

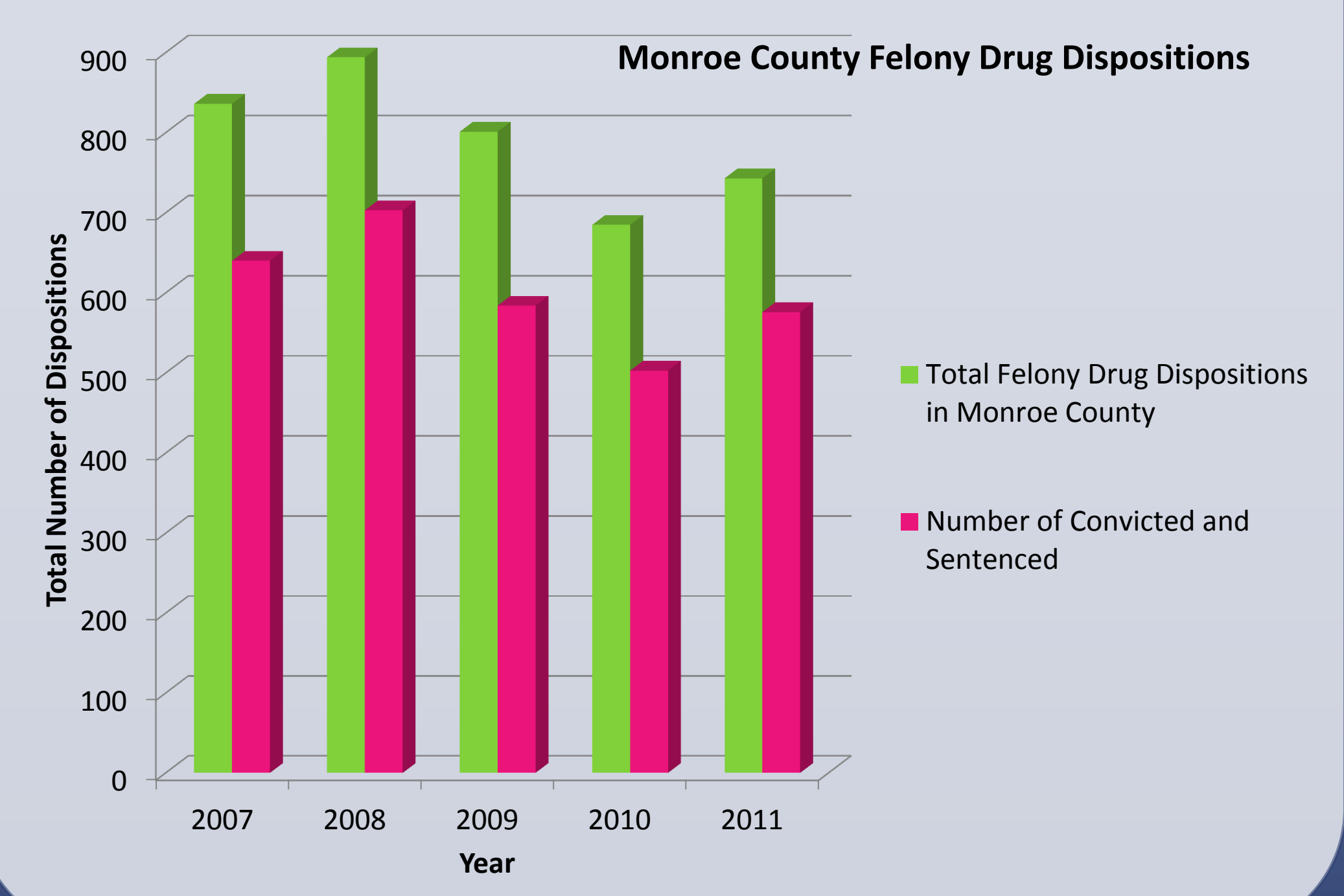
Background

Open-air markets are geographically defined areas that are identified as a hotspot for the retail distribution of illicit drugs. Reuter and Pollack (2012) call the idea of open-air drug markets “a transparent one, a place where drug users can go with fair confidence of finding a willing seller”. The presence of open-air markets provides various challenges to both local communities and law enforcement officials. The presence of open-air drug markets tends to signify a loss of social control by law enforcement officials upon a local community. Although these markets often tend to be in high crime areas, it’s just as plausible that the market is derived from the same causal factors associated with crime and disorder in the area. It is likely that the market has a root cause that also causes other crime but the presence of the market itself magnifies and provides opportunity for crime to happen that would not exist independently of the market.

Issues Associated With Open-Air Markets

Open-air markets can be extremely disruptive to local communities. There are a host of issues that are consistent with the existence of an established open-air market, including:

- Traffic congestion
- Noise
- Disorderly conduct
- Loitering
- Vandalism
- Drug use and littering
- Damage to property
- Prostitution
- Robbery
- Weapon offenses
- Homicide
- Lack of comfort, trust, and public safety
- Loss of public space

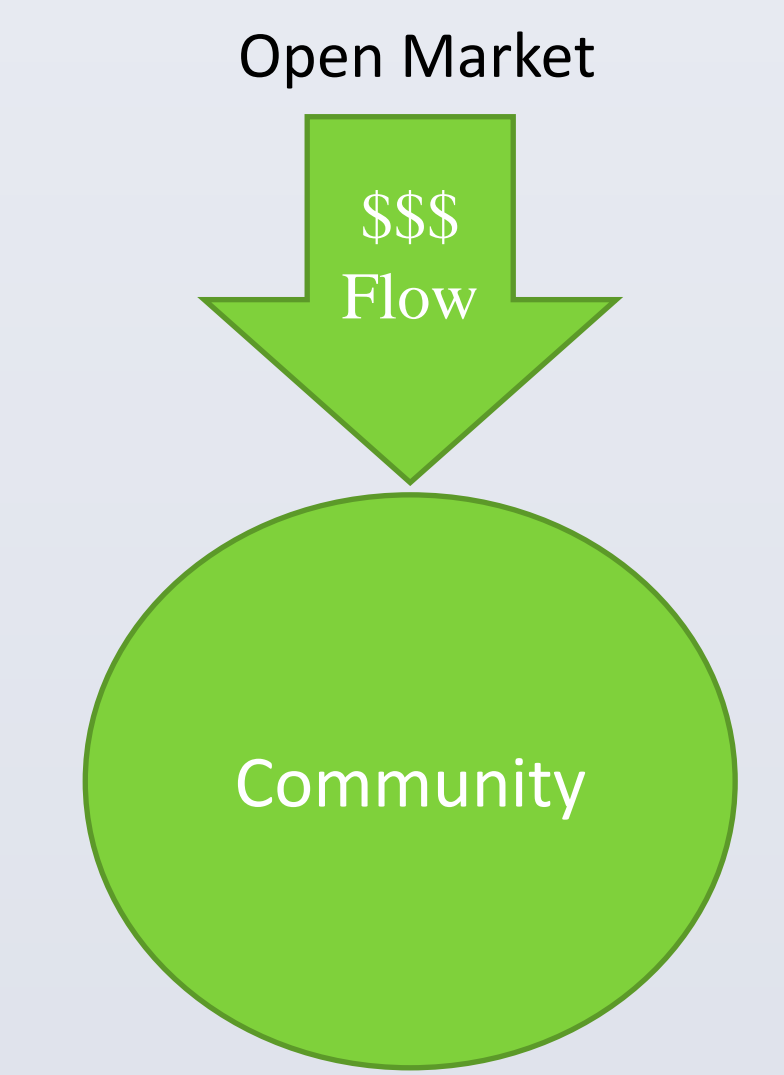


Understanding Open-Air Drug Markets

There are two categories of open-air markets: closed and open.



If the customers of a market are local they are called closed markets. They are considered closed because dealers only make transactions with customers they are comfortable with. Closed markets are usually centered in a location most accessible to local buyers.



Markets that cater to non-local residents tend to reside near major transportation hubs and funnel customers to specific areas. They are also very important to the informal economy of a neighborhood, because they tend to bring in more outside funds (Bole, et al.).

There is often great overlap between these two types of markets. Which category a market falls in and how much overlap it has depends on many variables. Everything from the drug being sold and the dangers associated with it, to how aggressive and conservative the dealers are about approaching new customers, are determining factors in how the market will function. But the ultimate determining factor like in any industry is the consumer.

Intervention Strategies

Community policing is the most widespread policing initiative. Community policing is an umbrella term because so many tactics and other initiatives can fall under that category.

- officers walk the beat, increasing visibility, to conducting neighborhood surveys can be considered community policing, hallmark of all community policing initiatives is an attempt to increase community engagement.
- By doing so law enforcement is investing the community into solving local problems
- The three common features to all community policing approaches are police community partnerships, a problem solving approach, and organizational decentralization(Somerville, 2009).

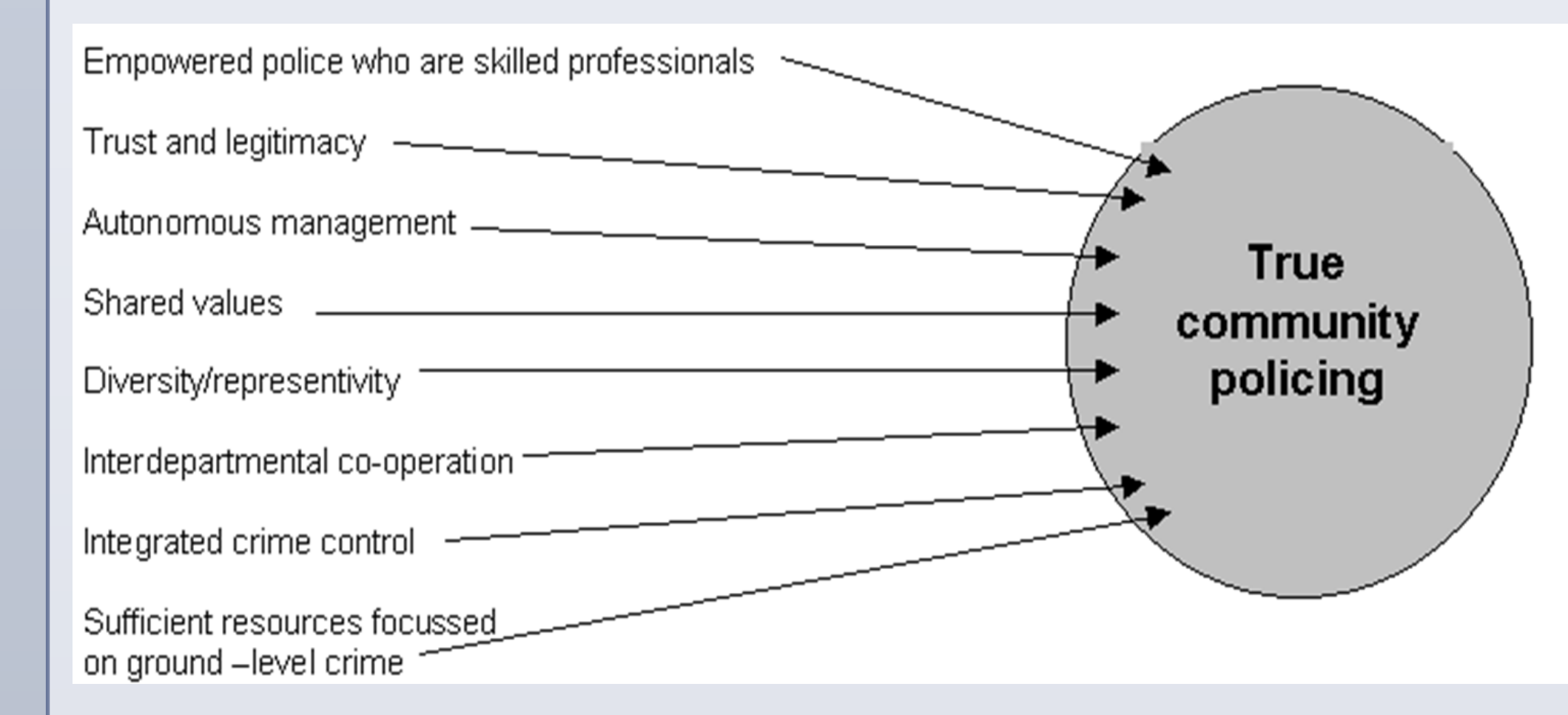
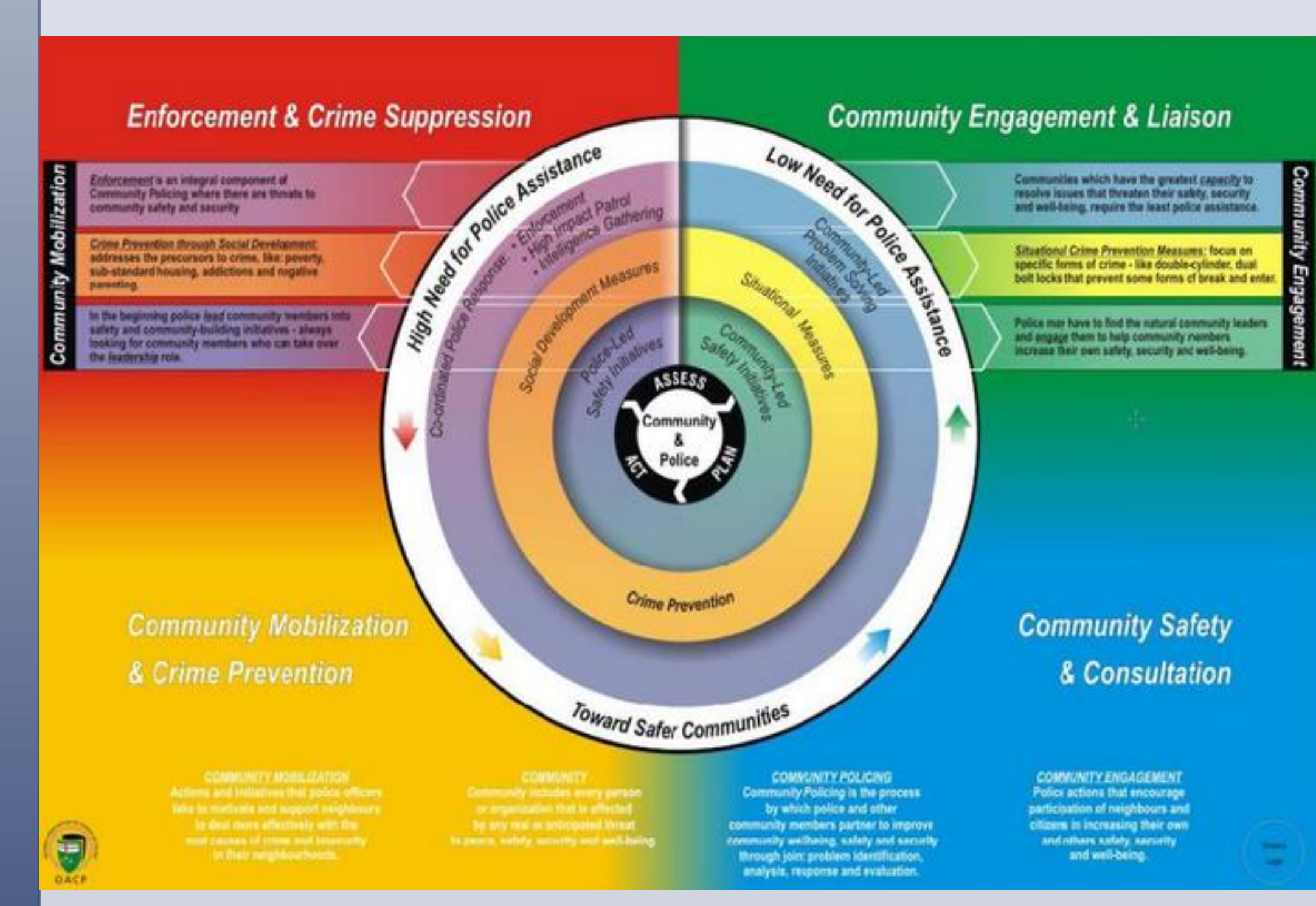


Diagram of a Community Policing Model Used in Ontario, Canada



Pulling Levers Policing

This is a unilateral deterrent strategy. It was first implemented in Boston during the mid 1990s and has been successfully replicated and modified by many cities nationwide to meet local needs. It was first developed to reduce gun violence by targeting youth involved in gangs. The strategy was to:

- Identify youths who had lengthy criminal histories.
- Conduct in-person meetings with the youths, informing them that if the violence continued they would be targeted with all possible sanctions.
- Offer the youths support from service providers

“The Boston Method”

- Was successfully modified to target open-air drug markets is the High Point, North Carolina.
- In this model undercover officers were deployed to accumulate evidence against anyone involved in open-air drug markets.
- Individuals who were known violent offenders were then prosecuted. Lower lever offenders met with officials and were presented with the evidence against them.
- Avoided prosecution if market was shut down (Bishop & Feld, 2011).

Conclusion

There are many possible intervention strategies available to both law enforcement and local communities to battle the presence of open-air drug markets. To find the most effective strategy to close any illicit open-air market first requires a proper analysis of the market to understand both the nature of the market and the individuals involved.

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