

# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY POLICING IN NEW ROCHELLE

## FINAL REPORT BY THE NEW ROCHELLE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY POLICING

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**Dated: November 23, 2015**

## LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

To the readers of this report:

In early 2015, the New Rochelle City Council authorized the formation of the New Rochelle Committee on Community Policing (“NRCCP”) and allowed City Manager Chuck Strome to appoint 15 members to the NRCCP – with three of those members being recommended by Police Commissioner Patrick Carroll. After much preparation, the NRCCP commenced its work in June 2015 with its inaugural meeting.

Over the course of the past six months, the NRCCP has met on several occasions to discuss and formalize a plan for how to incorporate best Community Policing practices in New Rochelle. During this period, NRCCP members were tasked with doing research, reading relevant policing material, and bringing different perspectives to the table. With a wide variant in age, ethnicity, and professional experience amongst our members, the NRCCP provided a perfect setting for the exchange of ideas. Ultimately, these ideas became what is now included in this Final Report.

We would like to thank everyone involved who made this effort possible, especially the NRCCP members who volunteered their time to work on this issue of Community Policing. We hope that the information provided herein is useful as the City of New Rochelle strives to be a leader in providing effective community-police relationships.

Sincerely,

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Chair, Department of Criminal Justice  
Iona College  
Co-Chair,  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Rochelle is fortunate to be one of the safest cities in the country. According to a 2014 New Rochelle Police Department (“NRPD”) annual report, New Rochelle was ranked 11th safest overall -- in the top 10 percent -- among cities with a population between 75,000 and 100,000. Despite the loss of 30 sworn officers in recent years due to the economic downturn, the number of violent and property (Part 1) crimes were the lowest they have been in more than five decades. However, New Rochelle can become even safer by way of modern Community Policing initiatives. This is especially applicable along the Lincoln Avenue corridor, in parts of the West End, and in the downtown.

Community Policing is a philosophy that utilizes community partnerships and problem solving techniques to proactively address public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. In looking at the NRPD, the NRCCP focused on the following three priorities:

- Increase levels of trust between the NRPD and the community by using positive dialogue to share information, and by promoting transparency and accountability.
- Reduce crime in New Rochelle by working with neighborhood residents to co-produce public safety.
- Ensure officer wellness and safety by providing the NRPD with the proper resources so that their health is maximized and their risk of harm is minimized.

Throughout this process, the NRCCP tried to strike a healthy balance between the needs of the community and the needs of NRPD while taking an approach that analyzed the past, the present and the future. Eventually, the focal point of NRCCP became the Police and Community Together (P.A.C.T.) Unit, a department within the NRPD headed by a supervisor and comprised of several different units.

At its zenith in 2000, the NRPD employed 187 sworn officers. With that level of personnel, the P.A.C.T. Unit was structured to host Beat Officers, Youth Officers, Housing Officers, Community Resource Officers, and Conditions Officers. However, with the number of current NRPD officers now down to 157, many of those previous positions of the P.A.C.T. Unit remain vacant. Additionally, with the reduction in the number of officers, the NRPD’s ability to be involved with programs is compromised.

With national and local criminal justice reform measures that will likely reduce overall incarceration numbers over time, and with anticipated growth in New Rochelle connected to downtown development (those impacts will be separately analyzed), it is imperative that the NRPD remains prepared to handle the challenges associated with policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our ultimate goal is to bring the community and our police officers together so that we can live, work, and play in a city that is safe for all of us.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Restructure the NRPD** - Restart our Community Policing program by eliminating the P.A.C.T. Unit and restructuring the department by having all officers involved with a new collaborative approach for community involvement. Instead of merely answering calls for service, a model based on New York City's new Collaborative Policing initiative should be utilized where officers spend up to 33% of their time meeting and working with community members, and identifying recurring problems and issues. Based on their levels of experience, current P.A.C.T officers should be retained in Community Policing leadership positions within the restructured department.
- 2. Increase the number of officers in the department** – The addition of personnel is essential to the resurrection of community policing in the department. While the optimal number of sworn officers in the department to handle community policing in this current environment is 187, financial constraints are recognized. Accordingly, the recommendation from this committee is that an additional ten officers be added to the department in this budget cycle bringing the total number of sworn officers to 167 with the understanding that this number will likely need to be increased as we continue toward the goals stated herein.
- 3. Retrain the entire department in the community policing philosophy** – In an effort to change the culture of policing in the NRPD, and redefine some of the expectations, officers would be retrained on issues related to sensitivity, diversity, social and cultural differences, implicit racial biases, and de-escalation methods. It should be noted that this will likely take a number of years to implement and that ongoing training will be needed for the entire department.
- 4. Take advantage of existing and new programs** – Already in place to different degrees are the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T) Program, Explorers Program, and Youth and Police Initiative. All efforts should be made to maximize the use of these programs, as well as to seek new programs aligned with the NRPD Community Policing philosophy.
- 5. Strengthen levels of dialogue** – Utilize Citizens for Better New Rochelle more effectively to provide a safe space for constructive dialogue between the community and the NRPD. Additionally, officers should routinely be made available to be present at neighborhood and civic events.
- 6. Aggressively seek grants that are aligned with the community policing philosophy** – Have someone within the NRPD that is actively looking for new grants related to community policing so that the financial burden of providing new resources may be offset.
- 7. Enhance Diversity Hiring** – The makeup of the NRPD should reflect the New Rochelle community as a whole. With respect to hiring practices, timely outreach and robust

recruitment measures should be put in place to provide assistance to officer recruits in civil service test preparation.

8. **Work closely with My Brother's Keeper New Rochelle** – Become full participants in the My Brother's Keeper New Rochelle initiative which is designed to help all young people - particularly boys and young men of color - be free from violence and afforded second chances in life.
9. **NRPD volunteerism** – Encourage NRPD officers to volunteer, especially as it relates to programs associated with the youth.
10. **Accountability process** – A permanent Community Policing committee should be commissioned to collaborate with the Commissioner - or his or her designee - to receive updates on these and future recommendations, and be apprised of the progress being made to achieve the benchmarks associated within this report.

**\*13 members of the NRCCP voted in favor of the recommendations contained within this report, one member chose to abstain from voting, and one member was unable to be reached for a vote.**