

Prospects for Reform? The Collapse of Community Policing in Chicago

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In an era of renewed enthusiasm for police reform, it could be instructive to examine how reforms—even successful reforms—fail. In the 1990s and 2000s, Chicago’s community-policing initiative was widely recognized as one of the most impressive in the country. In short order, it then collapsed. Community policing’s accomplishments were numerous, but it fell victim to issues commonly facing reform: money—especially the impact of economic downturns; leadership turnover and policy preferences; changes in the social, political, and crime environments; and the emergence of new technologies for responding to community concerns.

I. PROSPECTS FOR REFORM? THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN CHICAGO

Planning for Chicago’s community-policing program began in earnest in early 1992.¹ Following a 1993–1994 developmental period in five police districts, the project grew to encompass all twenty-five of the city’s districts.² The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) created opportunities for police and residents to build positive relationships with one another.³ It quickly expanded to encompass thousands of yearly local community meetings, district-level advisory committees, block-by-block doorstep visits by civilian community organizers, intensified delivery of city services to dilapidated areas, and widespread involvement of city residents in neighborhood crime-prevention projects.⁴ In a few

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¹ For an account of the early planning process, see WESLEY G. SKOGAN & SUSAN M. HARTNETT, *COMMUNITY POLICING, CHICAGO STYLE* 38–41 (1997).

² WESLEY G. SKOGAN, *POLICE AND COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO: A TALE OF THREE CITIES* 56–57 (2006).

³ *Id.*

⁴ See WESLEY G. SKOGAN, LYNN STEINER, JILL DUBOIS, J. ERIK GUDELL & AIMEE FAGAN, *NAT’L INST. OF JUST., TAKING STOCK: COMMUNITY POLICING IN CHICAGO* 6–12 (2002) [hereinafter *TAKING STOCK*]; WESLEY G. SKOGAN, SUSAN M. HARTNETT, JILL DUBOIS, JENNIFER T. COMEY, MARIANNE KAISER & JUSTINE H. LOVIG, *ON THE BEAT:*

years, CAPS grew to be the most impressive community-policing effort in the country. By 2010, Chicagoans had attended their local beat meeting on almost one million occasions,⁵ and politicians ran for office touting the fact they had been activists in the program.⁶

But by 2010, CAPS was unraveling. Community meetings dried up, local commanders stopped consulting with what remained of their advisory committees, most community organizers were laid off, and the police department no longer played a major role in identifying areas with high service needs.⁷ The project's budget had been slashed. After a successful fifteen-year run, most of the police officers assigned to work on CAPS moved on, and it lost its place in the city's organization chart.⁸ Community policing was not dead in Chicago, but it was on life support.

In an era of renewed enthusiasm for police reform, it could be instructive to review how reforms fail. Many fail because they were never much more than a press release. Others struggle to find a secure place in the organization after their founding believers and political supporters move on (the police chief's job is usually a revolving door). Still more projects are hollowed out but kept around so that mayors and chiefs have something to point to when questioned. While other priorities come and go, aggressive enforcement always lurks in the wings, waiting for a call when crime spikes. Police reform has enemies. Change may threaten career and bureaucratic interests, upset working union-management relations, and run afoul of some of the many touchstones of police culture. Projects requiring the cooperation of other city agencies can be complicated.⁹

However, community policing in Chicago was more than a press release. Foundations provided funding for special projects, and think tanks promoted it as the future of policing.¹⁰ The research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice published a summary report on its progress and remaining challenges.¹¹ But CAPS still

POLICE AND COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING 103–04 (1999) [hereinafter ON THE BEAT]; SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 76–79.

⁵ Wesley G. Skogan, *Collective Action, Structural Disadvantage and Crime*, 25 J. POLICE STUD. 135, 140 (2012).

⁶ Mick Dumke, *Rahm's Spin vs. City Hall's Plea for Federal Help*, CHI. SUN-TIMES (Jan. 30, 2017), <https://perma.cc/2UNL-GF9F>.

⁷ See Nissa Rhee, Manny Ramos & Andrea Salcedo, *The Rise and Fall of Community Policing in Chicago*, CHI. READER (Sept. 22, 2016), <https://perma.cc/XZQ4-KV3J>.

⁸ *See id.*

⁹ For a more complete discussion of the failure of reform, see generally Wesley G. Skogan, *Why Reforms Fail*, 18 POLICING & SOC'Y 23 (2008).

¹⁰ SKOGAN & HARTNETT, *supra* note 1, at 63.

¹¹ TAKING STOCK, *supra* note 4.

ran up against several of the obstacles that often scupper reform. Even successful reforms can fail, and around the country, some have failed.¹² What happened to community policing in Chicago?

Many of the observations and inferences reported in this paper are based on research conducted in Chicago. My involvement began in mid-1992 and continued thereafter. What I concluded has appeared in three books on community policing in Chicago and in numerous research articles and government reports, some of which are cited here. My question in this Essay is new, however. It caused me to reflect on what has occurred during the ensuing years. Sensing that there was a problem, our team conducted a follow-up evaluation of CAPS between 2014 and 2015. This involved interviews; meeting observations; surveys of meeting participants; and analyses of crime, demographic, and beat-meeting-participation data. The fieldwork focused on eight broadly representative police districts, where we interviewed key staff members, attended beat and District Advisory Committee meetings, and discussed trends with a range of community and CAPS activists. This Essay incorporates the unpublished findings of this follow-up evaluation and my continuing monitoring of the program. It is organized in ways that fit the Chicago case into the larger domain of community policing and reform more generally. Its lessons provide a list of things to watch out for.

II. CAPS'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During its effective years, community policing provided a venue for building trust and confidence in the police among a large number of city residents. Chicago's model called for officers to listen to residents and to pay special attention to problems that they identified as most important, giving residents a voice in how their communities were policed.¹³ Discussions of priority problems took place in monthly community meetings—through District Advisory Committees and their subcommittees—and in many other venues.¹⁴ CAPS also encouraged residents to participate actively in crime-prevention and crime-solving efforts.¹⁵ Rather than being treated as passive victims who encounter officers only

¹² Wesley G. Skogan, *What Happened to Community Policing?*, Testimony for the Listening Session on Community Policing and Crime Reduction of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 1–2 (Feb. 13, 2015), <https://perma.cc/CY2S-RRBM>.

¹³ ON THE BEAT, *supra* note 4, at 53–54 (describing the heightened community role in the CAPS problem-solving model).

¹⁴ *Id.* at 68–73.

¹⁵ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 180.

when something goes seriously wrong, residents were invited to see themselves as valuable partners who had something to contribute to community safety. They were encouraged to meet and work collaboratively with officers to address local issues. During 1998, police and civilian community organizers trained thousands of city residents in how to decipher local problems and address them through collective action.¹⁶ Our follow-up survey of participants found that more than 60% got involved in addressing what they identified as their community's priority problems.¹⁷ Police had special access to city agencies that could bring resources to bear on solving priority problems. These ranged from graffiti-cleanup teams to expedited towing of abandoned cars and calling in city inspectors to investigate serious building code issues.¹⁸ Special programs for youth, seniors, and other groups allowed police to make additional connections with harder-to-reach corners of the community.¹⁹

By sheer numbers, beat community meetings were the city's most important mechanism for building and sustaining relationships between police and the public.²⁰ They created occasions for police and residents to meet face-to-face and get acquainted, something that residents prized. The meetings also provided a forum for exchanging information and a venue for identifying and prioritizing problems in an area. No one was sure how the public would respond when the Chicago Police Department (CPD) launched its first trial beat meetings in late 1993, but they turned out to be a big success. The number of people who came into contact with Chicago police under the auspices of CAPS was very large. Between 1995 and the end of 2010, residents attended more than 45,100 of these meetings.²¹ Apart from elections, it is difficult to identify a municipal activity—of any kind and anywhere in the country—that attracts similar levels of individual civic participation. The meetings were also highly visible. A city survey found that more than 80% of Chicagoans knew about CAPS, and 60% knew that meetings were being held in their neighborhood.²² Regular surveys conducted for the evaluation found that support for

¹⁶ *Id.* at 103.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.* at 193–94, 180–81.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 198–200.

²⁰ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 68 (finding that over half a million Chicagoans attended beat meetings between 1995 and 2003).

²¹ Data on file with author.

²² SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 105, 119.

the police grew with time.²³ Confidence—particularly in perceptions of their responsiveness to neighborhood priorities—grew among Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics.²⁴ During the 1990s, observers came from all over the policing world to see CAPS in action; it was routine to run into officers from the Bundeskriminalamt (Germany’s federal police force) or London’s Metropolitan Police Service in the halls at police headquarters and in the back row at community meetings. In May 2021, London police were still running beat meetings.²⁵

III. THE ENVIRONMENT CHANGED

But the nation and the city changed. Two of the most dramatic events of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—a large and virtually nationwide decline in crime and the worst economic downturn in eighty years—together undercut two fundamental underpinnings of Chicago’s community-policing effort.

A. Crime Declined

CAPS was launched during an extremely violent period. In 1992, Chicago saw the highest homicide rate in its history. The 943 killings that year were second to the 970 murders recorded in 1974, but the city’s population had dropped by 400,000 residents in the interim.²⁶ Shootings, which included the victims of gun violence who survived, peaked in 1991.²⁷ Robbery and serious assaults were also near record highs. CAPS was a police-department program, and crime was on people’s minds. During the mid-1990s, both citywide surveys and questionnaires distributed at beat meetings found that those who turned out for CAPS events were primarily concerned about crime. Compared to the views of general samples of residents from their own areas, attendees at the meetings were more worried about crime and disorder problems than were their immediate neighbors. Beat-meeting participation and problem-solving activism were highest in Chicago’s poorest

²³ See TAKING STOCK, *supra* note 4, at 19 (describing increasing across-the-board improvements in police approval from 1993 to 2001).

²⁴ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 280.

²⁵ See City of London Police (@CityPolice), TWITTER (May 25, 2021), <https://perma.cc/43A2-AHQQ>.

²⁶ CHI. POLICE DEP’T, CHICAGO MURDER ANALYSIS (2011), <https://perma.cc/P3BV-D3W6>; William Recktenwald & Colin McMahon, *Deadly End to Deadly Year*, CHI. TRIB. (Jan. 1, 1993), <https://perma.cc/K6U4-EY4E>.

²⁷ See ON THE BEAT, *supra* note 4, at 203–04 (noting that higher rates of CAPS activism were associated with neighborhoods with high levels of poverty whereas engagement was less common in White and more affluent areas).

and most crime-ridden beats. Turnout was greatest in places where other community institutions—including schools and the health care system—were failing and where residents' well-being was most at risk on many fronts. However, violent crime was the single strongest predictor of meeting attendance rates.²⁸

It is important to note that these were distinctive findings. There has been a great deal of research on the community factors that control crime. These include neighborhood associations and volunteer groups, informal social control, solidarity between neighbors, and a willingness to intervene to nip problems in the bud.²⁹ But research—including important studies conducted in Chicago—finds that the benefits of community involvement usually flow disproportionately to better-off homeowners and racial majorities living in less-troubled communities that already get along with the police.³⁰ Beat meetings looked quite different. They successfully created opportunities for involvement in poorer, more dilapidated, and crime-ridden areas that were plagued by gang, drug, and social-disorder problems—where the general population did not like the police very much.³¹

Then crime declined. Between the early 1990s and the late 2000s, shootings dropped by 70%, murders (a one-in-five subset of shootings) by about 50%, and robbery by about 67%.³² The drop in crime in Chicago was both historic and unexpected. It was accompanied by a parallel decline in fear of crime, which dropped by ten to twenty percentage points, depending on residents' backgrounds.³³ Fear of crime among women went down by twenty percentage points. By 1999, the city's senior citizens were no more fearful than younger adults, a reversal of established trends.³⁴ A statistical analysis of ten-year trends in fear concluded that these declines were primarily due to improving perceptions of neighborhood crime and disorder and the dramatic drop in recorded crime.³⁵

²⁸ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 112–19.

²⁹ *See generally, e.g.*, Patrick Sharkey, Gerard Torrats-Espinosa & Delaram Takyar, *Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime*, 82 AM. SOCIO. REV. 1214 (2017).

³⁰ *See* Skogan, *supra* note 5, at 148.

³¹ *See id.* at 148–50.

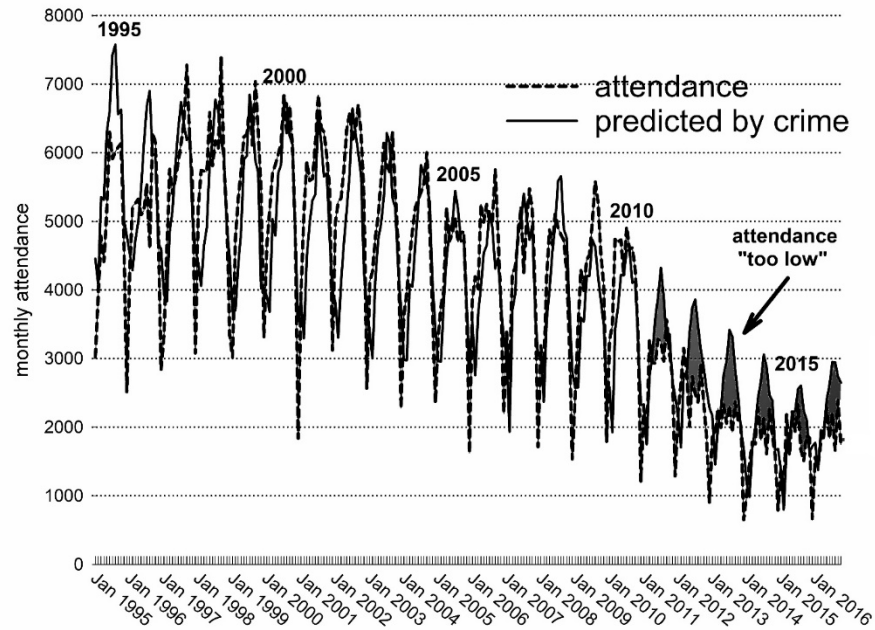
³² WESLEY G. SKOGAN & LYNN STEINER, CHI. CMTY. POLICING EVALUATION CONSORTIUM, *COMMUNITY POLICING IN CHICAGO, YEAR TEN 74* (2004), <https://perma.cc/5EBG-7K5M>.

³³ Wesley G. Skogan, *Trends in Crime and Fear: Lessons from Chicago, 1994–2003*, in *EMOTIONS, CRIME AND JUSTICE* 101, 104–05 (Suzanne Karstedt et al. eds., 2011).

³⁴ *Id.* at 104.

³⁵ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 265–66.

FIGURE 1: TRENDS IN MEETING ATTENDANCE AND CRIME



In tandem with trends in crime, community-meeting attendance dropped across the board. It was down the most in poor areas where most of the decline in crime took place. Figure 1 presents an analysis of the impact of crime on citywide beat-meeting attendance, beginning in 1995.³⁶ A multiple-regression analysis predicted monthly beat-meeting attendance from the level of two types of crime, those occurring in public places (street crime) and crimes in and around people’s homes (residential crime). They both varied with the weather, a factor that affects almost every aspect of crime and much of policing in the city. After a start-up period, attendance and crime rose and fell in harmony—until the years following 2010. Then, as the Figure indicates (see the shaded areas), attendance fell by more than it “should have” as predicted by crime. The shaded areas following 2010 flag the gap between attendance predicted by crime and actual turnout, which was lower than predicted. Other factors were coming into play

³⁶ Beat-meeting data were keyed by the research team each month from individual meeting reports filed by attending officers and approved by their sergeant. The data included details regarding citizen participation, the badge numbers and jobs of the officers attending, and summaries of old and new issues discussed at the meeting. Figure 1 is based on attendance data for 55,300 meetings taking place through the end of 2016.

that affected the city's community-policing effort. One of those other factors was resources.

B. The Great Recession Hit the Budget Hard

Community policing—done right—can be expensive. It involves spending a great deal of time in face-to-face contact and relationship building with the public. Officers must be trained—and retrained—in how to do this. Figure 1 depicts attendance trends at 55,300 community meetings, all of which had to be planned, supplied with meeting materials, led by an officer trained for the job, and, frequently, attended by other officers who worked in the area. Beat meetings were only one aspect of the project. Officers protected “positive loitering” groups that challenged loitering toughs, and they helped organize parent groups that marched younger students safely to and from school.³⁷ Importantly, officers were assigned to patrol cars that were permanently assigned on two shifts a day to each of the city's 269 police beats. The beat officers needed to be spared time away from their radio in order to work with the public. Other officers assigned to rapid-response cars needed to be on duty to pick up the slack. CAPS was one victim of budget cutbacks that inevitably hit the police department.³⁸

The Great Recession was the greatest economic downturn in the United States since the 1930s. The decimation of government revenues it engendered did not begin to bite into city finances right away, but the warning signs were on the horizon. Chicago's budget numbers were already shaky before it began.³⁹ In 2008, to provide an emergency plug for the city's draining coffers, Mayor Richard M. Daley's administration leased its parking-meter revenue for seventy-five years in return for \$1.16 billion, which it spent right away.⁴⁰ By 2009, sales-tax and real-estate transfer revenues had begun to drop, and the assessed values underlying property taxes stagnated.⁴¹ Unemployment among city residents was high.⁴² The parking-meter deal provided only a temporary budget fix, so—among many other things—the mayor began

³⁷ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 196–204.

³⁸ See Rhee et al., *supra* note 7.

³⁹ Rebecca Hendrick, Martin Luby & Jill Mason Terzakis, *The Great Recession's Impact on the City of Chicago* 3 (Great Cities Inst., Working Paper No. GCP-10-7, 2010), <https://perma.cc/EZ85-N4ME>.

⁴⁰ Andrew Stern, *Chicago Leases Parking Meters for \$1.16 Billion*, REUTERS (Dec. 2, 2008), <https://perma.cc/YV9W-WL6P>.

⁴¹ Hendrick et al., *supra* note 39, at 16.

⁴² *Id.* at 13.

scaling back on policing.⁴³ His police department consumed about 38% of the city's corporate budget, and by 2010 Daley faced a \$650 million deficit that he could not fix with smaller efficiencies.⁴⁴ In 1999, the CAPS budget (which did not include police salaries) stood at \$12.5 million, or 1.4% of the police department's total.⁴⁵ In response to the downturn, the mayor, in 2010, slashed the CAPS budget from a still-healthy \$9 million annually to about \$4.8 million.⁴⁶ About two hundred officers were reassigned from CAPS to other duties.⁴⁷ At one time, off-duty beat officers were paid overtime to attend meetings.⁴⁸ This was to introduce them to people they would not ordinarily meet at early evening meetings and to hear what residents' concerns were. Late in the night they would often hear other messages.⁴⁹ After 2008, only already-on-duty officers could attend, and meetings could last only one hour. To save money, the department also ceased hiring new officers.⁵⁰

When a new mayor (the first in twenty years) came into office in mid-2011, he found that the force had shrunk by almost 1,400 officers, although definitions varied as to what the baseline level actually was.⁵¹ Mayor Rahm Emanuel could not afford to take on even half of the 1,000 replacement officers that he had promised during his election campaign, so he reverted to the time-honored strategy of putting desk officers back on the street. Among them were staff still assigned to district and headquarters community-policing offices. In January 2012, the police superintendent publicly announced a plan to reorganize CAPS, making district commanders more responsible for its operation.⁵² However, few officers and civilian organizers actually remained to do the work. The mayor described this as decentralization, labeling it as a way to "revitalize the program."⁵³ I sat with district commanders in the meeting at which this move was announced internally on

⁴³ See Rhee et al., *supra* note 7.

⁴⁴ See Dan Mihalopoulos & Mick Dumke, *Next Mayor Will Face Tough Decisions to Solve Financial Mess*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 9, 2010), <https://perma.cc/6DYS-2RUA>.

⁴⁵ See Rhee et al., *supra* note 7.

⁴⁶ See *id.*

⁴⁷ See *id.*

⁴⁸ A report on budget and resource cutbacks can be found in *id.*

⁴⁹ See *id.*

⁵⁰ Rhee et al., *supra* note 7.

⁵¹ See Hal Dardick & John Byrne, *Emanuel Police Cuts Push Draws Criticism*, CHI. TRIB. (Aug. 31, 2011), <https://perma.cc/JQP8-MF74>.

⁵² See OFF. OF THE MAYOR, CITY OF CHI., *Mayor Emanuel, Superintendent McCarthy Announce Revitalization of Community Policing Program* (Jan. 8, 2012), <https://perma.cc/QL5P-MAHS>.

⁵³ See Rhee et al., *supra* note 7.

November 30, 2011, and they clearly saw it as making the reduction in CAPS's resources their problem. In 2016, Emanuel cut the CAPS budget again, down to \$3.9 million—or 0.3% of the police department total.⁵⁴

Earlier, district CAPS offices had two sergeants and five or more officers on staff.⁵⁵ They organized and attended beat meetings, marches, and rallies, and they led special projects such as scouting Explorer posts and athletic teams. They created and distributed newsletters and responded to numerous informational phone calls concerning neighborhood problems. When community groups needed a speaker, the CAPS office responded. This level of staffing let the office operate on two shifts most days of the week.⁵⁶ Following the cuts in late 2011, each district CAPS office was allocated only one sergeant and two officers, which meant it was closed much of the time.⁵⁷ As they were quick to point out, they did not experience a commensurate reduction in their responsibilities. CAPS teams were still in charge of taking public reports and complaints, organizing events, and staffing the work of District Advisory Committees and subcommittees.⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, fewer of these things were being done.

Earlier, the city also employed a staff of civilian street workers responsible for sustaining community involvement in CAPS.⁵⁹ The CAPS Implementation Office worked closely with officers in the districts. Most of its staff (which totaled almost ninety at its height) were experienced community organizers.⁶⁰ The organizers promoted upcoming beat meetings, and they trained and organized volunteer activities in their districts. Most spent a great deal of time going door to door recruiting neighbors for block clubs.⁶¹ Daley participated in a CAPS rally every Saturday morning, and organizers in the participating district put special effort into turnout for that event. Between 1995 and the early 2000s, the office was responsible for marketing the program.⁶² They created flyers, t-shirts, bumper stickers, hats, pens, and other familiar brand-development items. They also trained and directed the work of subcommittees of the District Advisory

⁵⁴ *See id.*

⁵⁵ *See* SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 89–92.

⁵⁶ ON THE BEAT, *supra* note 4, at 75–76.

⁵⁷ *See* Rhee et al., *supra* note 7.

⁵⁸ *See* ON THE BEAT, *supra* note 4, at 75–76.

⁵⁹ *See id.* at 72–74.

⁶⁰ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 57.

⁶¹ *See* ON THE BEAT, *supra* note 4, at 72–74.

⁶² *See id.*

Committees, especially their Court Advocacy and senior-citizen support groups. City service coordinators organized intensive “service blitzes” in run-down areas.⁶³ After the cutbacks, most districts had just one civilian community organizer, and a few had none.⁶⁴ Early in the Emanuel administration, the Implementation Office was folded completely.

An early victim of officer-staffing cutbacks was regular local beat meetings. After the 2010 staffing cut, in contrast to earlier periods, there were fewer meetings, fewer police attended when they were held, and efforts to organize effective community action through the meetings dissipated.⁶⁵ Regular monthly beat meetings largely disappeared. During 2015, only 13% of beats met at least ten times per year, the past standard; more (20%) met only quarterly; and two-thirds of beats met six times per year or less.⁶⁶ In addition, following 2010, most districts combined their beats into groups of two or three that met jointly, to reduce the total number of meetings. In a few districts that still held smaller, more frequent meetings, often just one officer would attend. In about half of the districts that we followed, officers working daily in the beat stopped attending meetings altogether; only a staffer from the district office was there. In 2010, there were 2,800 monthly beat meetings throughout the city; by 2012, that number had dropped to 1,480 meetings, and it went down in each succeeding year. Between 2010 and 2012 alone, total attendance dropped by 50%, in concert with this decline in opportunities to participate. “Everybody practices community policing,” Emanuel claimed during his successful campaign for reelection.⁶⁷ At the end of the year, it was announced in the districts that there would be many fewer beat meetings the following year, and the new rules included that there could be no discussion of individual crime incidents nor complaints about police manpower.⁶⁸

⁶³ SKOGAN & STEINER, *supra* note 32, at 87.

⁶⁴ See Rhee et al., *supra* note 7.

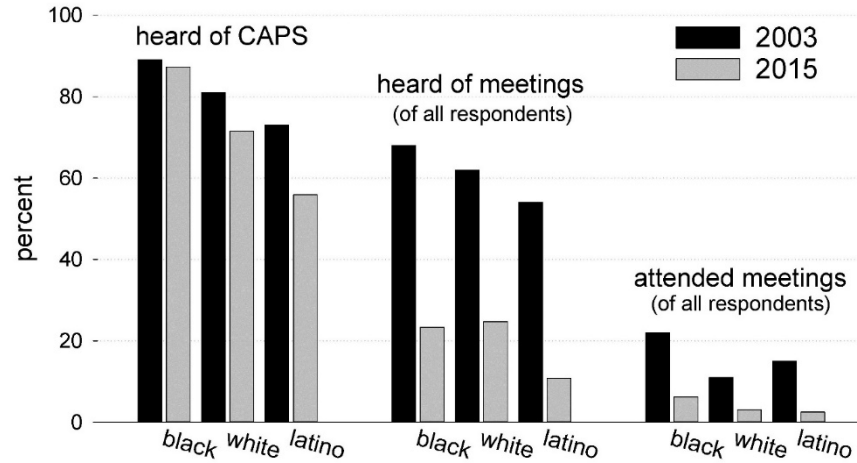
⁶⁵ See *id.* (“[W]hen funding for community policing started decreasing . . . [t]he number of public meetings between officers and community members decreased.”).

⁶⁶ These findings come from my calculations based on CPD data.

⁶⁷ Dumke, *supra* note 6.

⁶⁸ *On Anniversary of Our Founding, Alderman Walks Out of Police Meeting*, CWBCHICAGO (Nov. 5, 2015), <https://perma.cc/CNU3-PG89>.

FIGURE 2: TRENDS IN CAPS AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT



Declining CAPS involvement could also be seen in surveys of city residents. Figure 2 compares the results of a 2003 city survey with the findings of the 2015 study described earlier.⁶⁹ On the left, it depicts the level of sheer awareness of the city's effort. Recognition of CAPS or community policing (both terms were in the question) was very high in the early 2000s, driven in part by the city's aggressive CAPS marketing campaign. Awareness later dropped only a bit. In 2003, almost 90% of African Americans knew about CAPS, and that number dropped only to 87% in 2015. A notable drop in recognition between 2003 and 2015 was among Hispanics, a group that Chicago always struggled to get involved. Their awareness of CAPS dropped from 73% to 56%. Most of this decline was among Spanish speakers rather than Hispanics who we interviewed in English.

More notable was a decrease in reports that beat meetings were being held, which they often were not. Interviewers briefly described the meetings, then asked if respondents had heard about beat meetings being held in their neighborhood in the past twelve months. Awareness that meetings were taking place had dropped by two-thirds among African Americans (down to 23%) and almost as substantially among others. Among Latinos, reports that meetings were taking place stood at only 11% in 2015.

⁶⁹ The 2003 survey is described in SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 104. The 2015 survey is described in Wesley G. Skogan, *Stop and Frisk and Trust in Police in Chicago*, in POLICE-CITIZEN RELATIONS: A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION OF SOURCES AND IMPEDIMENTS OF LEGITIMACY AROUND THE WORLD 247, 249–51 (Dietrich Oberwittler & Sebastian Roché eds., 2017).

Finally, survey reports of actual participation (the rightmost bars in Figure 3) paralleled the decline in attendance documented by the city's headcounts, dropping by a factor of four. Chicagoans noticed this drop in opportunities to participate in community safety.

IV. POLICING AND THE POLICE CHANGED

A. Leadership Turnover

An enduring feature of police departments is that their policies and priorities are very tied to the views and commitments of the chief—also known as the superintendent. In Chicago, the superintendent serves at the pleasure of the mayor, and both feel the heat regarding crime and policing policies. At its inception, CAPS was nurtured by two successive chiefs of police who were committed to its success.⁷⁰ This was no accident; both had been selected for the job by a mayor who had insisted on its adoption in the first place. The real origin of community policing in Chicago was in Daley's office. He learned about it through his network of big city mayors, and he hired a consulting team that studied the police department's staffing and came up with an organizational plan.⁷¹ The consultants as well as Daley played a role in the selection of Matt Rodriguez as the Superintendent of Police who would oversee the implementation of community policing.⁷² His successor, Terry Hillard, proved just as supportive, and between them, they led the department for eleven years.⁷³

Then leadership from city hall faltered. When the position fell vacant in late 2003, the mayor chose a new superintendent from the detective bureau.⁷⁴ Philip Cline was chosen, rather than a more community-oriented candidate, despite the fact that the city's murder count in 2003 was the lowest in twelve years.⁷⁵ Cline refocused the department on guns, gangs, and homicides.⁷⁶ The city's modern stop-and-frisk regime was born during his tenure. Policing initiatives that had been center stage before, including community policing, were starved of resources to support this new policy direction.

⁷⁰ See SKOGAN & HARTNETT, *supra* note 1, at 38–39.

⁷¹ See *id.*

⁷² For more detail regarding the selection process, see *id.*

⁷³ See *id.*

⁷⁴ See Dumke, *supra* note 6.

⁷⁵ SKOGAN & STEINER, *supra* note 32, at 74.

⁷⁶ See Dumke, *supra* note 6.

As is often the case with Chicago public officials, Cline's tenure ended in scandal.⁷⁷ The mayor again chose a chief of police who was uninvested in community policing. He would not appoint any of the candidates that the city's police board put forward to him, which was required by law, and during the ten-month hiatus in leadership that followed, no one knew what direction the department would turn next. Eventually, Daley took the unpopular step of going outside the CPD for his next chief of police. He found Jody Weis, who was the special agent in charge in the Philadelphia office of the FBI.⁷⁸ He was the first outsider appointed police superintendent in more than fifty years. Weis was not opposed to community policing, but it lay completely outside of his line of experience. His brief tenure in office (three years) was marred by dissension within the leadership ranks and disputes with the police union, which sensed that he had never found his political footing.⁷⁹ One of their points of contention was Weis's right to wear a Chicago police uniform. He and Daley left office at about the same moment.⁸⁰

Emanuel chose to make crime a central issue—as new U.S. mayors often do—during his 2011 campaign to replace Daley.⁸¹ He promised to put one thousand more officers on the street and to pick a new police chief who would make effective use of them. He ran against the muddled leadership of Weis and the financial mess that proved real when he took over city hall.⁸² His choice of a new chief also came from out of town. Garry McCarthy had spent most of his career with the New York City Police Department.⁸³ There, he was the deputy commissioner for operations and the director of the department's metrics-driven CompStat management process. McCarthy had first interviewed for the Chicago job in 2003, when Cline was selected, and was among the three finalists for the position. He was a supporter of the “broken windows”

⁷⁷ Andrew Fan, *Many Superintendents Have Tried to Reform the Chicago Police*, CITY BUREAU (Dec. 18, 2015), <https://perma.cc/RLX4-J3CU>.

⁷⁸ James O'Shea, *Despite Progress, Police Chief Still Struggles*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 17, 2010), <https://perma.cc/FFU7-N7TS>.

⁷⁹ *See id.*

⁸⁰ *See* Fan, *supra* note 77.

⁸¹ Mick Dumke, *Did Rahm Live Up to His Campaign Promises on Public Safety?*, CHI. READER (Jan. 20, 2015), <https://perma.cc/646T-LZJJ>.

⁸² Dumke, *supra* note 6.

⁸³ Kristen Mack, *Rahm Emanuel Is Set to Name Garry McCarthy New Chicago Police Superintendent Monday, Source Says*, CHI. TRIB. (May 1, 2011), <https://perma.cc/KHV4-R2LS>.

policing strategy⁸⁴ promoted by his commissioner at the time, William Bratton.⁸⁵ McCarthy and Bratton's approach was to crack down relentlessly on minor offenses—such as curfew violations, public drinking, vandalism, pot smoking, and graffiti writing—to send a robust deterrent message to the community that lawbreaking was unacceptable. When it came to guns and drugs, their favored tool was stop and frisk. Stop and frisk reached a crescendo during McCarthy's tenure; in 2014, Chicago police made more than 718,000 stops.⁸⁶

B. Problem-Solving Moved Elsewhere

During its first fifteen years, police representation at the CAPS meetings was strong; an average of five officers attended each meeting. Most were from the district CAPS office or were members of the beat teams that answered calls in the area. For CAPS's first decade, off-duty beat officers were paid to attend so that problems taking place on their shifts were also discussed. The official line was that Chicago police were committed to “problem-solving policing,” and they all had been trained in doing it.⁸⁷ The department's official problem-solving model framed the discussion of local conditions at many meetings.

Importantly, CAPS accepted a broad definition of its mandate to respond to community concerns, and many vexing noncrime problems gained priority status.⁸⁸ Better listening to the community produced different policing agendas. Officers involved in neighborhood policing quickly learned that many residents are deeply concerned about problems that previously did not come to police attention.⁸⁹ Early in its life, CAPS's beat meetings were closely linked to city services. Complaints recorded at beat meetings were quickly translated into service-delivery requests.⁹⁰ A statistical analysis documented that these services were distributed in response to need and to the priorities of beat-meeting attendees.⁹¹ Civilian service coordinators also organized service blitzes (known variously as “wolf packs” and “super-block

⁸⁴ Rachael Levy & Jennifer Delgado, *McCarthy Touts “Broken Windows” Crime-Fighting Strategy*, CHI. TRIB. (Mar. 11, 2013), <https://perma.cc/EBA2-XKQF>.

⁸⁵ *See id.*

⁸⁶ Data on file with author.

⁸⁷ *See* SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 70–76.

⁸⁸ *See* ON THE BEAT, *supra* note 4, at 77–80.

⁸⁹ *See id.* at 79.

⁹⁰ *See* SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 206–07.

⁹¹ *Id.*

cleanups”) in strategic locations, as a follow-up to police crack-downs.⁹² The districts also had troubled-buildings officers who prioritized targets for a citywide Strategic Inspections Task Force and the city attorney’s troubled-buildings prosecution team.⁹³ Over time, city residents saw their neighborhoods become cleaner and more orderly. Over ten years of surveys, concern about graffiti dropped by half, and most respondents saw declines in disruption around schools, fewer problems stemming from abandoned buildings, and less junk and trash strewn around.⁹⁴ There was a notable increase in the percentage of African Americans and Latinos who thought that police were being responsive to neighborhood concerns.⁹⁵

But over time, responsibility for much of this shifted from the shoulders of the police, and into the arms of the city’s 311 city service hotline. Beginning in the 2000s, there were a series of technical improvements to its behind-the-scenes operations.⁹⁶ Up-to-date computer technology was acquired to process complaints, allocate them to the right agencies, and reach into the agencies’ databases to follow up on complaints that had been sent their way.⁹⁷ During 2012, the first year for which the data on 311 operations can be found in the Chicago Data Portal, the hotline handled 34,300 complaints concerning rats, more than 20,000 reports of abandoned cars, and 132,100 graffiti complaints.⁹⁸ The system became widely known and popular, and aldermen later rebelled when Emanuel proposed to sell the 311 system to a private vendor to raise cash.⁹⁹

This was all well and good for the city, but it erased yet another incentive for residents to turn out for beat meetings and work with their district CAPS officers on neighborhood problems. In the past, if residents had an issue, they went to a meeting, filled out a problem form, and handed it to an officer who would fax it downtown later that evening.¹⁰⁰ The meetings featured lively discussions of a broad range of neighborhood problems.

⁹² See ON THE BEAT, *supra* note 4, at 77–80.

⁹³ See *id.*

⁹⁴ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 220.

⁹⁵ *Id.*

⁹⁶ See Susan Crawford, *Chicago’s New 311 System Is a Huge Win for Public Works*, WIRED (Jan. 10, 2019), <https://perma.cc/NFJ2-TFUB>.

⁹⁷ See *id.*

⁹⁸ CITY OF CHI., *311 Service Requests – Request Type*, CHI. DATA PORTAL (Sept. 3, 2021), <https://perma.cc/JZM5-P99A>.

⁹⁹ See Crawford, *supra* note 96.

¹⁰⁰ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 146.

Parking and traffic issues came up as often as personal crime and gangs.¹⁰¹ Abandoned buildings, bad landlords, and loose garbage in the alleys were often on the agenda.¹⁰² When we revisited beat meetings in 2013, it was apparent that the meetings had taken a narrower focus. When residents shared problems, they were told to just keep calling 311 or their alderman. CAPS no longer offered a fast-tracked response to their issues. Officers threw up their hands when residents complained about slow responses to service requests. The districts no longer seemed to work in coordination with the beat meetings, and a common response by officers to complaints about crime at the meetings was to keep calling 911.

C. A Dubious Rank and File?

Under many circumstances, planned organizational reforms can be sidetracked by a lack of support from employees on the operations side. A study of the sustainability of reform in community corrections agencies concluded that line workers had to understand how reform could be accommodated in their daily operations (and sometimes it could not), and they had to think that it was legitimate and worth their time.¹⁰³

Officer support for community policing in Chicago was mixed. CAPS was always more popular with the public than it was internally.¹⁰⁴ Many officers initially dismissed it as “just politics” or another passing civilian fad.¹⁰⁵ They were certainly unfamiliar with it; community policing came late to Chicago. Reformers were asking them to do new things, and old things in new ways, which was challenging. Officers expected CAPS to wither on the vine, like other well-sounding initiatives. A 1995 department-wide survey of officer opinion found that many were dubious about the impact of the program on crime and the police’s relationship with the community. Mostly, they believed that CAPS would just bring more work their way.¹⁰⁶ But at that time, they had no experience with the project; they barely knew what it was.

¹⁰¹ *Id.* at 169.

¹⁰² *Id.* at 129.

¹⁰³ See generally Danielle S. Rudes, Shannon Portillo & Faye S. Taxman, *The Legitimacy of Change: Adopting/Adapting, Implementing and Sustaining Reforms Within Community Corrections Agencies*, 61 BRIT. J. CRIMINOLOGY 1 (2021).

¹⁰⁴ Compare TAKING STOCK, *supra* note 4, at 17 (finding that community trust in police increased following CAPS implementation in 1993), with Arthur J. Lurigio & Wesley G. Skogan, *Winning the Hearts and Minds of Police Officers: An Assessment of Staff Perceptions of Community Policing in Chicago*, 40 CRIME & DELINQ. 315, 329 (1994).

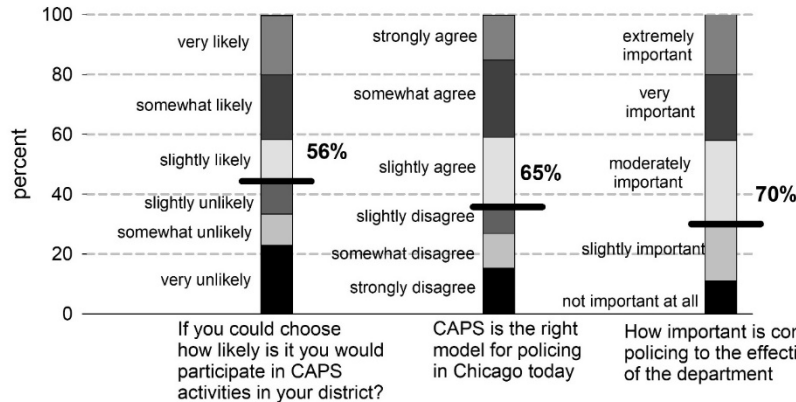
¹⁰⁵ Lurigio & Skogan, *supra* note 104, at 329.

¹⁰⁶ *Id.* at 315–30.

A 2013 survey of district officers included questions reevaluating the depth of support for CAPS among the rank and file. In total, 714 police officers and sergeants were interviewed after being selected at random from the duty rosters of the 22 police districts.¹⁰⁷ The results suggested that there was majority, albeit tepid, support for CAPS. The responses to three such questions about CAPS are summarized in Figure 3.

In the survey, respondents were asked how much they agreed with CAPS “as a model for Chicago policing today.” They were also asked, “If you could choose, how likely is it that you would participate in community policing activities in your district?” This is not an entirely hypothetical question, as officers often find ways to evade assignments that they would like to avoid. Finally, they were asked, “How important is community policing to the effectiveness of the department?” In total, 65% agreed at least “slightly” with the CAPS model. About 40% of officers fell in more supportive categories, agreeing with the concept at least “somewhat,” as illustrated in Figure 3. Fewer officers in total (56%) thought that they would be likely to volunteer, but 40% were again fairly supportive. Many more, 70%, agreed to some extent with the view that community policing was important to the department. I would judge the support for CAPS suggested by these figures as “not terrible.”

FIGURE 3: OFFICER SUPPORT FOR CAPS



In 2013, African American officers were more supportive of community policing, as were women and officers who joined the

¹⁰⁷ For more on the survey, see Wesley G. Skogan, *Surveying Police Officers*, in ENVISIONING CRIMINOLOGY: RESEARCHERS ON RESEARCH AS A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY 109, 109–15 (Michael D. Maltz & Stephen K. Rice eds., 2015).

force at an older age. Officers who scored high on measures of their support for the procedural-justice principles being taught at the training academy were very strongly supportive of CAPS, both as a model for policing and in terms of their own participation.¹⁰⁸ The most important source of opposition to CAPS was police culture. This was measured in the survey by responses to questions regarding how isolated officers felt from the community, the strength of in-group solidarity, and their levels of cynicism regarding political leaders, the press, and top leaders of their own organization. Officers who were high on these dimensions were very opposed to the CAPS initiative—and they were opposed to just about everything else that was going on in the department as well.

I observed, importantly, that CAPS avoided being at cross-purposes with the city's largest police union, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). From the beginning, the initiative was planned to fit within the terms of the labor agreement. For example, I noted that officers retained their rights when it came to bidding for shifts and assignments and received generous overtime pay if they elected to attend events outside of their regular shift. There was an early rumor that they would be reporting to civilian activists rather than their sergeants, but this turned out not to be the case. Some prominent members of the union governing board became involved in planning aspects of the program. More truculent conflicts with the FOP that spill beyond bread-and-butter issues and into political and cultural domains were to come later, nearer to the end of the 2010s.¹⁰⁹

However, an important feature of policing is that officers do their job. Beat meetings were held even if attendance was low because they were an organizational strategy. They were held monthly at neighborhood venues that were secured by the CAPS offices, including churches, schools, hospital cafeterias, apartment-building party rooms, and park-district buildings. The beat-team sergeant often had keys to the building. When officers were assigned to attend meetings, they showed up, bringing along materials that had been prepared at the office for distribution. If their sergeant wanted them to sit among audience members rather than cluster in a back corner, they moved. One officer was always assigned to co-lead the meeting along with a local CAPS activist, and many did a decent job of it. They had occasional training on how to run a beat meeting. When discussion would turn to what

¹⁰⁸ See Wesley G. Skogan, Maarten Van Craen & Cari Hennessy, *Training Police in Procedural Justice*, 11 J. EXPERIMENTAL CRIMINOLOGY 319, 323 (2015).

¹⁰⁹ SKOGAN, *supra* note 2, at 94–95.

police had been doing regarding crime problems discussed at earlier meetings, they usually had something to report. Their sergeant would approve and sign a beat meeting report noting attendance, the names and employee numbers of officers who were present, and the old and new problems that were discussed. The numbers would be collected and reviewed at police headquarters, where reports were generated tracking attendance and the frequency of meetings. Having been involved in many activities organized and run by well-meaning but busy volunteers with jobs and families to attend to, I can attest that there are many advantages to involving the community through the organized structure provided by CAPS.

D. CAPS Lost Its Place at the Table

A sign of CAPS's near demise was when it lost its place in the city's organization chart. Into the 2000s, its daily operations were on the mayor's mind, and CAPS literally had a place at the table.¹¹⁰ There were monthly CAPS status meetings in the mayor's office. The meetings were attended by senior police leaders, the head of the civilian CAPS Implementation Office, the coordinator of city services, the director of the city's troubled-buildings program, and other officials who were contributing to the effort.¹¹¹ I sometimes attended as well. The mayor was skilled at managing bureaucracies, and he did not shrink from issuing direct orders. But in the early 2000s these sessions ended, and by 2010, all the senior civilian leaders save one were gone, along with the Implementation Office itself. The remaining staffer, who had been sent to CAPS at its origin by the mayor to watch over it on his behalf, was sent to work two levels down in the Patrol Division office at police headquarters. The sworn leaders of the division oversaw the work of about nine thousand people and did not often focus on CAPS. There was a new mayor in office, and community policing had slipped off city hall's agenda, seemingly for good.

V. THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNITY POLICING

I judge the Great Recession to be the most consequential factor involved in the collapse of community policing in Chicago. Policing was the largest item on the city's general budget, and civic leaders had to find a lot of money quickly. CAPS was still popular with the voters, but tax increases were not. Over 90% of the

¹¹⁰ *Id.* at 55–56.

¹¹¹ *Id.*

department's money went to salaries, so budget cuts meant staffing cuts. Outrage over the parking-meter deal closed a path to selling off other city assets, which was already underway. Every city agency felt the financial pain, not just the police. The mayor squeezed both CAPS and department staffing generally to conserve cash. His decision to leave 1,400 police positions unfilled was not taken lightly.¹¹² The recession also arrived at an important moment in the early 2000s when community policing was no longer a priority at police headquarters. The mayor's efforts were directed elsewhere, and by 2010, it was apparent that he was tired and ready to step down. This, I think, was the second arrow in the side of community policing. Ensuing events cut further into support for CAPS. Crime and the use of crime data to drive aggressive policing strategies reemerged on the city's agenda, beginning fifteen years after the launch of CAPS when violent crime stopped dropping. There was a new mayor who had no experience in municipal administration, much less policing. He had campaigned against crime and weak police leadership, and he was politically committed to somehow putting more officers on the street and encouraging his new police chief's aggressive stop-and-frisk agenda. It did not help that community policing does not lend itself to instant and quantifiable results or even activity counts, and it never really found a place in the department's CompStat management system.¹¹³ The decline in crime and the shift in many neighborhood problem-solving efforts elsewhere in city government appears to have weakened residents' resolve to turn out in the evening for meetings, and after 2010, few officers were there to hear their concerns. When the city faced another legitimacy crisis at the end of 2015, there was not much left of CAPS to turn to.

Now, U.S. policing faces another legitimacy crisis of major proportions. Communities around the nation are seeking new opportunities to build and sustain public confidence in the police. In its 2015 report, the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing included community policing as one of its six "pillars of reform."¹¹⁴ It noted the importance of community policing "as a guiding philosophy for all stakeholders" and recommended that agencies co-produce public safety by "work[ing] with community

¹¹² See Dardack, *supra* note 51.

¹¹³ See Skogan, *supra* note 9, at 29–30.

¹¹⁴ PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING, OFF. OF CMTY. ORIENTED POLICING SERVS., FINAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING 3 (2015), <https://perma.cc/2LQL-ZVUL>.

residents to identify problems and collaborate on implementing solutions that produce meaningful results for the community.”¹¹⁵ Community policing was one of the task force’s most important solutions to the legitimacy crisis.

In Chicago, community policing collapsed, but it did not die. The origins of CAPS lay in widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of service being delivered by Chicago police during the late 1980s.¹¹⁶ In Chicago, as around the country, community policing was aimed at building trust in the community and ensuring support for the police among voters and taxpayers. Now its time may have come again. In 2016, there was a historic and persistent spike in Chicago’s gun violence.¹¹⁷ This coincided with an enormous scandal involving the cover-up of a young man killed by the police in November 2015.¹¹⁸ In response, in January 2016, the deputy mayor for public safety recruited members for a new Community Policing Advisory Panel charged with overseeing the revitalization of community policing in the city. Before the panel convened, she left the administration, and there was another new chief of police. However, both the panel and promises regarding the reestablishment of a community-policing initiative are enshrined in the federal consent decree on police reform that resulted from the scandal.¹¹⁹ The first forty substantive subsections of the agreement concern community policing. Following a list of guiding principles, the decree specifies actions to be taken on seven distinct aspects of community policing.¹²⁰ Organizationally, direction of the program was rescued from the depths of the Patrol Division and moved into the Office of the Superintendent. New staff members were hired and trained, and management systems were put in place to direct the program and produce regular reports for the consent-decree monitor. The soon-arriving post-COVID-19 period will be the test of the ability of the organization to reinvent itself again.

¹¹⁵ *Id.*

¹¹⁶ For a discussion of the origins of CAPS, see SKOGAN & HARNETT, *supra* note 1, at 20–37.

¹¹⁷ Azadeh Ansari & Rosa Flores, *Chicago’s 762 Homicides in 2016 Is Highest in 19 Years*, CNN (Jan. 2, 2017), <https://perma.cc/Y9X2-QF4M>.

¹¹⁸ See Ben Austin, *Chicago After Laquan McDonald*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 20, 2016), <https://perma.cc/7BFL-9BQZ>.

¹¹⁹ See Consent Decree, *Illinois v. City of Chicago*, Case No. 17-cv-6260, 2–14 (N.D. Ill. 2019).

¹²⁰ *Id.*