges were mostly due to the drug trade. The comparatively few arrests for prostitution (sometimes a means to obtain drugs) may in part reflect reluctance by community members to call the police on sex workers they perceive as “down and out.”

Hotspots identified by observation often didn’t match up with statistics either. These included certain areas of Emerson Wight Park, a nearby mini-mart, and two sections of Main Street that included a sports bar and a liquor store. In the case of the mini-mart, all that was needed to reinforce the observations was a site visit in which the researcher found syringes, needle cleaning kits, and other drug paraphernalia littering the adjacent alleyway.

The researchers noted that crime in the area is literally a moving target, with hotspots likely shifting to more vulnerable sites as changes take place in the neighborhood. In fact, there was a significant downtick in incidents in the BCJI area between 2011 and 2014—the first fruits, perhaps, of major physical revitalization efforts completed during this period, including the redesign of Emerson Wight Park and installation of street lighting, landscaping, and surveillance cameras.

Taken together, these pieces of information were illuminating, highlighting the importance of combining human intelligence with other data sets in any public safety effort.

### Ready to Roll: Launching the South End Public Safety Initiative

During this research process, in June 2014 Molina began reaching out to recruit members for the South End Public Safety Steering Committee, which would include representatives from city housing and finance departments, the Hampden County Sheriff’s Department, the Springfield Police Department (SPD), and neighborhood groups and service agencies, as well as members of the resident community itself. The full steering committee met three times in the summer and autumn of 2014.

**Pictured** During the Choice planning process, the city dramatically altered the formerly boxed-in Emerson Wight Park by demolishing buildings along its perimeter and opening it up to the surrounding neighborhood—an aesthetic improvement also designed to enhance the park’s safety.



While successful in its launch, Molina noted that the path would have been easier if the Committee had taken steps to better clarify how the various members were going to work together to advance a complex plan. “The biggest piece of advice I would give a colleague,” said Molina, “is to work closely with LISC in establishing a strong steering committee and making sure everybody has a mutual understanding

of their individual role and purpose in managing the Byrne [BCJI] initiative.”

In March 2015, with the research phase complete and a steering committee in place, DOJ approved the South End’s plan to implement its safety initiative. A C3 community policing detail of six Springfield PD officers led by Sgt. Brian Beliveau hit the streets, with the specially trained officers patrolling the neighborhood on foot or bicycle every day from 4 p.m. to midnight. Said Smith, “They’re on their bike, they’re stopping, the kids are riding their bikes along with them. That’s what I love to see.” She said the

officers readily offer their work cell phone numbers, and she’s always encouraging neighbors to give “Brian” a call about concerns.

Establishing a collaborative cross-sector public-safety steering committee with clearly defined roles is vital. Leaders involved in Choice Neighborhoods planning can make strong participants of BCJI teams, or they can help with recruiting other leaders.

### *C3 with a Difference*

The South End Public Safety Initiative includes novel components to support and enhance C3 in the neighborhood, prompted by the findings of the Choice Neighborhoods and BCJI planning processes. Weekly open meetings give community residents, police, and other interested parties a chance to share information, calling attention to movements in criminal activity (residents say it has shifted to wee hours) as well as to physical problems that encourage crime such as illegal dumping or a poorly maintained property.

These meetings are bolstered by Community Walks, in which an officer and a resident go door to door in the neighborhood, talking to people about the safety initiative, answering questions, and offering informative materials and trinkets for the kids. SPD narcotics operations and other regular enforcement activities benefit from greater intel from the community via these activities, as well as from the data analysis of the BCJI research process.

In the same month the BCJI-funded South End public safety plan got the green light from DOJ, Police Commissioner Barbieri announced that the police department would be expanding C3 for implementation in other neighborhoods around the city. The hope is that comparing the South End's program with citywide C3 will provide useful information for everyone, showing how community-building enhancements affect results.

### *Promotores Build Bridges*

Perhaps the South End initiative's most creative approach to the need for greater resident leadership to collaborate with police is its Promotores Program. Up to ten residents are serving as "promotores," community workers who liaise among their neighbors, the police, and other local organizations, pointing the way to services from health care to after-school programs. It's a paid part-

time position, an arrangement that's responsive to the community's urgent need for jobs and job training. Four promotores joined the team as of September 2015, and one is Smith. "If you ask me, 'Crystal, what do you do?' I say I'm an advocate for my community," said Smith. "I'm an advocate for you. I'm an advocate for your child. The police are just one part of it."

The long-term plan is for promotores to helm safety-related initiatives—and to assume leadership in the neighborhood more broadly. This aligns with an underlying goal of many safety initiatives – to build collective efficacy in the neighborhood and make them, in the words of a police commander from another BCJI city, "self-policing".

In addition, six people who are part of the safety initiative, including three residents, have received community organizing training through NeighborWorks America. These individuals cut their organizing teeth by mounting the first annual South End NeighborFest,

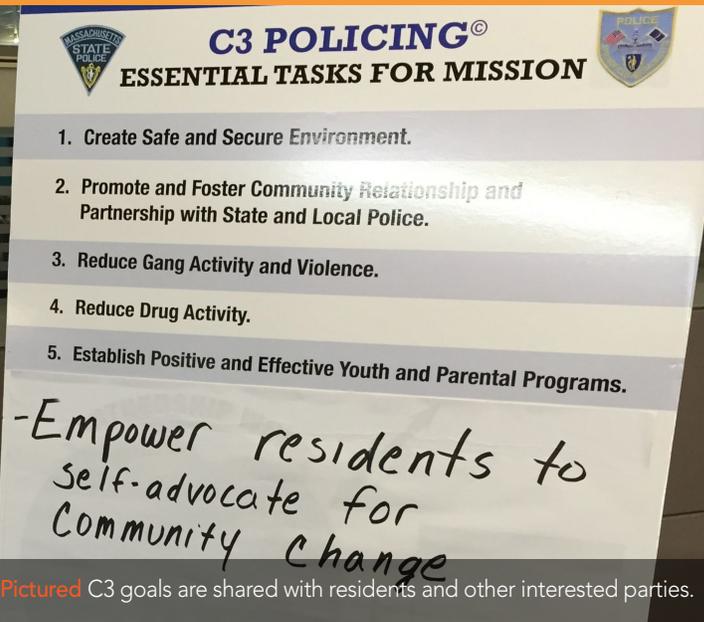
which brought hundreds of residents old and new to Emerson Wight Park in June 2015 to enjoy a barbecue. Two C3 officers were there to meet and greet, letting curious children climb in and out of their cruiser.

Finally, the neighborhood's initiative supports efforts by its partner, the Hampden County Sheriff's Department, to engage individuals released from correctional facilities who re-enter the neighborhood, providing individualized guidance and help accessing services and peer support.

### **Sustaining Progress in the South End**

As time goes on, city leaders are making a concerted effort to expand the network of people who are spearheading activities defined in the neighborhood's public safety plan. Residents who have gained leadership know-how through the Choice and BCJI processes are becoming more active in the South End Citizens Council, bringing new voices to the body that serves as the primary

**Creating an environment where people and police officers solve problems together requires building relationships. Choice Neighborhoods and BCJI efforts both afford many opportunities for people to connect with officers informally - at block parties and community events - and in more targeted joint projects like safety walks and youth programs.**



official representative of neighborhood interests. Already two new community members, both participants in the BCJI Program, have joined the council.

These achievements are backed by the continuing efforts to rehabilitate the physical environment in a way that promotes safety. Walking the neighborhood recently with a first-time visitor, Molina, Smith and Promotora Jennifer Rivera took pleasure in pointing out Outing Park's handsome new on-site management building and the sprawling expanse of green in Emerson Wight Park. They also spoke of goings-on that aren't visible to an outsider, recounting, for example, that people shoot up at night just behind the tree line at the park's edge. Rivera said she doesn't let her ten-year-old daughter out in the neighborhood unsupervised. But when the visitor turned to snap a picture, she said, she saw it too—the open street lined with shipshape historic buildings and new trees. It was an image of what the neighborhood is becoming, and for the sake of her child she planned to keep working toward it.

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**The activities of revitalization – from property renovations to streetscape improvements – can be powerful tools for crime reduction.** Done right, they can open up sightlines, change how people move through a place, and signal that caring eyes are watching, making places less appealing for criminal activity. They can also transform persistently “hot” locations – by putting a nuisance property in the hands of a responsible owner, for example, or siting a cherished community center in a park in need of positive activity. Crime reduction strategies that rely on enforcement action alone miss these opportunities to reduce and prevent crime by strategically changing the environment.

**Involving people in the process of charting a new course for their community is essential for successful safety and revitalization efforts.** In high crime communities, fear and distrust can add another layer of difficulty to an already hard job of community engagement. But the persistence, creativity and determination required to reach people and get them involved reap major dividends. Empowering credible local people to liaise among different neighbor groups, police and organizations can mitigate distrust and create leadership opportunities.

Engagement strategies and values – like working with credible local leaders, doing more listening than talking, and showing respect for people's needs – cross-cut safety and other kinds of community development efforts. They also create norms for collaboration across diverse groups of people in a neighborhood which can set the table for effective community-police collaboration.

**Knowledge gained from Choice Neighborhoods planning can enhance BCJI efforts to develop deep understanding of crime problems and community conditions.** Official data rarely tells the whole story about what drives crime. Observations and information from residents provide invaluable context and new insights, as does a solid understanding of what local organizations can bring to the table. Combining different types and sources of information from both BCJI and Choice processes creates a full, textured, actionable picture of crime and other community conditions.

**BCJI can help drive forward Choice Neighborhoods plans related to both people and place.** Given the influence of environmental and social factors on crime, projects advanced by Choice can align well with BCJI priorities, perhaps with enhancements shaped by BCJI research. The two programs reinforce each other. Leaders involved in Choice Neighborhoods planning may be well-suited to participate in public safety steering committees, or to help recruit others. BCJI can provide the resources for local leaders to more robustly implement a priority strategy that emerged in a Choice planning process.