



# LINCOLN POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Gang Activity In the City of Lincoln

A Strategy of Prevention and Response

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*Revised 2014*



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## Introduction

The Lincoln Police Department's Strategy and Response to Gang Activity plan is 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 a small percentage of reported incidents within the City of Lincoln, but serious and significant offenses have experienced a slow, steady increase. Unlawful activity connected to gangs has impacted neighborhoods, schools, and families in our community and is a significant threat to the future of our community if it continues to increase over time. The Lincoln Police Department's commitment to addressing gang issues remains steadfast and is highlighted by a statement first written in 1996:

*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, documented gang membership in the City of Lincoln continues to increase. 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 original 1996 report. In opposition to these advancements, obstacles including reduced budgets, strained personnel allocations, the proliferation of drug related crimes and increasing gun violence. It appears that gangs have a foothold in Lincoln in 2014 and it is clear that LPD and the community must increase our efforts to address this problem 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 initial 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, often in the form of tattoos; members may wear specific "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, illegally obtain firearms or other weapons, commit assaults or robberies, 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?**

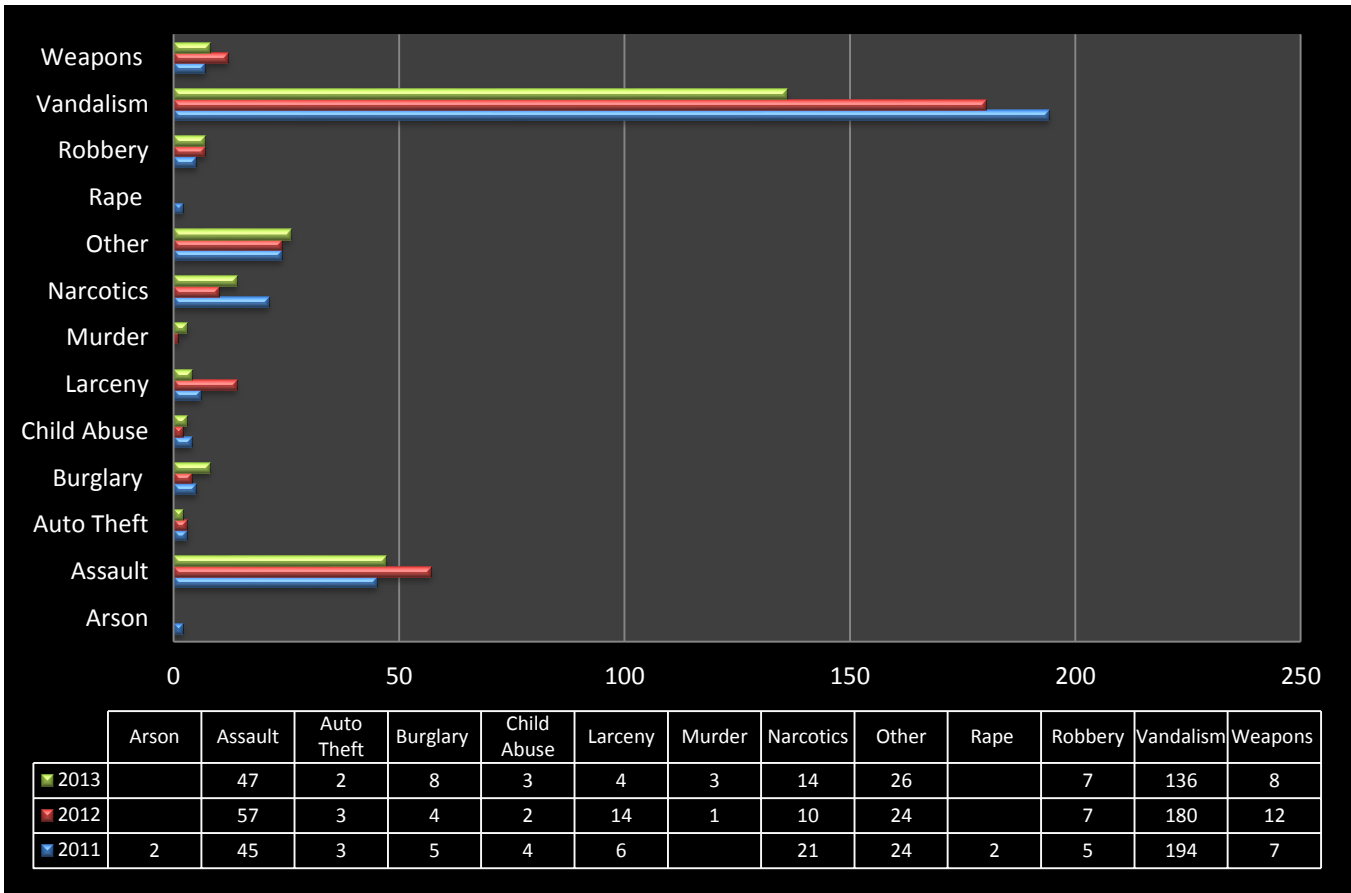
With the foregoing definition of gang in mind, a gang-related incident is an act committed by one or more gang members in furtherance of the criminal purpose of the gang. The arrest of a gang member may or may not be a gang-related incident, depending upon the circumstances. For example, the arrest of 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 as they assess incidents in the initial stages of reporting and investigation. In addition, gang investigators will now re-assess cases periodically and designate cases as "gang-related" when this was not initially known to be the case. Accurate statistical data drives our response and use of resources and data will be reviewed regularly to insure accuracy and to update case status as an investigation reveals new information.

## **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. In 2013, LPD documented 234 gang related incidents, including an unprecedented 3 gang related homicides. Recent crime patterns involving gangs include burglary, commercial and street robberies, home invasion robberies, and drug crimes. Some of these crimes are for profit, but the impact of the "gang mentality" on any given situation has been increased violence as an outcome. The gang mentality holds that violence is a way to solve almost any problem, that violence engenders respect (through fear) and that any act against the gang demands a response.



The specific gang crime breakdown for the last three calendar years can be seen in the graph below.



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; in 2007 it was 555 and in 2013 it was 848. This number fluctuates from year-to-year, but changes in purge criteria can be credited with some of the increase. Purge criteria removing a gang flag from names which have no new information or criminal activity has been extended from an original period of 18 months to five years. While allowing for better monitoring of gang activity, the new criterion 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.

Increasingly, we see evidence that gang members are engaging in initiation activities, including “beating in” new members, “sexing in” female members, and requiring novice gang members to prove themselves by committing crimes. The line between “wannabes” and bona fide gang members is increasingly difficult to discern. We also see more evidence of gang structure and leadership.

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 better identification and response to community gang issues.

## 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 institution 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. Further, it is clear that the police must play a major role in providing the community an accurate picture of the problem. In 2014, this means increasing the number of presentations and helping the community to understand the significant threat posed by gangs.



## 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 social media. Family members that are involved in gangs often have a strong influence on younger generations, and we have seen many gang members move to Lincoln from other communities. Ironically, relocations of gang members are sometimes a strategy by the family to remove a young person from a dangerous environment in another community. Finally, prevention is further hampered by limited resources within the community and competition from other pressing social issues.

The Lincoln Police Department's primary role in any community gang strategy is to aggressively investigate gang related crimes and ensure consequences that will deter future gang involvement. But we recognize that there are other ways that we can contribute to creating an unfriendly environment for gangs by having a positive influence on at risk youth and gang associates.

We believe that the best protection against gang recruitment in Lincoln is public policy and private action that strengthens and supports parenting and family life. We believe that youths who have been abused or neglected 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. Some youths who are at risk for gang involvement are basically good kids looking for direction and some 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 and the hazards of gang life.





## What we have done

We have actively supported the work of community and volunteer resource agencies to provide teen recreational activities. These include:

- Lincoln Public Schools
- Lincoln Parks & Recreation
- The Lighthouse
- Community and Cultural Centers
- Girl Scouts and Boys Scouts of America
- Girls and Boys Clubs of America
- Salvation Army

The Lincoln Police Department has directly sponsored youth and teen activities such as:

- Youth football teams, sponsorship for over 43 years
- The Lincoln Police Union and the Lincoln Police Department sponsor and support a Law Enforcement Explorer Post for teenagers
- Santa Cop, a joint effort with the Lincoln Police Union since 1980, purchases and distributes gifts to thousands of Lincoln children each year
- Police clubs within Lincoln Public Schools

We have provided educational instruction to Lincoln Public Schools including presentations to students in the classroom and teacher seminars on a variety of topics relating to gang, drug, and gun violence prevention.

We have built collaborative partnerships with the Domestic Violence Coalition and the Family Violence Council and have 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).

## What we intend to do

- We will continue to provide Department resources to support direct youth activities such as Youth Football, Explorer Post, and Police Clubs as budget and personnel availability permits.
- We will continue to support community and volunteer resource agencies. We will explore ways to collaborate more with the community, to exchange information regarding at-risk youth, and to identify appropriate referrals within the community for youth that are identified as at-risk.
- We will actively participate in the efforts of the Family Violence Council to identify ways to improve the community response to domestic violence.
- 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.
- 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 Strategy as necessary.
- We will attempt to engage our community more and provide leadership to mobilize the efforts of other agencies and organizations that are engaged in activities that prevent and intervene in gang membership. These organizations, such as the Golden Warriors, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Salvation Army, and many of our community centers, are on the front line of working directly with our at risk youth and we must work more closely with them to identify, refer, and follow through with troubled or at risk youth.
- We will seek additional resources through grant funding and, when available grants are consistent with fiscal policies, we will pursue ways to enhance our ability, and the community's ability, to combat this problem.
- We will continue to aggressively investigate gang related crime using investigators with specialized training and expertise, seeking aggressive prosecution and sentencing, and sending a clear message of deterrence to gang members and at-risk youth.



## 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, or 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 and 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 Lincolniters 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 33 years to create and support a large Neighborhood Watch program in Lincoln, which presently includes 427 active associations.



- 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 are a participant in the Federal/Regional Safe Streets Task Force.
- We are a member of the Lancaster County Fugitive Task Force.
- We participate in the Federal initiative of Project Safe Neighborhoods.
- We are a key member of the mayor's Stronger Safer Neighborhood initiative to sustain the livability of our neighborhoods.
- We have enhanced our mapping technology capabilities by providing residence based information about where gang members live through the use of NearMe software to street officers.

## 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. Gang investigators will partner with uniform teams to lend manpower and expertise to special details.
- We will continue to participate in the Problem Resolution Team.
- We will continue to support neighborhood watch, and encourage greater independence by the Neighborhood Watch Association. We will provide training and information and encourage community efforts to observe and report gang crime and graffiti.
- 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 use social media and other relevant technologies to keep our neighborhoods informed, connected and ultimately united against gang activity.
- 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 and to become an integral part of the team area we serve. The Southeast Team area is currently in the planning stages of their own stand-alone station.

## 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.

Schools must be vigilant to the presence of gang members in the student population and must share that information with law enforcement. A collaborative approach to prevention and to providing a safe learning environment for all students must be the cornerstone of the partnership between schools and law enforcement.

### What we have done

- For the past nineteen years, LPD and LPS have jointly funded a School Resource Officer Program (SRO) currently consisting of six full time positions. These officers serve as liaisons between the police and school staffs, and broker the full range of law enforcement services to their "beat."



- The School Resource Officers 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, and monitoring known gang members and their associates.
- 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.
- We have provided substantive gang education to SRO's.
- 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 educational 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.
- We have beat officers assigned to all schools in order to periodically stop in and interact with staff and students.

## What we intend to do

- We will seek to continue the School Resource Officer program as resources allow, committing one officer to each public high school.
- We will continue to educate SRO's on gang related issues and will emphasize the importance of active intelligence gathering, monitoring of known gang members and their associates, and the sharing of information with school officials and gang investigators as an integral part of the SRO's job description.
- 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 and current 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 explore ways to provide an anti-gang message to pre-teen students.
- 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.
- We will work closely with school officials to enhance safety when specific gang related threats exist.
- We will work collaboratively with LPS to improve communication on gang intelligence and at-risk kids.

## Graffiti

### What we believe

Graffiti is not harmless "street art," rather it is intended to announce the presence of gangs, in some cases to lay claim to a location, and at times it telegraphs future intended violence. It is also criminal behavior that causes significant property damage and costs taxpayers and consumers thousands of dollars to remove or repair.

We believe that gang-related graffiti creates public fear and erodes the quality of life where it is allowed to exist. Graffiti is a message crime: an offense intended to establish or solidify gang strength by instilling fear and announce to the community and other gangs that the gang is here. Other message crimes may 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 and pervasive message crime. We believe that gang graffiti, if unchecked, spreads quickly and that rapid removal denies gangs the reward of seeing their work on display, neutralizes the communication of the message, and closes the window of opportunity for other gangs to respond with challenges or violence.

Gang graffiti incidents spiked to a high of 151 cases in 2012, up from 106 in 2011. After dedicating more personnel to gang investigations in 2013, this number dropped to 106, likely due to the impact of increased enforcement effort.

### 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 from public areas quickly. A full time city employee monitors reports of graffiti and facilitates the quick removal of all gang graffiti.
- The City of Lincoln has initiated a graffiti abatement ordinance, [8.52](#), to mandate quick removal of graffiti from private property.
- We have supported and helped initiate volunteer graffiti removal efforts organized by private citizen and community service organizations.
- We investigate all graffiti incidents and document 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 provides oversight and coordination to the investigation of numerous graffiti incidents and has cleared over 300 of these offenses by arrest.

## What we intend to do

- We will continue to encourage private and volunteer graffiti removal efforts and vigorously support the graffiti abatement policy of the city.
- We will maintain our current level of effort of investigating graffiti vandalism and apprehending suspects.
- We will take advantage of improvements in intelligence and data collection to seek out persons responsible for these offenses and make arrests when possible.
- We will continue to support the graffiti removal coordinator position and initiative that the City of Lincoln has established. We will explore ways to extend graffiti eradication to non-permanent structures like dumpsters and trash cans.
- Gang investigators will review all gang graffiti reports weekly for content, seeking to identify suspects from monikers, interpret any messages or crossed out graffiti, and will further investigate anything warranted by the review. Gang officers will share any intelligence involving potential threats with the affected team area, and work with team officers to identify suspects.





## Intelligence, data collection and sharing

### What we believe

Sound policy and practice in responding 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 gang problem is owned by all employees of the Lincoln Police Department and this should be reflected by our access to gang information.

The amount of information generated by the Lincoln Police Department is staggering. The task of filtering through it all to find useful gang information is a challenge. The department continues to expand its informational technologies in order to aid officers in sorting through 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 generation of good intelligence that is easily retrievable from a name based information system is critical to the success of all criminal investigations, and gang investigations are no exception. We believe that we must continuously encourage and reward officers that regularly contribute meaningful intelligence. We must emphasize to officers what is at stake—public safety and the quality of life in our community, and that their contributions are critical to the success of any anti-gang strategy.

### 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. This provides us with the ability to produce data base reports for analysis of gang-related incidents.
- 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 assigned additional personnel to increase our efforts at reducing gang violence in 2013 & 2014. Currently, three investigators are tasked with gang investigations as their primary duty, along with half of a supervisor's time. Only current staffing levels prevent these officers from truly being fully devoted to gang investigations, as they are called upon when other needs dictate. However, these investigators will adopt a proactive approach, not simple reaction to apparent gang related crimes or passive analysis of intelligence.
- We have developed proficiency at using social media to gather intelligence and evidence related to gang crimes.
- 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, state Fusion Center 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 the following:
  - 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.
  - On-line GIS software is available to citizens through CrimeView Community. This allows individuals to create their own limited inquiries over an inputted time period to examine crime patterns in their community.
  - Digital evidence allows officers to more easily share new and emerging gang graffiti more rapidly.
  - CrimeView Dash Board allows officers and commanders to more easily identify emerging trends, identify possible suspects and develop quicker responses.



- CrimeView NearMe is a GPS software product that provides officers information on gang member's residences and crime bulletins of a specific nature as they patrol their beat/team areas.

## What we intend to do

- We will continue to improve our crime analysis capability to support gang investigations.
- We will continue to share intelligence information about gang members with other law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.
- We will renew and increase our efforts to encourage officers to record gang related intelligence. We will place particular emphasis on the generation of gang intelligence by school resource officers.
- We will produce, distribute and share gang intelligence through flyers, alerts, and other media.
- We will create gang liaison officers assigned to uniformed teams. These officers will act as conduits of information and investigative resources for the gang unit and, in turn, will help to identify projects and special details on the teams that gang officers can assist.
- We will continue to staff a gang unit as outlined previously, charging them with responsibility for generation of documented gang intelligence.
- We will work to more effectively "mine" social media for useful intelligence and to acquire and utilize emerging technologies to maximize our efforts.
- 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 work with Lincoln Public Schools to try and identify kids that may be being pulled into or pressured to join gangs in order to conduct an intervention.
- We will consistently encourage, at every available opportunity, all citizens of Lincoln to observe and report gang related activity.
- We will use facial recognition software to assist us with the identification of gang members from social media postings.



## 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 information 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. 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.

We believe that we must avoid the perception amongst our staff that the gang problem is the responsibility of only the gang unit. Training and information sharing must be frequent and must stress department wide ownership of the gang problem.

### 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.
- 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 provide gang investigators with regular, meaningful training opportunities and expect them to help educate their peers throughout the department both formally and informally.
- We will seek out best practices and strategies in the area of gang enforcement. We will seek out grants and additional resources to aid in the implementation of those strategies.
- 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 connection between gangs and drugs, and that some Lincoln street gangs participate in illegal distribution of drugs as a profitable criminal activity. We have seen evidence of drug distribution in connection with gang members, but do not see drug dealing as the primary criminal enterprise of Lincoln gangs, in contrast to other cities. We have also seen strong evidence that gang members from other cities have made many in-roads into the illicit drug market in Lincoln and we feel that aggressive strategies to enforce drug laws will reduce gang penetration into Lincoln.

### What we have done

- We have devoted substantial police resources to drug law enforcement.
- Seventeen commissioned 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 officers 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 to increase drug law enforcement efforts as resources are available.
- We will give special priority to drug investigations that involve gangs or gang members. We will increase efforts to work collaboratively within the department. Procedures will be implemented to include a gang officer in any scheduled drug interview, such as a proffer or debriefing of a cooperating witness, when there is reason to believe that gang members are involved in the investigation.
- We support the efforts at rehabilitation through drug courts and other post arrest treatment facilities.
- Gang investigators will aggressively pursue short term drug investigations involving gang members after de-conflicting with the Narcotics Unit.

## Gangs and guns

### What we believe

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.



Firearms represent the highest risk of harm to members of this community, whether gang members use guns to victimize good citizens or members of the public are injured by gunfire intended for another target. Aggressive investigation and prosecution of gang members for weapons offenses should be a primary focus of gang suppression efforts. This is particularly true in Lincoln, where gang crime is not as deeply intertwined with drug trafficking.

## 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 gang members through the enactment of local ordinances including:
- Unlawful possession of a firearm, which prohibits persons, convicted of certain misdemeanor crimes from possessing a firearm in the city.
- 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 have held three successful Gun Amnesty days.
- We present appropriate gun violations to Federal and local prosecutors to determine the best avenue for maximum punishment.
- We have destroyed all weapons used in the commission of a crime.
- We have all seized guns test fired by the state lab and comparisons done to determine if the gun may be associated with any other crimes.



## 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 gang members 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 prosecution on gun crimes in both federal and state court in order to deter illegal possession of a firearm and to maximize any penalty.
- Gang investigators will aggressively investigate actionable intelligence relative to the illegal possession of firearms by gang members and will focus their efforts on developing gun cases whenever possible.

## 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 an aggressive enforcement 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 can provide needed expertise and attention to the problem, but the efforts of the entire department will be needed to effectively address it.





## What we have done

- 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 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 work directly with prosecutors to insure aggressive prosecution.
- We have assigned additional personnel in 2013 and 2014 in order to more effectively respond to gang issues.

## 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 warranting special scrutiny with an eye toward maintaining significant consequences for gang crimes and toward salvaging those gang members or at risk youth that are salvageable.
- We will continue to track and target habitual gang offenders.
- We will continue to bring information concerning gang affiliation to the attention of prosecutors through our investigative reports and we will continue to work with prosecutors to encourage and support effective prosecutorial policies for gang offenders.
- We will continue to assess and evaluate the resource needs of an effective gang unit and the impact of gangs on the community.



## 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.
- We have initiated social media sites to educate and inform the public.

### 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.



- 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.