

Chapter 1

Overview of Operation Weed and Seed

The Weed and Seed Program is one of those good ideas that began as an interagency pilot program in a few cities and is now firmly established. Initial funding was provided by the Office of Justice Program. Weed and Seed has the comprehensive objective of weeding out crime from designated neighborhoods, moving in with a wide range of crime and drug and prevention programs, and then seeding these neighborhoods with a comprehensive range of human service programs that stimulate revitalization. One reason why this program enjoys wide support is that Weed and Seed demonstrates a number of Federal agencies can work together effectively.

EXCERPT FROM ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO'S
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE. APRIL 22, 1993

Violent crime in many American communities remains unacceptably high despite the significant accomplishments that have been made over the past decade. The Department of Justice and other Federal agencies are implementing Operation Weed and Seed, an innovative program to address the problems of violent crime, gangs, drug use, and drug trafficking.

Operation Weed and Seed is targeted at those neighborhoods hardest hit by crime, violence, and eroding social and economic stability. Weed and Seed is designed to rid these target areas of violent criminals, provide prevention, intervention, and treatment services for substance abuse and other social problems, and revitalize the community through housing and economic development.

The Weed and Seed Concept

Operation Weed and Seed is a multi-agency strategy that "weeds out" violent crime, gang activity, drug use, and drug trafficking in targeted high-crime neighborhoods and then "seeds" the target area by restoring these neighborhoods through social and economic revitalization. The Weed and Seed strategy recognizes the importance of linking and integrating Federal, State, and local law enforcement and criminal justice efforts with Federal, State, and local social services, and private sector and community efforts to maximize the impact of existing programs and resources. It also recognizes the paramount importance of community involvement. Community residents must be empowered to assist in solving problems in their neighborhoods. In addition, the private sector is involved as a pivotal partner in the Weed and Seed strategy.

Four elements make up Weed and Seed: law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention, and treatment; and neighborhood restoration. Law enforcement activities constitute the "Weed" portion of the program. Revitalization, which includes prevention, intervention, and treatment services, and then neighborhood restoration constitutes the "Seed" element. Community policing is the "bridge" that links the Weed and Seed elements.

Weed: Law Enforcement

Narcotics traffickers and violent criminals, once arrested, are often immediately returned to the streets to continue distributing drugs and terrorizing local residents. This environment of violence makes potential witnesses fear for their lives. Despite the best efforts of State and local prosecutors, often there is a lengthy delay between arrest and disposition of narcotics cases prosecuted at the local level. Moreover, even when such cases are resolved through a guilty plea or conviction, the criminal may serve little, if any, time in a county or State correctional facility. The Weed and Seed initiative is designed to break this cycle of arrest, delay, and mild or no punishment that breeds frustration and despair in the community.

Under this program, the United States Attorney will play a central role in coordinating Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to prosecute targeted drug and/or violent offenders in Federal court where they will be subject to pretrial detention, a speedy trial, and mandatory minimum sentences. The advantages of the Weed and Seed program are:

- < The offender is immediately removed from the streets, and the public immediately sees

that these law enforcement efforts are effective.

- < The offender is met with swift justice.
- < Those convicted serve longer sentences mandated by Federal law and are prevented from committing further criminal acts for years to come.

Federal, State, and local prosecutors should reach agreement regarding the most effective and appropriate application of prosecution resources to insure swift and long-term removal of other offenders from the neighborhood.

Law Enforcement activities will be directed at street criminals, gangs, and larger criminal organizations. Law enforcement strategies will involve progressive and sophisticated tactics such as undercover buys, expanded surveillance, wiretaps, and witness protection and assistance as means of enhancing the investigation, apprehension, and prosecution of the entire drug organization.

Community Policing: Bridge Between "Weed" and "Seed"

Community policing will increase police visibility and develop cooperative relationships between police and citizenry in target areas. This strategy will support suppression activities and provide a "bridge" to prevention, intervention, and treatment, as well as to neighborhood reclamation and restoration. Officers on foot patrols and meeting with residents, citizen neighborhood watches, and community relations activities will increase positive interaction between police and neighborhood residents and help continue reductions in drug use, trafficking, and related crime.

Community policing encourages resident involvement in crime prevention and other partnership efforts that help solve drug-related problems in the neighborhoods. Enhanced public safety and reduced fear in the community make it possible for human services and economic revitalization activities to be implemented successfully.

Based on the success of community policing efforts, a number of local prosecutors have modified the concept to implement community prosecution by assigning assistant prosecutors to vertically prosecute cases originating in a particular neighborhood. They also attend and make presentations at community meetings, sponsor community forums on crime and drug abuse, and make presentations to teachers and students in the

schools. In addition, these assistant prosecutors encourage community involvement in enforcement telephone tiplines and neighborhood watches and keep residents informed of the status of cases that originate in their neighborhoods.

Seed: Neighborhood Restoration Program

The Seed component consists of two elements: prevention, intervention, and treatment, and neighborhood restoration. Prevention, intervention, and treatment activities for community residents may include family services, organized recreation, job and life skills development, mentoring, service projects, educational programs, and counseling and support groups.

Neighborhood restoration consists of renovating and refurbishing housing, commercial establishments and open areas, and creating a solid economic foundation for entrepreneurship and job creation.

Principal Components of Weed and Seed

The three principal components in the Weed and Seed strategy are:

- < Coordination and concentration of resources in specific geographic areas.
- < Private sector investment
- < Community involvement

Coordination and Concentration of Resources in a Specific Geographic Area

Services provided to target neighborhoods are often fragmented, inadequate, and inconsistent. Weed and Seed is designed to focus existing resources on a well-defined geographic area that is experiencing high levels of violence and drug trafficking. This requires the coordination of existing criminal justice with human services to ensure that they are consistent and provide a comprehensive approach to meeting the neighborhood's needs. These services should be concentrated intensively in the selected neighborhood and then maintained at a level sufficient to ensure that the residents can live, work, and raise their families in a safe environment.

Private Sector Investment

Private sector investment is essential to ensuring the success of the Weed and Seed strategy. Representatives from the private sector should work closely with public agencies to design, develop, and implement "weeding" and "seeding" activities.

Weed and Seed will directly affect the private sector by improving the economic conditions of the neighborhood and the economic status of its residents creating jobs and more skilled potential employees, and providing safer areas more conducive to business operations. In return for such benefits, the private sector should dedicate resources that will expand and enhance entrepreneurial opportunities, job training, recreation, and health services.

Community Involvement

Apathy, fear, and hopelessness keep many neighborhood residents from becoming involved in community life. An integral part of Weed and Seed is the mobilization of neighborhood residents to assist in designing, developing, and implementing Weed and Seed activities. Residents need to be empowered to take responsibility for the neighborhood. Resident involvement can be encouraged through activities such as neighborhood watches, marches, and rallies, and neighborhood "cleanup" parties to remove graffiti.

Goals and Objectives of the Weed and Seed Program

The purpose of Weed and Seed is to demonstrate an innovative, comprehensive, and integrated approach to law enforcement and community revitalization for preventing and controlling violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in target areas. The goals and objectives of the program are designed to address this purpose.

Goals

There are two primary goals of the Weed and Seed program:

- < To eliminate violent crime, drug trafficking, and drug-related crime from targeted high-crime neighborhoods.
- < To provide a safe environment, free of crime and drug use, for law-abiding citizens to live, work, and raise families.

Objectives

The Weed and Seed program consists of three major objectives that address the issues of interagency collaboration, integration of multiple resources, and community mobilization. The program objectives are as follows:

- < To develop a comprehensive, multi-agency strategy to control and prevent violent crime, drug trafficking, and drug-related crime in targeted high-crime neighborhoods.
- < To coordinate and integrate existing as well as new Federal, State, local, and private sector initiatives, criminal justice efforts, and human services and to concentrate those resources in the project sites to maximize their impact on reducing and preventing violent crime, drug trafficking, and drug-related crime. This step maximizes the potential good and lasting power of needed social services.
- < To mobilize community residents in the targeted sites to assist law enforcement in identifying and removing violent offenders and drug traffickers from their neighborhoods and to assist other human service agencies in identifying and responding to service needs of the target area. Of equal importance, however, is the need to mobilize residents to be active participants in service delivery.

Weed and Seed Elements

The comprehensive approach of the Weed and Seed program dictates a multi-level action plan. There are four basic elements in this plan: law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention, and treatment; and neighborhood restoration.

Law Enforcement

No social program or community activity can survive in an atmosphere poisoned by violent crime and drug abuse. Law enforcement must "weed out" the most violent offenders by coordinating and integrating the efforts of Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies in targeted high-crime neighborhoods. The law enforcement element consists primarily of suppression activities. These activities include enforcement, adjudication, prosecution, and supervision efforts designed to target, apprehend, and incapacitate violent street criminals who terrorize neighborhoods and account for a disproportionate percentage of criminal activity. One example of an

effective law enforcement strategy is Operation Triggerlock, a Department of Justice initiative that targets violent offenders for prosecution in Federal court to take advantage of tough Federal firearms laws.

Some of the suppression activities will focus on special enforcement operations such as repeat or violent offender removal programs, intensified narcotics investigations, targeted prosecutions, victim-witness protection, and elimination of narcotics trafficking organizations operating in these areas.

Community Policing

Community policing serves as the bridge between the "weeding" (law enforcement) and "seeding" (neighborhood restoration) components. The community policing element operates in support of intensive law enforcement suppression and containment activities and provides a bridge to the prevention, intervention, and treatment component as well as the neighborhood reclamation and restoration components. Local police departments should implement community policing strategies in each of the targeted sites. Under community policing, law enforcement works closely with community residents to develop solutions to violent and drug-related crime. In addition, community policing should foster a sense of responsibility within the community and serve as a stimulus for community mobilization.

Community policing activities will focus on increasing police visibility and developing cooperative relationships between the police and citizenry in the targeted areas. Techniques such as foot patrols, problem solving, victim referrals to support services, and community relations activities will increase positive interaction between the police and the community. Special emphasis should be placed on addressing the needs of crime victims and minority communities that are disproportionately victimized by crime.

The objective is to raise the level of citizen and community involvement in crime prevention and intervention activities to solve drug-related problems in neighborhoods and to enhance the level of community security. Community policing might include police ministations, foot patrols, and nuisance abatement.

Community mobilization is also important to community policing in crime prevention. Programs that encourage community participation and help prevent crime include neighborhood watches, citizen marches and rallies, prayer service, drug-free zones,

and graffiti removal.

Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment

The prevention, intervention, and treatment element would begin with the near completion of the intensive "Weed" activities. However, depending on the needs, interests, and most importantly, the safety of the targeted neighborhood, this aspect of the strategy could be initiated concurrently with the weeding effort. This element should help prevent crime and violence from recurring in target neighborhoods. The coordinated efforts of law enforcement and social service agencies, the private sector, and the community will help prevent crime from recurring. This can be accomplished by concentrating a broad array of human services on the target areas to create an environment where crime cannot thrive.

Prevention, intervention, and treatment should include youth services, school programs, community and social programs, and support groups designed to develop positive community attitudes toward combating narcotics use and trafficking. The Safe Haven, for example, is a mechanism to organize and deliver an array of youth- and adult-oriented human services in a multi-service center setting such as a school.

Neighborhood Restoration

Neighborhood restoration can be achieved only through the coordinated use of Federal, State, local, and private sector resources. This element of the Weed and Seed program is designed to revitalize distressed neighborhoods and improve the quality of life in the target communities. The neighborhood restoration element will focus on economic development activities designed to strengthen legitimate community institutions. Resources should be dedicated to economic development, provision of economic opportunities for residents, improved housing conditions, enhanced social services, and improved public services in the target areas.

Programs will be developed to improve living conditions; enhance home security; allow for low-cost physical improvements; develop long-term efforts to renovate and maintain housing; and to provide educational, economic, social, recreational, and other vital opportunities. A key feature of this element will be the fostering of self-worth and individual responsibility among community members.

Planning for Weed and Seed

Planning for and implementing the Weed and Seed strategy at the local level involves six basic planning steps. While specific program elements may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, the planning steps will be common to all Weed and Seed sites. These steps are:

Step 1: Organize and convene a Weed and Seed steering committee.

Step 2: Select the target neighborhood.

Step 3: Conduct a needs assessment of the target neighborhood.

Step 4: Select the resources that should be mobilized to address neighborhood problems.

Step 5: Identify goals, objectives, and implementation activities.

Step 6: Develop an implementation schedule.

Users of this manual should keep in mind that working through the planning steps is not a neat, consecutive process. Work on some of the steps occurs simultaneously. For example, selecting the members of the steering committee may be in process while the target neighborhood is being chosen and assessed. Likewise, agency resources for Weed and Seed will be identified before all the details of the program goals, objectives, and activities are decided.

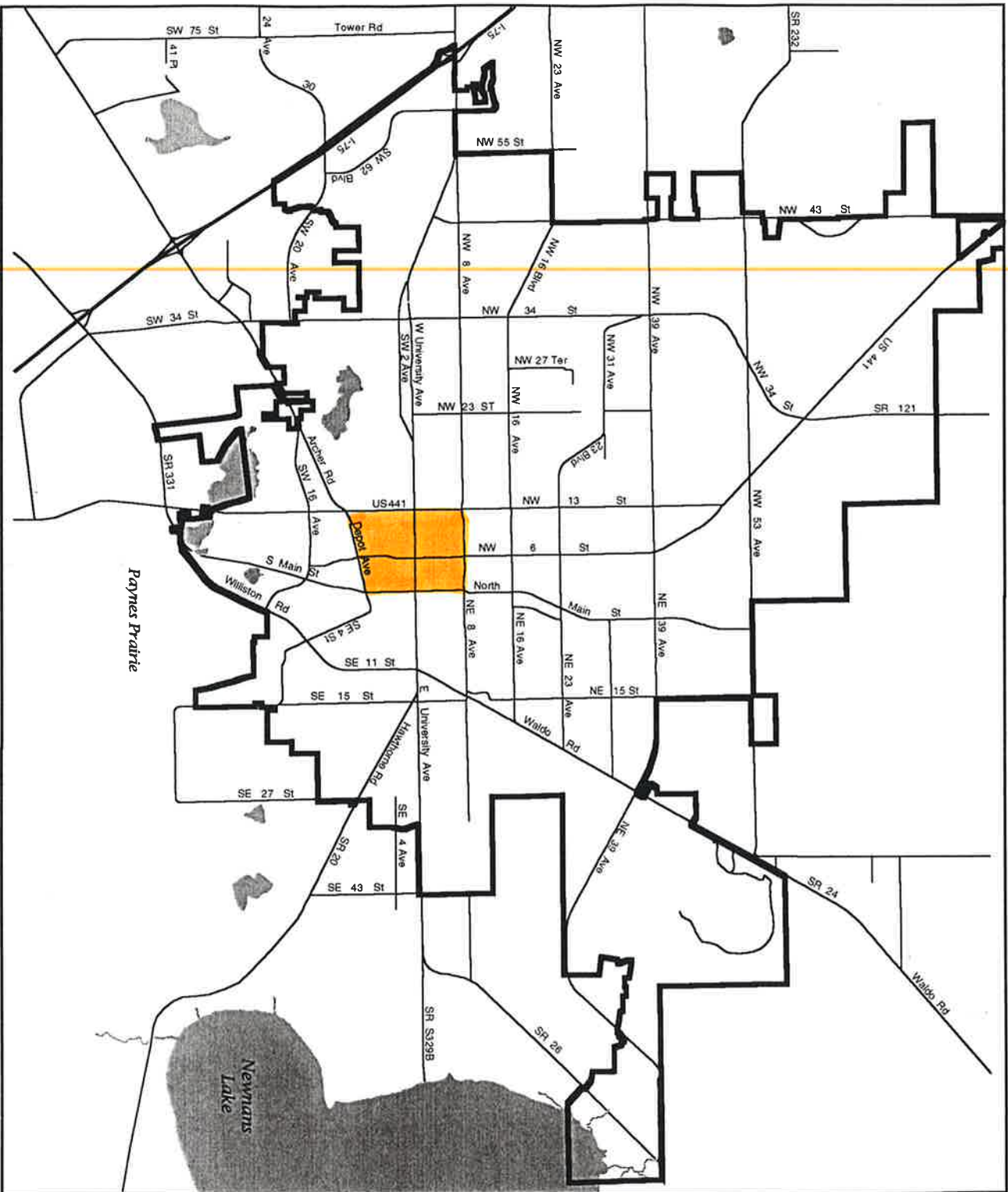
Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are devoted to the six-step planning process outlined above. Chapter 2 discusses steering committee leadership, composition, and responsibilities. Chapter 3 covers planning steps 2, 3, and 4--selecting a target neighborhood, conducting a neighborhood needs assessment, and selecting resources. Chapter 4 discusses planning steps 5 and 6--developing implementation activities and an implementation schedule.

Other chapters address in detail the four key Weed and Seed components. Chapter 5 explains ways in which Federal, State, and local law enforcement and prosecution programs can be coordinated. It also discusses appropriate roles for corrections, the courts, and other criminal justice agencies. Chapter 6 discusses community policing and community mobilization. It provides an overview of community policing principles, discusses their applicability to Weed and Seed efforts and addresses key organizational and community relations issues to

consider when initiating a community policing effort.

Chapter 7 concerns the prevention, intervention, and treatment component of Weed and Seed. It suggests appropriate roles that education, health, drug treatment, youth development, and other organizations can play in rebuilding the targeted neighborhood. Chapter 8 discusses the fourth component, neighborhood restoration, with particular attention to housing and economic development.

The final two chapters deal with Weed and Seed management and evaluation. Chapter 9 provides guidelines for managing Weed and Seed programs and deals with policy making, coordination, staffing, hiring, training, and related issues. Chapter 10 discusses issues to consider in evaluating both the Weed and Seed process and the impact of the effort on the community.



Weed and Seed Study Area

Census Tract 1.00
(Block Groups 3 & 4)
& Tract 2.00

 Study Area

| Criteria | Study Area | City |
|---|------------|----------|
| Race: White | 58.50% | 73.30% |
| Black | 36.60% | 21.40% |
| Other | 5.20% | 5.20% |
| Ages 12-21 years | 31.30% | 24.40% |
| % of all Persons below Poverty Line | 55.40% | 26.30% |
| % of Persons 25 years or Older with High School Diploma or GED | 74.50% | 84.80% |
| 1990 Unemployment Rate | 11.40% | 6.60% |
| % of Total Family Households Having Only Female Heads with Children Under 18 Years of Age | 21.10% | 12.60% |
| Median Household Income: | | |
| Tract 1.00, Block Group 3 | \$7,915 | |
| Tract 1.00, Block Group 4 | \$6,534 | |
| All of Tract 2.00 | \$10,135 | |
| All of Gainesville | | \$21,077 |
| % of Dwellings that are Owner-Occupied | 18.20% | 47.00% |

Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3A, for City of Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida

City of Gainesville Gainesville, Florida

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