



Lincoln
Police
Department

Gang Activity In the City of Lincoln

A Strategy of Prevention and Response

Revised 2008



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Introduction

A decade has passed since the last publication of the Lincoln Police Department's Strategy and Response to Gang Activity. This plan allows for a structured approach directed towards combating and controlling Lincoln's gang issues. The presence of gang activity within our community is clear. Currently, gang related crimes constitute only a small percentage of reported incidents within the City of Lincoln, but examples of serious and significant offenses do occur. Unchecked, unlawful activity connected to gangs has the potential of significantly impacting neighborhoods, schools, and families while taxing the resources of both law enforcement and the community. The Lincoln Police Department's commitment to addressing gang issues remains steadfast and is highlighted by a statement written ten years ago:

We are convinced that an aggressive public policy aimed at preventing gang recruitment and membership, coupled with vigorous efforts to respond swiftly and firmly to gang-related crime is imperative to the quality of life we enjoy in Lincoln.

-1996 LPD Gang Strategy

Comparatively, the level of gang activity observed in Lincoln may be the envy of other law enforcement agencies struggling with their own gang issues. Nonetheless, in the last decade documented gang membership in the City of Lincoln has increased. Historically, the gang situation in Lincoln has been proactively identified, contained and managed through prompt community response and enforcement. A variety of new technologies and processes have allowed improved identification of crimes and increased focus on individuals associated with gang activity; a commitment outlined in the 1996 report. In opposition to these advancements, obstacles including reduced budgets, strained personnel allocations, the proliferation of methamphetamine related crimes and increasing gun violence make the future outcome of our labor unclear. It takes little time for gangs to gain a foothold in a community and it may be that Lincoln will soon be at a crossroads; either to stand together against such an intrusion or face the potential of a community beset with gang violence. This most current revision will continue our attempt to educate, update, and reaffirm the commitment of the Lincoln Police Department to combating gang influences and the resultant impact on the community.

What is a gang?

The foundation of a gang strategy begins with the definition. The Lincoln Police Department adopted and maintains this definition of the term gang from the 1996 Gang Strategy publication:

An ongoing organization, association or group of three or more persons who share a common sense of identity, and which exists in part for the purpose of committing crime.



We believe that this general definition is sufficient to establish common ground for discussion and action. Several key points of this definition, however, benefit from elaboration:

- Organization, association or group

Gangs do not have organizational charts, officers, bylaws and certificates of membership. An informal group of at least three people that meets the other components of our definition is a gang.

- Ongoing association

A gang is not momentary, but exists over a considerable time. For example, if a group of three people get together and vandalize several cars, their association is transient. When they get together regularly over a period of time for such purposes, however, they have an ongoing association.

- Common sense of identity

One of the most important defining characteristics of a gang is a common sense of identity, shared by the members. The existence of a shared sense of identity is most often inferred by one or more of the following circumstances: a gang name may be used by members, or they might refer to themselves as gang members; members can use special gang nicknames; a symbol or logo can be worn or displayed by members; members may wear gang "colors" or specific articles of clothing for identification; or members may adopt a specific jargon or hand signs for communication.

- Criminal purpose

Up to this point, many of the characteristics of our definition might apply to a sorority, a service club, or a high school basketball team. The existence of a criminal purpose, however, is what truly distinguishes a gang from other kinds of associations and organizations. People gather in groups for many purposes: fellowship, entertainment, protection, etc.; but in order to meet our definition of a gang, one of the significant purposes of the organization's existence must be to commit crime. Gangs may sell illegal drugs, commit assaults, intimidate with threats, steal property, or engage in many other forms of criminal behavior. When crime is a significant purpose of the group, our definition is satisfied. A criminal purpose is implied when the members either individually or collectively commit crimes of such a nature or with such frequency that a reasonable person would conclude that the group exists in part to further this conduct.

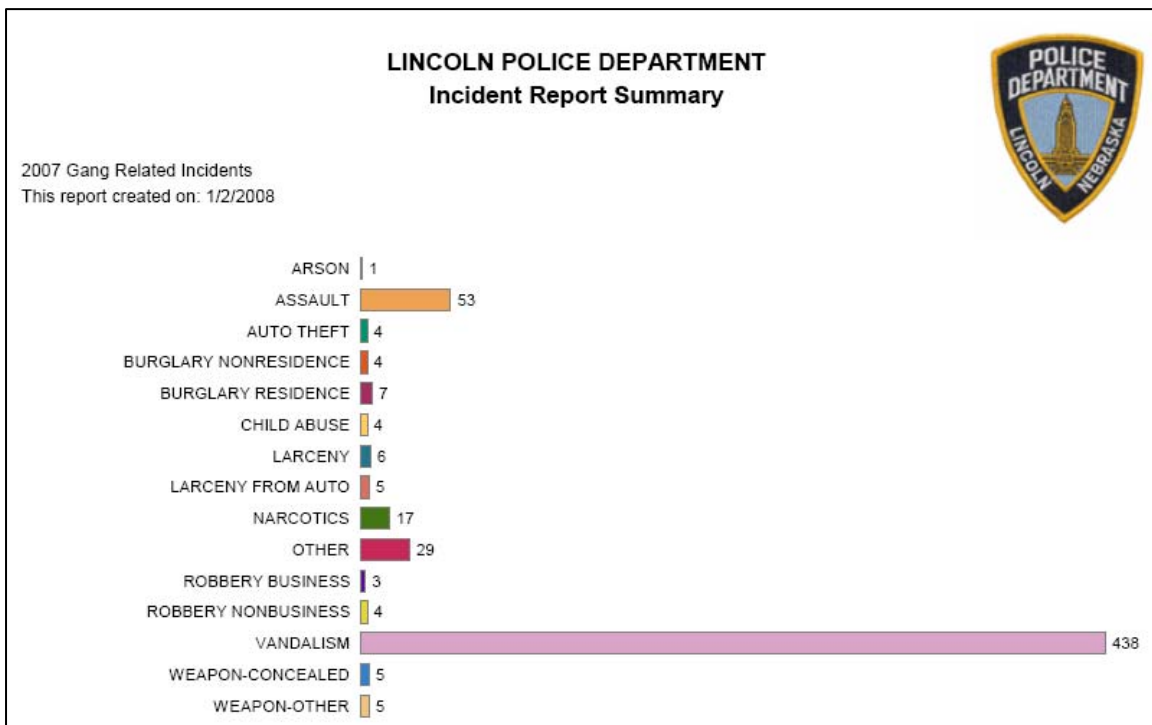


What is a gang-related incident?

With the foregoing definition of gang in mind, a gang-related incident is an act committed by one or more gang members in furtherance of the criminal purpose of the gang. The arrest of a gang member may or may not be a gang-related incident, depending upon the circumstances. For example, the arrest of a suspected gang member for drunken driving would not meet the definition of a gang-related incident, whereas an arrest for robbery could in all likelihood fall within this definition. We feel that our field officers are in the best position to make a common sense judgment about whether a given crime, arrest, or incident is or is not gang-related.

What kind of gang activity is occurring in Lincoln?

Gang-related incidents are occurring in Lincoln with regularity. These incidents range from minor acts of vandalism to assaults and shootings that have involved gang members. More than one recent homicide in Lincoln can be attributed to gang activity. In late 2006 the Lincoln Police Department began on-line entry of incidents by officers allowing the capture of specific gang related data. Year end numbers relating to gang offenses for 2007 were 585 total incidents, with losses amounting to \$44,984 and damages of \$47,162. The gang association linked to these incidents reflects the opinions of the officers investigating these crimes and is likely low. The specific crime breakdown can be seen in the graph below:





Much of our perception of increasing gang activity is based on anecdotal evidence. We place a high value on the perceptions and experiences of our officers. Statistical evidence supports the perception of a visible level of gang activity in Lincoln. Officers, through the use of criteria denoting gang association, document individuals who wear gang-related apparel, use gang language and hand signs, wear gang-related tattoos, and mark their personal belongings with gang symbols. In 1996, the number of persons listed in the Lincoln Police Department intelligence data base as having gang involvement of any kind stood at 467; at the end of 2007 it stood at 555. This number fluctuates from year-to-year, but changes in purge criteria can be credited with some of the increase. Purge criteria to remove a gang flag from names which have no new information or criminal activity had been extended from an original period of 18 months to five years. While allowing for better monitoring of gang activity it has also retained a number of individuals within the database.

Some citizens, and even some police officers, discount much of this gang-related activity as the work of wannabes. This term, a contraction of “want to be,” is a mildly derisive reference to a young person who adopts the appearance of a gang member, but who in actuality is merely mimicking some aspect of gangster demeanor gleaned from television, movies, or some other medium of popular culture. We find little comfort in this distinction. If substantial numbers of youths look like gang members, emulate gangsters, and identify with gang life, this is a sobering problem. So-called “wannabes” are an at-risk population to move into more sophisticated gang activity, and may be involved in gang crime themselves despite their youth or naiveté. They may also find themselves the target of assaults by rival gang members.

While Lincoln clearly does not have a level of gang-related crime approaching that of other similarly sized cities, a significant number of teenagers and young adults claim to belong to gangs. The best evidence of gang activity in Lincoln is clearly the self-identification of a significant number of young people as gang members. We also receive intelligence information from various sources on a regular basis concerning gang members from other cities, some of whom travel to Lincoln to take up residence here, or commit crimes such as distributing illegal drugs. Increased focus and intelligence sharing allows for a better identification and response to community gang issues in several area communities.



Whose problem is this?

Gang activity is not exclusively a problem for the police. It is, rather, a widespread cultural phenomenon that is negatively affecting our society in many ways, and involves virtually every institution from the family to the federal government. The police do not own the problem, and cannot solve the problem. We believe that it is crucial for the community of Lincoln to recognize a mutual responsibility shared by all citizens, all organizations, and all institutions to prevent gangs and to respond to gang activity. The Lincoln Police Department has a major role to play in community-wide strategies, but successful efforts demand commitment from our governmental agencies, churches, schools, businesses, voluntary associations, and families as well. It is the Lincoln Police Department's pledge to devote our special talents and resources to work cooperatively with others to identify, plan, and implement such strategies.

Preventing Gangs

What we believe

Preventing gangs from gaining a foothold in Lincoln, and preventing youths from becoming involved in gangs is much more effective than dealing with the problems resulting from gang activity after the fact. This is an immense challenge, due to the strength of the social forces which are contributing to gang membership. As the influence of many of our traditional institutions of social control has declined, the vacuum has been filled in many ways, including the emergence of gangs. In some ways, gangs serve many of the same functions as a family for their members: providing basic necessities of life, protection, companionship, and a sense of belonging. Prevention is made more difficult by the immense impact of popular culture, and the speed with which any social trend seems to spread in the information age. Images of gangs, subtle and overt, assail us in television, motion pictures, music, fashion and now the Internet. Prevention is further threatened by diminishing budgets and resource availability; the Lincoln Police Department's sponsorship of "Summer Camp" for at-risk youth has been terminated due to recent budgetary and personnel limitations and both Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) and Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) have ceased to be taught within our schools. Other community agencies face the same dilemma.

We believe that the very best protection against gang recruitment is a loving and supportive family. Public policy and private action that strengthens and supports parenting and family life is the bedrock of an intelligent gang and crime prevention strategy. We believe that youths who have been abused, neglected,



discarded, or who have witnessed domestic violence in their homes are at particular risk for involvement in gangs. An effective police response to domestic violence and child abuse provides an important opportunity for intervention that can reduce that risk.

We believe that a wide range of readily available, productive, safe, and fun activities for kids reduces the likelihood of recruitment into gang life. Activities which not only keep kids occupied, but also provide young people with opportunities for a sense of belonging and for positive feelings of accomplishment and self worth are a vital part of a rational gang prevention strategy. These activities may include such things as youth sports, extracurricular activities, scouting, outdoor activities, experiential learning opportunities, and employment. We feel that many youths who are at risk for gang involvement are basically good kids looking for direction, many who become entangled in gang activity are salvageable, if we are willing as a community to extend our hand as friends and mentors. Finally, we believe that education for both youths and parents about gangs can have a positive effect, by alerting youths and adults to the signs of gang activity, the hazards of gang life, and similar subjects.

What we have done

- We have actively supported the work of community and volunteer resource agencies to provide teen recreational activities. These include:
 - MAD Dads
 - Lincoln Parks & Recreation
 - The Lighthouse
 - Community & Cultural Centers
 - Boys & Girl Scouts, USA
 - Many Others
- The Lincoln Police Department has directly sponsored youth and teen activities such as:
 - Midget football teams for over 37 years.
 - “Police Camps” for disadvantaged youths, from 1970 to 2007.
 - The Lincoln Police Union and the Department sponsor and support a Law Enforcement Explorer Post for teenagers.
 - Santa Cop, a joint effort with the Lincoln Police Union since 1980, to purchase and distribute gifts to thousands of Lincoln children each year
- We have provided educational instruction to Lincoln Public Schools including:
 - Past Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) to all Lincoln elementary schools Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) in junior high schools and middle schools.
 - Presentations to students in the classroom and teacher seminars on a variety of topics relating to gang, drug, and gun violence prevention.
- For over 40 years, the police department has operated a diversion program for young people under the age of 16 who have been involved in their first or second minor law violation. This diversion program focuses on establishing and enforcing meaningful and reasonable consequences.



- The Lincoln Police Department has been an active participant in the Domestic Violence Coalition and the Family Violence Council, and has adopted strong procedures for reporting and investigating domestic assaults and arresting abusers.
- We have assigned an experienced investigator to work as a full-time coordinator of domestic assault and protection order investigations.
- We have maintained a close working relationship with Child Protective Services, adopted written protocols for investigating child abuse and neglect cases, and actively participated as a key member of the Lancaster County Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation Team and the Child Advocacy Center.
- We have provided extensive staff training on domestic violence and child abuse, including the link between these crimes.
- We have implemented procedures to assure that children are identified by name and age in the investigative reports in domestic violence cases, and that such reports are forwarded to Child Protective Services whenever children are present in the household (G.O. 1620).
- We acknowledge that child victims require special interviewing techniques and methods. We have specially trained investigators who conduct forensic interviews with victimized children to elicit accurate and truthful information and participate in a multi-agency child interviewing team.

What we intend to do

- We will continue to provide Department resources to support direct youth activities such as Midget Football and Exploring as budget and personnel availability permits.
- We will continue to support community and volunteer resource agencies and welcome the Boys and Girls Club of Lincoln, opened in late 2007, to our community.
- We will continue to operate a youth diversion program for law violators between the ages of 7 and 15, and will emphasize supporting parents in establishing and enforcing consequences.
- We will actively participate in the efforts of the Family Violence Council to identify ways to improve the community response to domestic violence, and will work to implement the Council's recommendations.
- We will continue to conduct substantive training on a regular basis for officers on both domestic violence and child abuse.
- We will continue to work with Lincoln Public Schools in providing educational resources as well as a School Resource Officer program as budget and personnel availability permits.
- We will use our position as community leaders to assist other efforts to provide services which support and strengthen families, and to provide positive activities for youths in our community.
- We will strive to achieve a balanced workforce that is able to meet the multiple needs of a growing community.



- We will review and update the Lincoln Police Department's *Gang Activity in the City of Lincoln* plan as necessary.
- We will attempt to notify the parents of juveniles flagged for gang membership or affiliation to educate them and enlist their assistance in combating gang influences.
- The Lincoln Police Department is committed to excellence in the investigation of crimes and other incidents involving children.

Protecting neighborhoods from gangs

What we believe

The emergence of widespread gang activity can destroy the quality of neighborhood life. In many cities, gang infestations have caused certain neighborhoods to deteriorate both physically and socially. When gang activity is evident in a neighborhood, residents are understandably fearful, and alter their lifestyle as a result. Residents are likely to take obvious precautions such as keeping their children inside, discontinuing their evening walk, not lingering to talk to a neighbor at the mailbox. Not only does this reaction damage the freedom of people to enjoy their usual activities, but it may even worsen the problem. When good people abandon the porch, the yard, the sidewalk, and the street, the casual surveillance of the neighborhood by honest citizens diminishes, and the area is even more appealing to criminals as a result.

The process often begins with minor evidence of disorder: accumulating litter, people drinking in public, rowdy groups of people using bad language, minor acts of vandalism. But as it continues, it inexorably leads to greater disorder, increasing crime, declining property values, and empty buildings. A vicious cycle spirals downward until the neighborhood is a haven for gangs and crime. No such neighborhoods exist in Lincoln, but they are not uncommon in other cities of our size. We believe that protecting the safety and integrity of our neighborhoods is essential to preventing gang encroachment in Lincoln. We should never cede a block, a street, or a neighborhood to gangs.

We also believe that crime prevention depends ultimately on citizen involvement. To the extent that citizens are mobilized to take an active role in creating and maintaining a sense of community with their fellow residents, neighborhoods are immunized against the effects of gangs and crime. Although a very large number of Lincolmites have shown an interest in crime prevention through involvement in neighborhood watch, we are concerned that more citizens understand the importance of personal involvement. In the context of gangs, crime prevention takes on a new meaning: it means calling the police about any suspected crime,



gang activity, graffiti, or rumored conflicts. It also means being willing to testify, if necessary, in order to keep violent gang members off the street.

What we have done

- The Lincoln Police Department implemented community-based policing in 1977 and continues to practice that evolving philosophy still today.
- We have devoted major police resources for over 27 years to create and support a large neighborhood watch program in Lincoln, which presently includes over 23,000 households. Neighborhood Watch publishes quarterly newsletters to 1900 individual neighborhood groups sharing area crime information and tips on prevention.
- We have supported grass roots efforts to involve more citizens in active surveillance of their neighborhoods.
- We have implemented problem-oriented policing to help resolve specific neighborhood problems and deal with particular "hot spots."
- We have organized a Problem Resolution Team composed of representatives of key City of Lincoln agencies and other private and public organizations to coordinate an effective multi-agency response to problem neighborhood areas.
- We have opened and currently operate stand alone full-service community police facilities in the Northeast and Center Team areas to bring officers and neighborhoods closer together.
- We have assigned individual police officers to smaller geographical beats or areas, in order to enhance their personal familiarity with people, places, and issues in neighborhoods.
- We have implemented Citizen Advisory Councils in each geographic team area since 1995. Comprised of citizens who live in each specific area, they provide input to each team's supervision and management personnel, which is integrated into the Department's decision making process.
- We have implemented and interact with a Youth Advisory Council since 1999. The Council is made up of a cross section of public and private high school students that are nominated and selected after completion of a Leadership Lincoln program. This group meets monthly during the school year and is provided educational presentations regarding the work of the Lincoln Police Department and is consulted on a variety of issues.

What we intend to do

- We will continue to use problem-oriented policing projects to target problems which threaten the quality of life in neighborhoods. We will evolve our strategies to become more sophisticated as our skills and support technologies improve.



- We will continue to participate in the Problem Resolution Team.
- We will continue to support to neighborhood watch, and encourage greater independence by the Neighborhood Watch Association.

- We will provide support for citizen crime prevention efforts, such as technical advice and training.
- We will continue to nurture the partnership between the Lincoln Police Department and the community through greater interaction and communication. This includes seeking input from citizens through advisory opportunities as well as continuing to encourage our officers to interact with community members on their beat areas.
- We will continue to seek additional stand alone, full service police facilities in the remaining team areas to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our efforts.

Working with schools

What we believe

We believe that schools are a pivotal social institution, second only to the family in their influence on the development of children and youth. During the impressionable years of maturation, young people spend a significant period of time attending classes and interacting with others while on school property or at school sponsored events. Schools play an important role in the prevention of gangs.

We also believe that gang activity has an especially destructive impact on schools. We believe that schools must be free of gang crime, and students and staff must be protected from subtle or overt intimidation by gangs. We feel that as a police department we have a special responsibility to work cooperatively and closely with schools to minimize risk and hazards to students and staff that can result from gangs.

What we have done

- Since 1993, the Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) and Lincoln Police Department (LPD) have participated in a joint Safety Committee, which was charged by the Police Chief and Superintendent of Schools with the task of making recommendations to improve the safety of students and staff, with particular emphasis on risks arising from crime.
- For the past fourteen years, LPD and LPS have jointly funded a School Resource Officer Program (SRO). Currently consisting of ten full time positions, six officers are assigned individually to each of the six high schools and an additional four officers are assigned to share their time in



- the eleven middle-schools. These officers serve as liaisons between the police and school staffs, and broker the full range of law enforcement services to their "beat." School Resource Officers also help identify ways to maximize the effectiveness of existing resources
- The School Resource Officers will coordinate with campus security personnel regarding law enforcement issues occurring on or near school property. This includes examining ways to deal with continuing problems of non students who gather at or around school property, security concerns such as securing and monitoring entrances and exits, as well as recommendations on restricting gang affiliated clothing and graffiti.
 - We have provided educational opportunities to Lincoln Public School staff on gang issues through shared training opportunities, specific presentations, and staff interactions.
 - We have implemented and promoted prevention strategies at schools including a school-based Crime Stoppers program that incorporates the use of MySpace.com information technology to reach student populations.
 - We have provided substantive gang education to SRO's and obtain significant gang intelligence from those officers.
 - We require regular communication between our management staff and the administrative staff of LPS secondary schools. Police managers or supervisors meet regularly with administrators or staff at each secondary school, and we will ensure that school staffs are personally familiar with the supervisory personnel who are responsible for managing police services in their geographical area.
 - We work cooperatively with school staff to investigate and follow-up on complaints associated with excessive absences by students. Officers contact parents to get the student back in class to avoid education neglect enforcement.
 - We have established greater interoperability between our SRO's and school staff in areas such as radio communication and computer access to enhance our joint efforts.

What we intend to do

- We will continue to participate in the School Safety Committee as an ongoing organized process for exchanging information and refining practices.
- We will continue to strive to improve communication between our management staff and the administrative staff of LPS and area schools.
- We will seek to continue the School Resource Officer program as resources allow, committing one officer to each public high school, and four officers to the remaining secondary schools.
- We will continue to educate SRO's on gang related issues so that they can identify and share information to both LPD and LPS.
- We will maintain data collection practices which will provide rapid access to statistical information pertaining to the demand for police services at



- schools.
- We will continue to offer our in-service training and direct presentations concerning gangs to LPS personnel, in order to develop a common base of knowledge about gangs among both police officers and educators.
 - We will continue to encourage all officers to spend more time in the schools on their beats, in order to develop closer working relationships with school staffs and promote better police services to schools.
 - We will support LPS in establishing policies and processes designed or likely to impact gang activity such as clothing restrictions, banning outward gang insignia, the reporting and quick removal of graffiti as well as before/after school programs beneficial in eliminating or controlling gang influences.
 - We will continue to work in partnership with LPS on educational neglect situations and “truancy” violations to keep students off the street and in school.

Graffiti

What we believe

Graffiti is not harmless "street art," rather it is the daily news of gangs, where challenges are made and accepted, territory is marked, and gang life is glorified. It is also criminal behavior that causes significant property damage and costs taxpayers and consumers thousands of dollars to remove or repair. Some will argue that graffiti is not always gang-related, and that much of the defacing we see from day to day is the product of taggers, young people who are asserting their identity by marking their nickname or logo anywhere and everywhere. While this may be true, it offers little comfort. We feel that taggers, like "wannabes" are only a step away from more serious gang involvement.

We believe that gang-related graffiti creates public fear. Graffiti is a message crime: an offense intended to establish or solidify gang strength by instilling terror and fear of reporting. These message crimes may also include intimidation, assaults, drive by shootings, and other crimes of violence which are intended to spread the word about the gang's power. Graffiti is the most visible message crime. We believe that graffiti, if unchecked, spreads incredibly quickly, and that rapid removal denies graffiti artists the reward of their work on display and neutralizes the communication of the message.

What we have done

- We have highlighted the graffiti problem to the Mayor and City department directors. As a result, the City of Lincoln has adopted a policy of removing



graffiti on public property quickly. This is an operational priority for City departments such as Public Works, Transportation, and Parks and Recreation.

- The City of Lincoln has initiated a graffiti abatement ordinance, 8.52, to mandate quick removal of graffiti from victimized property.
- We have supported and helped initiate volunteer graffiti removal efforts organized by private citizen and community service organizations.
- We have investigated graffiti incidents and documented these cases with written reports and photographs.
- We have occasionally used undercover patrol and surveillance to investigate repeated graffiti incidents in cases where clear patterns have been apparent.
- We have implemented a specific incident code for graffiti vandalism, in order to more accurately track trends and statistics.
- We have established a gang intelligence coordinator that has been able to coordinate the investigation of numerous graffiti incidents and has cleared over 300 of these offenses through the arrest of those responsible.

What we intend to do

- We will continue to encourage private and volunteer graffiti removal efforts.
- We will maintain our current level of effort in investigating graffiti vandalism and apprehending suspects as resources allow.
- We will draft and propose municipal ordinances to control the sales of materials such as indelible markers and spray paint if increasing levels of graffiti require such measures in the future.
- We will take advantage of improvements in intelligence and data collection to seek out persons responsible for these offenses and make arrests when possible.

Intelligence, Data Collection and Sharing

What we believe

Sound policy and practice to respond to gang activity requires timely access to pertinent facts. We need to develop the capacity to identify both specific incidents which are gang-related, and to produce statistical information consistently, in order to analyze and assess trends. We believe that cultivating intelligence sources and informants are vital to successful criminal investigations, and that this is particularly true in gang-related crimes. We believe that special forms, procedures, computer systems, and reporting processes for gang-related



information should be avoided whenever existing procedures can be modified to collect and track the needed information, since this may avoid cumbersome and duplicative work for field personnel.

The amount of information generated by the Lincoln Police Department is staggering. In a system that stores and maintains data on two million contacts, two million criminal charges, approximately 900,000 individual names as well as other data, the task of filtering through it all to find useful gang information is a challenge. The department has introduced new (and expanded existing) information technologies to aid officers in managing this information. Officers are now able to retrieve gang related offenses almost immediately, create maps that geographically represent the location of these offenses, and obtain digital images of many offenders and/or suspects. The intelligent and resourceful use of information technologies in the management and control of gang related offenses, as well as other crime occurrences, has served to offset limited personnel and budgetary resources; for the moment.

What we have done

- We have encouraged officers, through training and interdepartmental communications, to document gang intelligence information with written reports, and to use consistent gang member identification criteria.
- We have developed a computer data file of gang intelligence information, linked to our master name index. Officers can query this data file quickly when needed.
- We have implemented and maintained an on-line computer name index for gang names and suspected gang members' names and nicknames, as well as maintaining a photo file of suspected gang members. In addition, associates of a named suspect can be readily retrieved.
- We have implemented purge criteria to remove gang flags from names when no significant new information has been received or gang-related activity has occurred within the last five years.
- We have improved our ability to designate information reports as well as incident reports as gang-related by changing the form design and capturing supplementary data on the form. This will provide us with the ability to produce data base reports for analysis of gang-related incidents.
- We have implemented a "hate/bias crime" data field in our incident report, in order to track data on such crimes, which are often gang-related.
- LPD officers, investigators and crime analysis personnel have provided field officers with detailed written intelligence briefings containing information on specific gangs and gang members. This has included flyers, Crime Analysis reports and direct briefings.
- We have established the full-time position of Gang Intelligence Officer to oversee gang related intelligence, files and investigations since 1999. The gang officer has created and distributes a monthly gang bulletin



highlighting active gang members and offenses.

- We communicate and share gang information and intelligence through regular meetings and contact with a variety of outside agencies including the Nebraska Department of Corrections and other state and regional gang units.
- We maintain contact with the Nebraska Department of Corrections with regards to inmates who may be released into our community who claim gang affiliation or are associated with known gang members. We are also informed of individuals or associates who interact with these inmates.
- We participate in a number of law enforcement initiatives to share gang and drug information locally, regionally and nationally including NeLEIS, MOCIC, and HIDTA.
- We have incorporated information technologies to manage gang intelligence information and provide quick and easy access to employees who desire it. These technologies have included:
 - Officers can create their own on-line “usual suspect” albums to track groups of individuals whose criminal conduct may constitute a gang.
 - Mobile data computers, in service since 1999, enable officers to initiate their own inquiries and obtain information from the seat of their police cruiser.
 - Digital imaging has allowed for higher quality and direct on-line access of “mug-shots” and visual identification of gang members through gang files and individual contact screens.
 - ACUDAT, (Analyzing Crimes Using Data about Trends), has been in use since 1998 and uses a geographical information system (GIS) to display crime trends visually on a map. Monthly ACUDAT meeting highlight hotspots and trends of crimes often associated with gangs.
 - On-line GIS software is available to officers and citizens alike through CrimeView Web and CrimeView Community respectively. This allows individuals to create their own limited inquiries over an inputted time period to examine crime patterns in an effort to identify trends and possible suspects.

What we intend to do

- We will improve our crime analysis capability, and develop better capacity to identify and analyze geographical trends in gang-related crimes.
- We will continue to share intelligence information about gang members with other law enforcement organizations.
- We will continue to encourage officers to record gang related activity and cooperate with other agencies to share gang related information.



- We will continue to produce, distribute and share gang intelligence through flyers, alerts, and other bulletins.
- We will continue to meet regularly with outside agencies to share gang information.
- We will continue to staff the position of gang intelligence officer as resources allow.
- We will record annual gang information to allow for historical tracking of the numbers of gang members, age, sex, ethnicity and gang or gangs they are associated with.
- We will examine purge criteria regularly to determine appropriate criteria for removal of gang flags from individual screens.
- We will continue efforts to leverage information technologies to increase department efficiency and effectiveness.

Staff training

What we believe

We believe that all officers need to be familiar with basic information about the sociology of gangs, and the dynamics of gang activity in the United States. Officers need to receive timely training on actual gang crime and gang activity within the City of Lincoln. Moreover, we need to provide more intensive training experiences for a smaller number of officers who can serve as resources to their peers. Police officers can also be trained in the skills of mediation, and can serve as resources to mediate disputes between individuals or groups that could escalate into gang violence. We believe that gang training is valuable for other professionals who work with youths, especially for school personnel, and that joint training improves communication and assures that officers and school staffs are receiving the same information.

What we have done

- We have conducted in-service training sessions on gangs for all officers, and offered several specialized training sessions on gangs to a smaller number of officers.
- Several officers have attended intensive gang training seminars in other cities and states.
- We have opened several of our in-service training sessions to participation from other law enforcement agencies, schools, and human service agencies.
- We have included gang training to our new officers during their Academy training.

What we intend to do



- We will continue to offer a variety of gang training opportunities for officers at varying levels of specialization and intensity, both within the police department, and through outside training seminars.
- We will continue to provide intensive training to a small number of officers who can serve as instructors and resources for the police department.
- We will conduct specific training for officers on hate/bias crimes and racist gangs.
- We will continue to offer our own instructors and training resources to schools and to other law enforcement agencies.

Drugs and gangs

What we believe

We believe that there is a close connection between gangs and drugs, and that many street gangs participate in illegal distribution of drugs as one of their most important and profitable criminal activities. Investigating drug offenses vigorously and arresting offenders will make Lincoln inhospitable to gang members who depend upon drug use and distribution. We feel that aggressive strategies to enforce drug laws undermine gangs, and will reduce gang penetration into Lincoln.

What we have done

- We have devoted substantial police resources to drug law enforcement. Sixteen LPD employees are presently assigned exclusively to drug law enforcement and all officers carry drug enforcement responsibilities.
- We have participated in a joint Lincoln/Lancaster County Narcotics Unit since 1981, in order to coordinate the efforts of law enforcement and prosecution agencies within our jurisdiction.
- We have supported drug enforcement efforts through HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Tracking Area) and Byrne Grants that provide financial assistance for personnel, equipment, and facility costs.
- We have adopted strategies that encourage rapid case resolution when the need to protect public safety by making arrests quickly offsets the value of collecting evidence over a longer time period. This may include such strategies as serving search warrants or making buy-busts rather than more protracted long-term investigations.
- We participate with the United States Justice Department by being a member of a regional Safe Streets Task Force (SSTF). The purpose of a SSTF is the focus on the investigation of crimes associated to violent gang offenders. This involvement attaches an FBI element to our task force providing personnel, equipment and financial resources to investigate



- violent gang crimes.
- We work cooperatively with the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) in investigating cases that have ties to other jurisdictions.
 - We work cooperatively with the Lancaster County Attorney's Office on cases that remain in State Court and the US Attorney's Office for mid and upper level dealers who are directed into Federal Court for prosecution.
 - We will notify prosecutors of any gang membership or association for those arrested for drug offenses. Gang membership can be used as an enhancement factor in Federal sentencing and can be a disqualifying factor for acceptance into Drug Court at the State level.
 - We have established a Clandestine Laboratory Team in 2001 to deal with the proliferation of methamphetamine labs found within our community. Comprised of both Lincoln Police and Lancaster County Deputies the team is called out to investigate and dismantle suspected drug labs. The team has improved evidence collection and subsequent prosecution of illegal methamphetamine manufacturers and along with other legislative actions, has led to a significant reduction of area labs.
 - We have provided ongoing pre-service and in-service training to our personnel on drug law enforcement.
 - We support the Crime Stoppers program that allows anonymous tips relating to area offenses that often provide investigative leads that end in arrests.

What we intend to do

- We will continue to provide resources to drug law enforcement and training, and to participate as a member of a multi-agency narcotics unit.
- We will seek opportunities for increasing drug law enforcement efforts as resources are available.
- We will give special priority to drug investigations that involve gangs or gang members. Questioning of drug offenders will contain questions about gang membership and participation.
- We support the efforts at rehabilitation through drug courts and other post arrest treatment facilities.
- We will continue to participate with cooperating agencies to enhance our drug enforcement capabilities.
- We will continue to work cooperatively with prosecutors to notify them of gang membership of offenders
- We will continue to support the Lincoln/Lancaster County Clandestine Lab Team as resources allow and focus resources on the investigation of methamphetamine offenses.
- We will lawfully seek the assets of drug violators to serve as a deterrent to drug law violators.



Gangs and guns

What we believe

Gangs and guns are a deadly mixture. We are increasingly encountering crimes that involve the actual or threatened use of firearms. Some of these crimes have clear gang overtones. We believe that arresting and prosecuting offenders for gun-related offenses such as use of a firearm to commit a felony, carrying a concealed weapon, and felon in possession of a firearm ought to be an important criminal justice priority. We also believe that it should be more difficult, more expensive, and riskier for people with extensive criminal records to obtain and possess guns. We believe that this can be accomplished without infringing upon the right of law abiding citizens to keep firearms.

What we have done

- We have arrested offenders for firearms offenses whenever probable cause has existed.
- We conduct careful background investigations on applicants for firearms certificates under Nebraska law, to the extent that we have access to pertinent information and can comply with the two day time limit provided in statute.
- We have provided the general public, news media, and public officials with information about gun-related crime, and about deficiencies in existing laws pertaining to firearms.
- We have restricted opportunities for lawfully possessed weapons to fall into the hands of criminals and potential gang members through the enactment of local ordinances including:
 - Unlawful possession of a firearm, which prohibits persons, convicted of certain misdemeanor crimes, to possess a firearm in the city.
 - Storage of weapons in motor vehicles, limits the storage of a weapon in a vehicle to 24 hours.
- We have participated in a firearms brass identification system since 2002. This involves the examination and cataloguing of brass cartridges, recovered at a crime scene or obtained from a test fired gun that was recovered from a crime scene, to link ballistic evidence from one gun to another. Comparisons of these brass casings to regional/national data bases increase the probability of matching weapons used in common offenses.
- We have participated in Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) details since



2004. PSN projects are funded through grant awards from the U.S. Attorney's Office. It is a national initiative to create safer communities by using every available means to reduce gun violence. The program in Lincoln focuses on three main strategies; Home Visits, Saturation Details and Domestic Violence Protection Order Focus.

- We present appropriate gun violations to Federal prosecutors for prosecution consideration. Federal prosecutions for gun crimes carry mandatory minimum five year sentences that can be enhanced by gang affiliation.

What we intend to do

- We will advocate reasonable gun control measures that do not infringe on the rights of law abiding citizens. We will especially support measures that seek to limit acquisition and possession of guns by people with serious and extensive criminal records.
- We will stringently enforce gun violations to limit availability of weapons to persons not legally permitted to possess.
- We will not auction, sell, or trade seized guns. Unless otherwise directed by court order or legal advice, we will destroy all guns which come into our possession as instruments of crime.
- We will continue to seek grant funding of PSN details to remove guns from violent offenders in our neighborhoods.
- We will continue to seek Federal prosecution when available on gun crimes to maximize the deterrence of illegally possessing a firearm.

Dealing with gang offenders

What we believe.

Patterns of criminal conduct and gang involvement start early in life, almost invariably while offenders are juveniles. The first few contacts that a youthful offender has with the justice system are crucial. Fair, reasonable, consistent, graduated, and scrupulously enforced consequences for misbehavior are vital to effective parenting, and must exist in criminal justice policy as well. Unfortunately, too many youths learn quickly that the consequences, if any, are unpredictable and sometimes feeble.

We recognize, however, that gang-related crime is a significant issue in the adult criminal justice process as well. Many gang members are over the age of 18, and must be dealt with effectively by our law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, and correctional systems.

We believe that a "zero tolerance" approach towards gang-related crimes is



sound public policy, both for juveniles and adults. We also believe that both youths and adults with known gang ties and clear patterns of repeated criminal conduct ought to receive special attention from the police, prosecutors, courts, and correctional authorities. We believe that specialized units to deal exclusively with gang activity have both benefits and drawbacks. Specialized units can bolster police expertise and ability in dealing with gang issues, but may decrease the emphasis, interest, and knowledge of other officers in gang crime.

What we have done

- We have tightened criteria for our Family Crime's diversion program to ensure that we are not dealing informally with serious or repeat juvenile offenders.
- We have participated in the development of a new juvenile justice plan for Lancaster County, which includes several components aimed at strengthening the consequences for serious and repeat juvenile offenders. We have also participated in the formulation of a similar plan by the Nebraska Commission for the Protection of Children for the State of Nebraska.
- We have implemented a repeat offender project in cooperation with other law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. This project assigns a small number of chronic repeat offenders to a specific detective or investigator. The assigned officer is subsequently responsible for collecting and maintaining all pertinent documents and information about that offender, and providing such information to authorized recipients for investigative or decision-making purposes.
- We have used special investigation methods, such as surveillance projects, to target repeat offenders for apprehension and prosecution.
- We will notify prosecutors of offenders' gang status through investigative reports and direct cases to appropriate courts for adjudication.

What we intend to do

- We will advocate the implementation of a structured pretrial diversion program for youthful offenders and for more consistent and reasonable consequences for juvenile law violators.
- We will consider gang membership or gang ties as a criterion for selection in our repeat offender tracking project.
- We will continue to use repeat offender tracking projects to target habitual offenders, and will expand this concept to include juveniles who meet the established criteria.
- We will continue to bring information concerning gang affiliation to the attention of prosecutors through our investigative reports pertaining to arrests, and we will continue to work with prosecutors to encourage and support effective prosecutorial policies for gang offenders.



- We will consider supplementing the gang intelligence officer position with a specialized gang unit if this appears to be desirable in the future and resources allow.

News media and public information

What we believe

The police department has an obligation to provide information about gang activity to the public. Citizens need this information in order to form their own opinions about public policy issues. It is imperative, however, that we not create or contribute to false or misleading perceptions that magnify public fear. Fear of crime can be even more debilitating to the social fabric of the community than crime itself. Providing accurate information to the public is a key to informed action. We believe that the news media has an essential role in disseminating information, and that we should work cooperatively with the media in this regard.

What we have done

- We have been straightforward in acknowledging the existence of gangs in Lincoln, and the occurrence of gang-related incidents.
- We have cooperated with news media on feature stories about gang activity in Lincoln.
- We have provided guidance to our employees on how to handle questions or inquiries about gang activity.
- When asked by reporters about gang involvement in specific incidents, we have avoided becoming mired in issues of definitions and semantics.
- We have published materials for parents and the general public regarding gangs in Lincoln, including an earlier version of this strategic plan, and a booklet for the public.
- We have included material about gangs in the information available at our Internet site.
- We have provided Public Safety Announcements to various media outlets regarding general crime trends and prevention methods to assist in educating the community.

What we intend to do

- We will report data on the number of gang-related incidents over time to the public as this becomes available, and provide representative case examples to illustrate the kinds and types of gang activity occurring in Lincoln.
- We will continue to provide our officers and employees with information which they can refer to in responding to inquiries from citizens, and in public speaking engagements.



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- We will use clear, consistent guidelines for responding to press questions about whether given incidents are gang-related.
 - We will provide information, presentations, and seminars to the general public, especially parents, regarding gang activity.
 - Whenever possible, we will refrain from using specific gang names in news releases, in order to avoid providing free advertising to gangs and gang members.
 - We will distribute this strategic plan to the public, news media and to decision makers in Lincoln, and make this plan available via the Internet.