

Building Bridges: Community Policing for the 21st Century

BY CARLA KIMBROUGH

When Scott Nadeau was hired in 2008 as the Columbia Heights police chief, he brought a new perspective to the community that borders northeast Minneapolis. His ideas had been shaped through his work as a beat officer in another Minneapolis suburb and his experience as a big brother for the Big Brother, Big Sister program.

As a young beat cop, Nadeau said it took him months to earn the trust of people in his assigned neighborhoods. He learned that many residents had “a jaded and inaccurate view of who the police were and what they sought to do.” That jaded outlook was similar for police officers, whose negative experiences through traffic stops and domestic disputes outweighed the positive. The officers didn’t know or understand the communities they were policing. As a newly minted chief, Nadeau would emphasize getting to know the community by being involved. That’s how long-lasting change would occur in the community of 20,000 residents, he believed.

“In community policing, the police need to both understand and work with the community to ‘co-produce’ law enforcement and safety in a community, and that simply cannot happen when no relationship and understanding are in place,” Nadeau said recently.

But in 2008, not all embraced Nadeau’s ideas. “The rebirth of community policing: A case study of success,” a study written by professors at University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, reflected some of the resistance. An excerpt from an interview with one officer illustrated that point:

“I signed up to be a cop. I didn’t sign up to be a mentor to some young kid. I didn’t sign up to be a neighborhood watch partner. I didn’t sign up to go talk to businesses about how to prevent theft. I didn’t sign up for that. I signed up to arrest the bad guy.” (p. 26)

Nadeau said some of those officers ended up leaving the department. He kept pushing. By 2014, all

officers were required to spend at least 10 hours on community-oriented programming. They could work in elder abuse education, meet with immigrants enrolled in adult basic education classes, promote anti-bullying by reading to young elementary students, host weekly open gym events with middle and high school students, mentor elementary school students, or participate in a variety of other community involvement efforts. Now, the department sponsors a variety of community outreach efforts, including “Coffee with a Cop” at a local coffee shop, “Cone with a Cop” at a local Dairy Queen, “Shop with a Cop,” or National Night Out, which has attracted more than 1,000 residents in the past.

“It’s as good for the officers as it is for the community,” Nadeau said of the interaction between police and community.

The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing emphasizes the need for bridge-building between law enforcement and communities. The report, which was released in May 2015, was developed after seven hearings with 140 witnesses plus online comments. The task force organized hearings and the subsequent report around six pillars: 1. Building Trust and Legitimacy; 2. Policy and Oversight; 3. Technology and Social Media; 4. Community Policing and Crime Reduction; 5. Training and Education; and 6. Officer Wellness and Safety. The 11-member task force proposed 59 recommendations, with 92 action items. Since its release, the report has been addressed in an implementation guide, a progress report and a related initiative. The implementation guide offers five tips for each stakeholder—governments, law enforcement, and community—on how to move the recommendations from the pages of the final report to the reality in the community.

Nationally, law enforcement agencies of all sizes nationwide are reviewing and adopting aspects of the report. For some departments, for example, Fargo, North Dakota, and Columbia Heights, the

report reflects many of the strategies already being used. In New York City, the department—as it transitions to a new police commissioner—is formally rolling out its own neighborhood policing strategy in Fall 2016 after testing the program in different parts of the city, beginning in May 2015. On a larger scale, Illinois was the first to translate report recommendations into state laws. Small or large, law enforcement agencies are urged to connect with residents in the communities they serve. In a time of divides between residents, especially people of color, and law enforcement, the call for building relationships is ever more urgent.

Recent All-America City winners, such as San Antonio and Columbia Heights, are using the recommendations from the president’s task force report to improve and evaluate their operations. In San Antonio, Police Chief William McManus said the department had already been changing policies, beginning in 2007, years before the task force report was released. When the department compared itself to the report’s recommendations, the department had incorporated or nearly incorporated all the recommendations, except for about four—all related to contractual matters with the police union, McManus said. The department, though, is continuing to review the report’s recommendations to see what tweaks to departmental policies are needed, he said.

“This is all a matter of continuous improvement,” McManus said of the department’s approach to reviewing the recommendations and changing policies. “There is no finish line.”

That progress caught the attention of the Department of Justice. In May, San Antonio was selected as one of 15 law enforcement agencies to participate in the Advancing 21st Century Policing Initiative. These agencies, which include police departments, sheriff’s offices, a tribal police department, and a highway patrol, have made significant progress in building and maintaining community-police collaboration and trust, Attorney General Loretta Lynch said in a release announcing the initiative.

As a part of the initiative, the agencies receive hands-on assessments and technical assistance as they continue to implement the recommendations.

San Antonio has already received its first visit from an assessment team, which interviewed officers as well as community members; McManus said he expected a report in August. The lessons gleaned from the work with these 15 agencies will become guiding materials for agencies nationwide.

McManus said being a part of the yearlong initiative will allow the department to close any gaps and add training, but he’s confident that the relationship between community residents and San Antonio police is solid. To build those prized relationships, McManus, who joined the department in 2006 as chief, accepted every invitation he received, sitting on panels, going to community forums, visiting churches. He established his own kitchen cabinet, a group of about 12 people who are academics, community leaders and business leaders, representing gender, racial and ethnic diversity.

“It was all in my upbringing,” McManus said of lessons he learned serving under Charles Ramsey, who was chief of the Metropolitan Police Department in D.C., where McManus began his career and rose to assistant chief.

McManus, who served as police chief in Dayton, Ohio, and Minneapolis before becoming chief in San Antonio, has not rested on his laurels. Media outlets have reported his efforts. In late June, after the third homicide in five days, McManus walked the neighborhood with a councilmember and ministry activists. Months earlier, on the other side of town, McManus walked again.

“These connections are not new,” McManus said, adding trust is absent if relationships haven’t been cultivated.

Oliver Hill, president of the San Antonio branch of the NAACP, said the chief participates in quarterly meetings with the San Antonio chapter and has done so for years. Hill, a fourth-generation San Antonio resident, said the meetings allow the community to ask questions and share complaints and, when warranted, provide an opportunity for the community to say “thank you for what you’ve done.” For example, people have questioned how the department collects data about stops, especially those that don’t result in citations.

“Our conversations with the police helps us to make them better,” Hill said of the regular meetings.

Hill said McManus also uses the meetings to explain training, including 21st century policing tactics such as de-escalation, which teaches officers to listen, explain, empathize and, ultimately, treat all people with dignity. Recently, the chief was among the speakers for what Hill called a gang summit, attended by gang members, grieving family members, probation officers and other community leaders, including Hill. They gathered to deliver a unified message to the gang members: “You need to stop the violence.”

But McManus doesn’t just accept invitations; he offers them to pull in community resources. That’s how Hill started speaking to police cadets, just before they hit the streets. Hill said he wants to dispel beliefs that blacks are not human and that they are vicious and violent. He challenges them on their prejudices and explains that distrust is present because of incidents, current and past, said Hill, who grew up in the Jim Crow era.

“I don’t want any police officer criminalizing the color of my skin,” Hill said of his message to cadets. “We all bleed red.”

Hill recounted troubling deaths of black males at the hands of police officers—the 22-year-old who was carrying a pellet gun he picked up from a store shelf in an Ohio Walmart and the 12-year-old who was killed while playing with a toy gun at a Cleveland playground. Such incidents make Hill cite the need for changes in training that officers receive and better screening techniques in the hiring process. He would like to see a thorough psychological review of each applicant, testing for biases and beliefs about others. If applicants seek law enforcement careers to gain authority rather than to protect the community, that raises a concern, Hill said. If applicants fear black people, they shouldn’t be hired, Hill said.

“If we don’t have a conversation about race, race relations, things will never change,” Hill said.

Although Hill personally has never had a negative experience when stopped for traffic infractions—“each officer was very respectful,” addressing him

as sir—he said, he sometimes wonders if it is how he looks, wearing a tie and coat, even 25 years into retirement. He also knows, on the basis of complaints fielded by the NAACP, that others have had negative experiences. He said building relationships is extremely important.

“If you don’t know me, you won’t know that I’m not violent,” Hill said.

Hill also has shared with senior police officials a brochure, “The 411 on the Five-O,” which was produced by the NAACP Legal Department. The brochure outlines a person’s constitutional rights at home, in the car, or on the streets and gives other tips for interacting with police. The senior staff liked it so much that they wanted Hill to order more copies to help educate officers on citizens’ rights and give to individuals as a way to increase unity and understanding, Hill said. The work the NAACP does with local police has a clear goal, Hill said: “We want to make the San Antonio Police Department one of the best in the nation.”

Engaging with the community is strategic

According to Columbia Heights’ application to become an All-America City, by 2016, the average in the department had eclipsed 30 hours of extracurricular attendance per officer, nearly 1,500 hours of strictly community-oriented programming, according to an application. When the community was asked to help develop the annual strategic plan, Nadeau said someone challenged the department to spend even more time in the community. Now, the department’s goal—based collectively on all employees, sworn and not—is to spend 2,080 hours, just under 1 percent of hours worked, in community-oriented programming, Nadeau said. The 35-member department has 27 officers.

This approach to community policing didn’t mean officers would stop arresting people. The department, though, had fewer arrests to handle because the crime rate had fallen and continues to fall, Nadeau said. He credits the declining crime rate to relationships officers have built with residents and in schools. For example, in 2007 and 2008, youth arrests averaged 247, record highs; by 2014, youth arrests reached an all-time low with 106.

“As police, law enforcement will always be a part of what you do,” Nadeau said.

In the meantime, Nadeau has strived to create relationships with Columbia Heights’ increasing number of immigrants and people of color. Columbia Heights’ population is about 13 percent black, 12 percent Latino, nearly 5 percent Asian and just over 1 percent American Indian/Alaska Native, according to the 2010 census. Historically home to mostly Polish immigrants beginning in the late 19th century, Columbia Heights continues to attract immigrants, who, according to the Rebirth study, are called “new Americans” rather than immigrants. The department works to engage them too.

Sometimes, though, it works the other way. In 2015, Degha Shabbeleh learned via Facebook that the police department had hired two new officers—one an immigrant from Ethiopia, the other from Somalia. She called the department because she wanted to—and did—organize a reception to welcome the new officers. Since then, Shabbeleh, a former elementary school teacher, said she has established very comfortable relationships with the chief and other officers. She has seen the impact of positive relationships over and over again.

Shabbeleh, a native of Somalia who has lived in Columbia Heights since 2008, said having those officers—who were born and raised in their countries before immigrating to the U.S. as adolescents—has made a difference in community relations in several ways. For example, they understand that residents might not answer the door immediately because the woman might be putting on a hijab. In another incident, police responded to a call about a refugee family who was arguing loudly. The responding officer encountered a language barrier and called another officer who was able to discuss the situation and explain the norms to the family in their native language. Afterward, the family told Shabbeleh they were “so happy” with how the situation unfolded, she said. They had feared that they would be locked up and their children removed. In refugee camps, police are feared, she explained.

The positive relationship with the East African community also was evident when fights broke out among groups of young men. The first fight started

on a Wednesday and then continued a few days later on the night of high school graduation. The cause of the fight: a girl. “It’s part of growing up,” Shabbeleh said.

While some citations were issued for disorderly conduct and curfew violations, within a few hours, the police chief and several officers were meeting with parents and youth, she said. The officers told the teens to refrain from fighting in the presence of officers. Officers explained to parents they could set any curfew they wanted for their children, and, at the parents’ request, the officers would pick up their children and bring them home if they broke curfew.

“Parents felt so relieved to know they could work with police,” Shabbeleh said of that meeting.

That very same meeting is highlighted on the police department’s website. The department’s goal was to discuss current events and improve youth relations within the local Muslim community. That meeting simply built on years of outreach that began in October 2010 with some Monte Horeb Pentecostal congregation members, who felt police were targeting them because of their immigration status. By 2015, the department was being invited to picnics, including one organized by the mosque and another by the East African community.

In June 2016, Nadeau formed a multicultural advisory committee, a group of community volunteers that meets monthly with police. Shabbeleh, who is a member of the committee, said the group—“where every minority is respected”—is a great environment to ask questions or raise concerns. The officers take notes and respond. “It’s really what we want to talk about,” she said. “It’s really a group that’s working together.”

Nadeau said one of the committee’s first tasks was to read and comment on the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing report. Shabbeleh’s reaction to the report was to note that the department was doing much of it already. That said, Shabbeleh suggested the department could improve by expanding its youth-oriented programs to students who don’t attend public schools, by giving more details about incidents that occur in the community, and by

sharing with other departments how to counter the negative image of police brutality.

“I think they set a really good example here,” she said of the Columbia Heights department.

Before the new committee tackled the task force report, the department itself worked in small groups to review the six pillars identified in the report. The groups were to identify what the department could be doing to improve. Nadeau calls the task force report “one of the best models of what we should be doing.”

One major theme in the final task force report and related subsequent documents focused on the call for law enforcement officers to approach policing as guardians who protect human and constitutional rights rather than warriors that are occupying forces that impose order in communities.

Nadeau said he believes in the report’s philosophical approach to policing. Being a guardian means being a community servant, he said, noting that a department’s effectiveness should not be judged by the number of arrests. Many of the traditional policing strategies have limited effectiveness and have driven a wedge between police and the community, Nadeau said.

Divide Between Law Enforcement and Communities of Color

Recent opinion surveys show that a wedge exists not only between racial minorities and police but also between how blacks and whites view those relationships. Both Gallup and Pew Research have investigated police and community relations in their polling. In a national Pew survey conducted between February 29 and May 8, 2016, a 34-point gap existed between blacks and whites’ views on treatment of blacks in their dealings with police.

Frank Newport (Gallup’s Editor-in-Chief) reviewed Gallup survey responses taken before back-to-back killings of unarmed African American men, Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, a suburb of St. Paul, and the subsequent shooting deaths of eight law enforcement officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge who

were targeted by snipers seeking revenge for police-related deaths of black men.

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Gallup found that 67 percent of blacks and 40 percent of whites—up from 34 percent in the previous year’s survey—say that blacks are treated less fairly by police than are whites in their communities. These dealings with police included traffic incidents. In Gallup’s annual update on confidence in institutions for the last three years, 58 percent of whites and 29 percent of blacks said they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police—a 29 percentage point gap.

Neither the law enforcement community nor the community at large are sitting on the sidelines to correct the problems between the community and police. In May 2016, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) launched the Institute for Community-Police Relations to give U.S. law enforcement agencies immediate, short-term, or long-term support in their efforts to address the six pillars in the president’s task force report. Specifically, the Institute plans to offer educational materials, create a blueprint for implementing the task force recommendations, and facilitate police-citizen dialogues to build trust.

“Policing is facing significant challenges in the United States,” IACP President Terrence M. Cunningham, Chief of the Wellesley, Massachusetts, Police Department, said in a press release announcing the institute. “Many agencies and communities are ready to challenge the status quo together and continue to evolve policing in the U.S. The IACP and its new Institute for Community-Police Relations is the perfect vehicle by which to achieve needed changes.”

That same institute received a \$1 million donation to focus on building trust and promoting best

practices in community policing from basketball legend Michael Jordan, who said in a statement that he was “deeply troubled by the deaths of African-Americans at the hands of law enforcement and angered by the cowardly and hateful targeting and killing of police officers.” He also donated \$1 million to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to support its ongoing work on reforms.

“We need to find solutions that ensure people of color receive fair and equal treatment AND that police officers—who put their lives on the line every day to protect us all—are respected and supported,” Jordan said in a statement released to theundefeated.com, a new digital platform focused on the intersection of race, sports and culture.

Jordan’s statement and gift came about one week after three law enforcement officers were killed in Baton Rouge. Jordan said he hoped the donations would make a “positive difference.”

Illinois Becomes a Leader in Law Enforcement Reforms

The final task force report on 21st century policing is making an impact. Within months of the final report, Illinois legislators passed several laws related to the final report, making it the first state in the nation to do so. Among them, creating a database to identify and track officers dismissed for misconduct, requiring outside and independent agencies to conduct investigations when an officer shoots someone, and mandating training on various topics designed to improve policing and community interactions.

Presidential task force member Sean Michael Smoot, whose work in Illinois’ law enforcement spans two decades, pointed to the confidence people have when outside investigators control probes related to officer shootings.

“That’s almost like the first step for people being willing to tone down rhetoric and wait for facts to be disclosed,” said Smoot, director and chief counsel of the Police Benevolent and Protective Association of Illinois. “Departments tend to be far more transparent and provide more information than they did in the past.”

Illinois’ Police and Community Relations Improvement Act expanded the basic training curriculum to include courses on procedural justice, cultural competency, implicit bias, proper use of force, law enforcement authority, and dealing with sexual assault victims and people with addictions and mental illness. To remain certified in Illinois, law enforcement officers—from rookies to the chiefs—must complete in-service training each year on law updates and use of force and refresher training every three years on procedural justice, civil rights, cultural competency, and proper use of force.

An even earlier change in law enforcement in Illinois was when the state outlawed the practice of instituting ticket quotas. That change made it impossible for municipalities to use police officers to drive city finances through fines from citations, Smoot said.

“If they (police officers) wanted to be tax collectors, they would have joined the department of revenue,” Smoot said of ticket quotas.

At the same time, being judged by the number of citations written is not the right message to send to officers, Smoot said; officers learn that what matters is what gets counted. It doesn’t count, for example, when officers pull over to assist someone or when they take a drug addict to a hospital, he said.

“Seventy percent of what police officers do every day doesn’t get counted,” Smoot said.

One common measurement used in law enforcement agencies is CompStat, which was pioneered in the 1990s in the New York City Police Department. Called part of the “institutional DNA of policing,” CompStat is a management approach that analyzes crime patterns and coordinates police response to reduce crime and meet departmental goals. While CompStat has been a tool to reduce crime, some have criticized the aggressive tactics related to addressing those pockets of crime. For example, Smoot said aggressive stop policies can contribute to reducing crime but also can sow mistrust when innocent people are stopped in the process.

Some law enforcement experts, such as Rutgers University professor George Kelling, are calling for

CompStat to be used to collect data on complaints against officers and even measure whether officers are reducing fear of crime in a community. Authors of a report on CompStat noted his view that “If you only focus on crime, you can develop a distorted view of whether the Department is succeeding . . . The CompStat systems of the future must reflect all of the values the police should be pursuing.” (p. 1)

In Fargo, North Dakota, Chief David Todd said the department has used CompStat as well, but it has evolved into “intelligence-led policing,” in which the department focuses on the people responsible for criminal activity and then builds cases against those people. While New York City police were creating CompStat in the 1990s, the Fargo department was incorporating community-oriented policing. Before the switch to community policing, Todd said officers were assigned different areas of the city each shift. That approach helped officers familiarize themselves with the city but made it harder to build relationships with the community, he said. Even Todd, who has 29 years of law enforcement experience with the Fargo department, said he was skeptical about being assigned to the same area for a year, but he personally began to see the value in that approach. In time, officers begin to recognize people in their area and “you want to do your best for them.”

The Fargo department, which has 165 sworn officers among its 187 employees, has used a similar approach to its growing minority population. In the last decade or so, Todd, who represented Fargo at a July meeting of law enforcement at the White House, said the city has transformed from being nearly all white to including thousands of refugees from places such as Sudan, Somalia, Vietnam, Iran, and Iraq.

The department’s cultural liaison officer is one of the first people the new arrivals meet. The officer shares with them information about driving rules, appropriate discipline of children, domestic violence, and other information that helps them to adjust to their new lives. In the process, they also gain a new perspective about the positive intentions of law enforcement, which may be different than negative experiences they may have had in their countries, Todd said. The department also has assigned two community trust officers, funded by a

three-year grant, to build deeper connections with youth and underserved populations in the city.

“It’s important to build relationships outside of crisis,” said Todd, who has been chief since October 2015. “It’s like putting chips in the bank.”

The department’s work in the community, which was highlighted in the one-year progress report on the 21st century policing task force recommendations, has resulted in stronger engagement. For example, Todd said he has seen higher attendance at department-sponsored meetings and events. That engagement is important, and Todd said he doesn’t take it for granted.

“It’s something that you have to work at every day,” Todd said. “You can make that engagement positive or negative.”

One way the department tries to make those engagements positive is by training its officers in crisis intervention, so they know how to interact properly with people who have a mental illness or suffer from addiction, Todd said.

While some of the task force recommendations were already being used in Fargo, Todd said the department is going to work on officer wellness by incorporating a more formal physical fitness plan. The task force report recommends ongoing physical and mental health assessments and notes that health problems, particularly cardiac issues, are cumulative over time. As an example, the report cites the physical health differences that can be found between a new academy graduate and a more seasoned officer who has been patrolling in a squad car for the last few years. Todd said the department also is exploring how to release more raw crime data to the public and how to expand its social media presence even further.

His advice to other departments is to read the task force recommendations and determine how it applies to their departments. Then, work on implementing the recommendations. It will be different for each community, Todd said.

“You have to start moving that way. If you’re not moving forward, you’re moving backward,”

Todd said of the report's recommendations. "They (residents) want professional police service."

That cry for police who serve—and not harm—the community has been captured in protests in hot spots and suburban towns throughout the country. The deaths of unarmed black men have spawned protests, some of which have been organized by the Black Lives Matter movement. Following the national conventions for the Republican and Democratic Parties, the Movement for Black Lives Policy Table, a coalition of more than 50 groups, released a platform—the result of a year-long process that began in Cleveland—that called for, among several demands, the establishment of civilian boards to oversee law enforcement agencies at all governmental levels. That democratic control would ensure that "communities most harmed by destructive policing have the power to hire and fire officers, determine disciplinary action, control budgets and policies, and subpoena relevant agency information." By instituting these changes, the platform said "communities will be able significantly to reduce the number of Black people impacted by police violence."

Police violence prompted demonstrations in St. Paul, Minnesota, after the death of Philando Castile. His girlfriend, who was a passenger in the car, along with her 4-year-old daughter, videotaped the aftermath of the shooting and noted that Castile was shot as he reached for identification and after he informed the officer of his permit to carry a gun. The *New York Times* reported that police in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region had pulled over Castile at least 49 times, often for minor infractions, during a 13-year period, an average about of about once every three months. On the day he was shot by an officer with the St. Anthony Police Department, Castile had been pulled over for a cracked taillight.

The border of St. Anthony is about seven miles from Columbia Heights, which has had its own challenges. Columbia Heights had struggled with its own pattern of pulling over people for minor traffic infractions. To address this, officers began addressing traffic stops on a continuum, which included evaluating the type of offense, assessing whether the driver or others were in danger, issuing warnings and tracking warnings, Nadeau said. Over the

last several years, that approach has resulted in far fewer citations, he added.

Implementing the Task Force Recommendations

A few months after the release of the final task force report, an implementation guide was released to help elected and appointed government officials, law enforcement agencies, and communities incorporate the recommendations. The guide highlights key first steps, emphasizing the importance of listening and planning as communities implement the task force recommendations. For example, leaders must be intentional about setting up opportunities to listen to the community; these opportunities might be community meetings, church gatherings, or other venues as well as use of formal or informal surveys, focus groups, social media, or interviews. Not only should leaders listen to the community, but leaders should also listen to police officers.

"Change begins with listening," the guide states. "This cannot be a one-dimensional conversation—it must be a true dialogue externally with the community and internally within law enforcement agencies. It will require moving beyond offices, squad cars, and boundaries to engage in conversations."

Smoot said having conversations between police and community is essential, even though people get very defensive. Police must understand that the community's experience with police "was not always good," he said. That history has created shame and guilt on one side and shame and resentment on other side, Smoot said.

"It really doesn't cost anything to find that history, acknowledge that history and acknowledge that it was wrong," Smoot said of the role police sometimes have played in maintaining inequalities. "It should be easy (to acknowledge the bad), but it's not."

Including the nation's—or a community's—history of negative interactions between police and African Americans, for example, would be an important addition to police training, Smoot said. Many current officers were born well after the civil rights movement and are unaware of its history, he said. For example, younger officers may not have seen

how police violently beat peaceful civil rights protesters in Selma, Alabama. “Once they see it, they say, ‘yes, that’s bad,’” Smoot said. Without that acknowledgement of historical wrongs, Smoot said he doesn’t know how departments and communities can ever get past them, but they must.

“The fact is police need the community and the community needs the police,” Smoot said.

Smoot continues the work of the task force in a consulting firm, 21CP Solutions. The firm also includes Charles Ramsey, who retired this year as the commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department and was co-chair of the president’s 21st century policing task force, and fellow task force member Roberto Villasenor, who retired as the police chief in Tucson, Arizona. Smoot emphasized the importance of community residents and police officers talking to one another more often, so that everyone understands that “we’re all just people.”

In developing the planning process, government leaders should engage labor unions, student groups, faith leaders, and neighborhood associations at all stages. During the planning stage, the groups can determine whether particular recommendations are relevant to their communities and, if not, how the recommendations might be tweaked to address the issue. All policies or recommendations should be agreed upon through consensus, the guide suggests.

“Leadership can circumvent a number of problems or challenges by being transparent and inclusive of stakeholders in all phases of the planning process,” the guide says. “Decision making through consensus requires conversation and open and transparent dialogue, and finally, consensus building builds a culture of trust.” (p. 6)

Finally, the guide recommends that a working group or more formal body manage and/or monitor the implementation process. During implementation, people most affected by law enforcement as well as people who have the authority and resources to make the changes must be included. In Philadelphia, for example, a police captain was assigned the duty of monitoring implementation and reporting progress. The implementation guide also suggests

that community advocacy groups could monitor changes, which would serve as another way to promote dialogue between the community and police. Excluding the right participants can sabotage a department’s plan, the guide warns.

“Be sure to include a feedback loop that can identify unintended consequences in order to be responsive to community concerns,” the guide says of implementation. “Transparency and regular communication are essential to this process. Keeping the community and all key stakeholders informed about progress and key learnings can build trust and increase collaboration.” (p. 7)

New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton, during a press conference announcing his September 2016 retirement, cited as unfinished business “the mistrust of the criminal justice system, particularly by minority communities; the immigration issues that are still paramount at the moment; the anger directed at our Muslim community.” But, he said the police department—the largest in the nation—is prepared to face the crisis with its new neighborhood policing plan.

“We are on a journey but it’s no journey unique to New York City; it’s a crisis in America at this moment,” Bratton said of the issue of race and community relations. “The national election is revolving around it, but I would argue that we are farther along in New York City than most places.”

On the same day Bratton’s retirement was announced, Bratton and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the expansion of the city’s neighborhood policing strategy from four precincts in May 2015 to 44 precincts by October 2016, just over half of all commands.

“The Neighborhood Coordination Program represents the direction in which American policing is headed,” Bratton said, “as I have often said, the community and its officers need to see one another.”

Bratton’s replacement is Jimmy O’Neill, who de Blasio called the architect of the city’s neighborhood policing strategy. O’Neill, who is NYPD’s chief of department, said this “crime-fighting model” is improving neighborhoods, block by block, by

identifying and managing concerns on the most local of levels.

Mayor de Blasio said the strategy would make the city safer and “bring police and community closer together.” Neighborhood policing “changes the relationship between the community and the police fundamentally.”

“When New Yorkers know their local officers and trust their local officers, we are all safer as a city,” de Blasio said. “In times like these, we have a responsibility to provide our nation with a model for respectful and compassionate neighborhood policing.”

Back in Columbia Heights, Nadeau could probably attest to de Blasio’s prediction that closer relationships create a fundamental change between the community and police. He knows the difference that connecting with a community and crossing boundaries of race and culture can make. He believes policing can be improved through community connections, and many of the answers on how to do that exist in the task force’s final report. In his town, he continues to ask himself and others he encounters, “how can we co-produce safety in the community.” As he considers the violence against residents and police alike, Nadeau, who has been in law enforcement for nearly three decades, still believes policing is a “wonderful profession,” and he maintains a positive attitude about the future.

“My hope,” Nadeau said, “is that all of the tragedy and trauma end up bringing us to be in a better spot.”

In the eyes of at least one young man, that better spot is in Columbia Heights. Shabbeleh said her 21-year-old nephew, a student at University of Minnesota, contrasted his behavior in Minneapolis and Columbia Heights. He told her he feels “super safe” in Columbia Heights. When he crosses into Minneapolis, though, he told his aunt that he takes off his headphones so that he can hear what’s going on; he wants to be able to comply if he encounters police. Otherwise, he fears, police might shoot him. On a night not long ago in Columbia Heights, instead of taking the bus, he walked home, headphones on.

“We need to make sure that children feel safe with officers,” Shabbeleh said, “wherever they are.”

Five Ways Stakeholder Groups Can Implement the Task Force’s Recommendations

Local government

1. Create listening opportunities with the community.
2. Allocate government resources to implementation.
3. Conduct community surveys on attitudes toward policing and publish the results.
4. Define the terms of civilian oversight to meet the community’s needs.
5. Recognize and address holistically the root causes of crime.

Law enforcement

1. Review and update policies, training, and data collection on use of force, and engage community members and police labor unions in the process.
2. Increase transparency of data, policies, and procedures.
3. Call on the POST Commission to implement all levels of training.
4. Examine hiring practices and ways to involve the community in recruiting.
5. Ensure officers have access to the tools they need to keep them safe.

Communities

1. Engage with local law enforcement; participate in meetings, surveys, and other activities.
2. Participate in problem-solving efforts to reduce crime and improve quality of life.
3. Work with local law enforcement to ensure crime-reducing resources and tactics are being deployed that mitigate unintended consequences.
4. Call on state legislators to ensure that the legal framework does not impede accountability for law enforcement.
5. Review school policies and practices, and advocate for early intervention strategies that minimize involvement of youth in the criminal justice system.

Source: *President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing Implementation Guide*

Readers can find electronic copies of three documents discussed as follows:

Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/Task_Force_FinalReport.pdf

President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing Implementation Guide http://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/Implementation_Guide.pdf

The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, One-Year Progress Report: http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/TaskForce_Annual_Report.pdf

Carla Kimbrough is program director/racial equity at the National Civic League.

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