

The Miami Police Department officers assigned to the Flagami Neighborhood Enhancement Team (NET) received a high level of complaints from the residents in the neighborhood concerning the increasing numbers of prostitutes in their streets. As the calls for service and numbers of arrests for prostitution-related crimes continued to increase, it became evident that the situation had evolved from a simple case of the common “street walker” to a well-orchestrated criminal effort managed by an organized prostitution enterprise.

The Flagami NET law enforcement officers applied a wide range of methods to determine the scope of the emerging prostitution situation in the neighborhood.

- Citizen complaints were reviewed to support detailed analysis of the problem.
- Patrol officers observed the prostitution activities and made frequent arrests for prostitution related violations such as “solicitation” and “obstruction of the roadway.” Additional analysis was conducted to determine the primary areas of prostitution activity including the places where the sexual acts were committed (motels, vehicles, etc..).
- Prostitution related calls for service were analyzed in an effort to identify trends highlighting “active” days of the week, time periods of increased activity, and particular locations favored by the prostitutes.
- Police officers attended community meetings and conducted a dialogue with area residents regarding their prostitution-related concerns and the impact on local traffic, criminal activity, their fear of crime and the reduced quality of life in their community as well as the adverse impact the prostitution activities had on their property values.
- Police officers conducted frequent interviews with prostitutes and “johns” in an effort to establish specific profiles of offenders including age ranges, race, prior arrests, and residences.

The overall analytical effort concentrated on developing insight into some of the key issues of the prostitution situation in the community. Applying the Crime Triangle analysis process, the police focused on the offenders, the locations, and the victims. The offenders were represented by the “supply side” of the equation. In this case, the organized enterprise provided younger, more attractive, African-American and Hispanic women from across the nation. These women were rotated locally from Miami Beach to Miami ( including the Flagami neighborhood) and after three months, they were moved out of Florida. The geographic location in which the majority of the prostitution activity was taking place was pinpointed. The victim population within the affected region consisted of the residents of the community and the local businesses. Additionally, the parishioners and priests of the community church along with the students, teachers and parents of the elementary schools in the neighborhood were severely impacted. The spread of sexually transmitted diseases normally associated with wide-spread prostitution affected the entire community.

In conjunction with the analytical process, the law enforcement team focused on identifying the stakeholders that were affected by the prostitution situation in the community. In developing a response to the problem, the team identified the

stakeholders who could assist in resolving the problem, and additionally, which stakeholders had a vested interest in having the problem resolved. The stakeholder “population” represented a broad range of groups and individuals. The City of Miami City Commissioner from the District, which included the Flagami neighborhood, was actively engaged in addressing the prostitution problem in his District. The Flagami NET personnel, including the law enforcement staff as well as the code enforcement officers, focused on enforcing the ordinances related to prostitution and working with commercial establishments in the community to ensure that appropriate codes were enforced. The Miami-Dade County Transit Authority and the Off-Street Parking Authority were considered stakeholders due to their responsibilities related to the placement of bus benches and parking restrictions in the effected area. Maintenance of street lighting in the neighborhood was the responsibility of the Florida Power and Light. Business owners in the community (including motel owners) were considered key stakeholders, as the prostitution activity had a direct impact on their commercial interests. Among the most critical stakeholders were the residents of the neighborhood, the students and staffs at the local schools as well as the parishioners and clergy members of the local churches. All of these stakeholders were considered key elements in engaging the community to combat the prostitution plague impacting their neighborhood.

Having completed a detailed analysis of the prostitution situation in Flagami, and identifying the various impacted stakeholders, the team developed several goals and objectives for their enforcement program.

- To significantly reduce the “supply side” of the prostitution trade by arresting the prostitutes.
- To significantly reduce the “demand side” of the prostitution problem by arresting the “johns.”
- To increase public awareness of the prostitution problem on Flagler Street and SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street.
- To use *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* methods to deter the prostitution activity.
- To promote a partnership between the community members and the police officers in their neighborhood.
- To encourage the business operators to cooperate in a self-policing agreement focused on an overall improvement in the quality of life and enhancement of their long term commercial interests.

A key element of the response that was developed to combat the prostitution issue in Flagami was the series of collaborative partnerships that were implemented. These partnerships were enhanced by the periodic meetings with the various stakeholders to discuss the initiatives to be implemented. The government’s response plan was well coordinated with the various agencies involved. The code enforcement officers educated the community business owners regarding the applicable ordinances and codes and implemented a liberal grace period to allow the businesses to implement the required modifications.

With the increased focus on prostitution in the Flagami NET area, the law enforcement effort initiated a series of operations with significant results. Twenty operations resulted in 76 prostitution arrests, and 105 “johns” arrests. Routine patrols in the area’s motel parking lots resulted in the recovery of several stolen automobiles as well as license tags. Additionally, the increased patrol activity resulted in the arrests of burglary and robbery offenders. The Flagami NET Citizens on Patrol volunteers conducted their assigned patrols in the neighborhood and distributed crime prevention materials in addition to their routine patrol activities.

In collaboration with the business owners and the various governmental stakeholders, a *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* approach was initiated to deter the prostitution activity in the community. The management at the Illusions Motel agreed to trim the hedges that lined their property, which, in the past, had provided a hiding place for prostitutes “working” that area. The Imperial Motel agreed to the posting of a NO STANDING NO PARKING TOW AWAY signage on their street to prevent “johns” from loitering on the street while they waited for prostitutes. The bus bench at the intersection of Flagler St and SW 48<sup>th</sup> Street was removed in an effort to deter the prostitutes from lingering in that area. The Off-Street Parking Authority implemented parking restrictions on SW 7<sup>th</sup> Street (between SW 48<sup>th</sup> Ave and SW 49<sup>th</sup> Ave) in an effort to curtail prostitution activity in vehicles on that block. The public telephone at the intersection of Flagler Street and SW 48<sup>th</sup> Street was frequently used by prostitutes to contact drug dealers and “pimps.” This telephone was removed. The Florida Power & Light inspected the street lighting along Flagler Street to ensure that all the lights were functioning properly and that the street was well illuminated. These unconventional actions by the business owners and government stakeholders had a negative impact on the flourishing prostitution activities in the area by creating an environment that significantly constrained the activities of the prostitutes and their potential “johns.”

Keeping the public aware of the counter-prostitution on-going counter-prostitution efforts in the Flagami area was considered a vital element of the project. Two major community meetings were convened to inform the community of the activities. Additionally, the *Miami Herald* published an article highlighting the counter-prostitution operations. Miami Police Department officers were featured on the local television talk show that was focused on the counter-prostitution operations in Flagami.

Once the arrested prostitutes entered the legal system, every effort was made to pursue convictions at their bond hearings. The Florida State Statutes included a \$2000 bond along with placement in the Prostitution Mapping Program as a condition of their probation.

As a result of the counter-prostitution effort, there has been a reduction of the daily counts of active prostitutes on the Flagami streets (primarily Flagler Street and SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street). However, there are indications that there has been a displacement trend of prostitution activity eastward on Flagler Street and a small pocket of prostitution activity on SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Although the project was successful in significantly deterring prostitution in Flagami, there were some unforeseen issues that developed and reduced

the overall effectiveness of the effort. The concept of obtaining DNA swabs from the arrested “johns” was not implemented due to the expense of processing the swabs. Although the motels in the community signed No Trespass affidavits, they refused to post No Trespassing signage. Florida Power & Light refused to increase the intensity of the street lighting in the neighborhood. The Department did not allocate funding to support the special Flagler Street Beat.

Due to the decreased numbers of prostitutes noted in the neighborhood, large scale “solicitation or john” details were eliminated as they were considered too manpower intensive and no longer cost efficient. The current guidance for patrol officers in the area are to observe the prostitution activity and make arrests as appropriate along with conducting records checks for warrants and prostitution mapping violations. Depending upon the situation, the officer has the discretion to “call her a cab.”

The key to success of this counter-prostitution effort was the collaborative partnership between law enforcement, its government partners and the Flagami community. This effective triad demonstrated that community problems can be confronted and ultimately solved by working together.