

Takoma Anti-Crime Task Force Report

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Completed 3/ 29/2006

Approved 4/14/2006

Released 5/01/2006

How did this report come about?

On August 9, 2002, Katie Lynn Hill, a visitor from Washington State, was robbed and shot to death while walking from the Takoma Metro station to her relatives' home a few blocks away. The community was frightened and outraged at the senseless violence of this murder. People seemed to feel that this woman had been a guest in our community, and we had an obligation to protect her. The community did not want to be known as "the place where Katie Lynn Hill was killed."

DC Council Member Adrian Fenty held a town meeting at the Takoma Park Baptist Church on August 19, 2002, to address the concerns of the community. About 350 residents, government officials and police officers from both Takoma, in Washington DC, and Takoma Park, Maryland attended, as did DC Mayor Anthony Williams. During this forum, community members had an opportunity to voice concerns about the crime in the area. Residents expressed frustration that it took the murder of a white lawyer from Washington State to cause this town meeting. During the previous year, Takoma DC and Takoma Park MD had suffered increased violent crime and threat to personal safety. However, along with concerns, residents also offered possible options and solutions to make the area safer. Council Member Fenty announced that a unique task force would be formed to study and address the issues and concerns of to the community. Unique in that it would bring men and women from both the DC side and the MD side, unique in that it would be made up of people who are dedicated to their community, from all different backgrounds and talents. This was not meant to be a group of elected officials, rather a group of dedicated, passionate residents who live, shop, work and participate in activities within the community.

The task force was formed from volunteers, most having participated in the town meeting, others having heard of the Task Force from members of the community. The Task Force met once a week for eight weeks in a meeting room at the Takoma Village Co-housing. During the first meeting, members aired concerns about crime in the area, gave suggestions as to what could be done, and voiced complaints about what they believed had not been done to combat the crimes. The importance of co-operation and cohesion between Takoma, Washington, DC and Takoma Park, MD was stressed. Facilitators volunteered to lead the proceedings. After a few meetings, the issues were broken into workgroup issues or major problem areas:

METRO

Police Community Relations

Inter-jurisdictional

Fiscal Issues

Child Safety Issues

Personal Safety*

*Personal safety was originally suggested as a workgroup issue, but after discussion, it was decided that personal safety would span across all other issues. However, when the Workgroup reports were completed, it became apparent that the personal safety topic had not been a focus in most of the groups. Therefore, the final Personal Safety Report was written after the Workgroups Task Force had completed the other reports.

Each group had its own unique way of working. Some groups did field research, such as the Metro group, visiting the Takoma Metro, noting and photographing trouble areas, talking with riders, and inviting the Metro Transit Police into the process. Other groups had guest speakers, who were able to address specific concerns and questions. The fiscal group shifted through budget reports. And the Child Safety group actually recruited people who work in and with area schools to obtain an insiders perspective. Although the facilitators had outlined a desired format for the Reports, in typical style of the Takoma area, each report was approached, researched, and formatted to reflect the diverse make-up of that particular Workgroup. Each report, in a unique way, addresses the problems, feasible outcomes, recommendations and possible strategy. It needs to be understood that, with limited time and limited resources, not all strategies have been completely worked out. Many recommendations are made with the understanding that more research needs to be done as to how to implement the suggested changes. Many people from the Task Force are willing and eager to work closely with officials to ensure this comes to fruition and want to be involved in the implementing process. We believe that each of the enclosed reports stands on it's own. As the Task Force was composed of ordinary residents, the hope is the Reports reflect the concerns of those who work, live, own businesses and visit Takoma and Takoma Park. Due to the detective work of Takoma Park and 4th District Police, the murderer of Katie Lynn Hill was eventually caught. However, he was found unfit to stand trial. He is currently being held in a secured facility. It is hoped that he will one day be able to stand trial for his crimes.

Summary: Takoma Anti-Crime Task Force

A task force of 60 dedicated volunteers met for 8 weeks in 2002 and 2003 to better understand the problems of violence and crime in the area and to recommend positive steps to improve the situation. This is a summary of their deliberations.

Metro Station: Improve safety for users of the Takoma Metro station. Example: loop bus services at night. The taxi stand should be conveniently placed and better information should be given to users of METRO bus services. The environment should deter crime. Improve lighting of the METRO parking lot and the elevator tunnel. Stronger police presence and visibility around the METRO station is recommended.

Police-Community Relations. Relations and cooperation between police and community have to be improved. In particular, communications between callers and dispatchers need improvement. There should be an active effort to educate the community in crime prevention. Takoma DC & Takoma Park residents should work jointly to enhance safety in their community.

Fiscal Issues: All these recommendations do have a fiscal impact. More money is needed for more police officers and anti-crime efforts. The Takoma Park Police and the Metropolitan Police have to address their chronic staffing problem. Other anti-crime recommendations such as lighting and landscaping require resources. But, such expenses will have a high return, because effective crime control enhances quality of life.

Inter-jurisdictional: The task force proposed better cooperation between the Metropolitan Police Department and the Takoma Park Police Department, including regular contacts at the commander level, and sharing of information on crime to allow proactive policing on both sides of the border. Joint patrols at the street level should enhance visibility of police. Finally, instant effective communication during police action against criminals should greatly enhance effective pursuit of crime.

Personal Safety: Clearly visible and publicized call boxes help residents contact police. Neighborhood patrol programs of orange hats are useful in crime prevention. Furthermore active Community Oriented Policing is suggested to identify and address crime problems.

Abstract - Takoma Anti-Crime Task Force.

METRO - Transportation

1. **Problem:** Lack of transport to and from METRO
Response: Loop buses
Resource: WMATA, Ride-on, Grant
2. **Problem:** No proper taxi stand
Response: establish Taxi stand with hot-line phone to taxi companies.
3. **Problem:** Lack of information
Response: Improve signage for Takoma DC and Takoma Park
Post better map at METRO
Post bus route map at METRO for DC & Maryland in each bus shelter.
Educate station managers regarding bus connections.
4. **Problem:** Residents unaware of recent crime problems.
Response: Crime reports on the back of bus information, community sponsored flyers
5. **Problem:** Unsafe, uninviting and dark METRO grounds
Response: Brighten tunnel, paint inside tunnel (community sponsored)
paint walkway under bridge (community sponsored). Negotiate with METRO to improve lighting
6. **Problem:** Lack of police presence
Response: Police substation. Staff substation at 7-Eleven regularly; post signs marking substation. Police "Koban" station at 4th Street. Explore reserve officers.

Police-Community Relations Work Group

1. **Problem:** Police-community relations dysfunctional, disappointed expectations
Response: Educate and train community about police work and ways to cooperate with police.
2. **Problem:** Not enough institutionalized forums to foster citizen-police discussion.
Response: Hold police-citizen forums.
3. **Problem:** Residents do not have enough information about
 - a. Crimes in their neighborhood and the best way of preventing crimes.
 - b. How to use the police most effectively.
 - c. Who is responsible to make the environment crime safe?

Response: Improve distribution of information about specific crimes as soon as possible after crime occurs. Use e-mail to disseminate information at little cost and effort. Use neighborhood patrols to disseminate information.

4. **Problem:** Citizen's discomfort interacting with police.
Response: Train citizens and improve direct interaction Between police and community. Enhance dispatcher Community interaction
5. **Problem:** Abuse of the 911 systems and improper use of 311 system; problems with cell phones.
Response:
6. **Problem:** Lack of functioning neighborhood associations.
Response: Continue taskforce meetings to address problems

Fiscal Issues Work Group

1. **Problem:** Fighting crime is expensive.
Response: Cut overlapping responsibility and reduce extraneous demand on police time
2. **Problem:** Manpower shortage
Response: Vacancies in the police departments need to be filled.
3. **Problem:** Police manpower static in Takoma Park, while crime increases. Ratio of police officers to residents unequal between Takoma, D.C., and Takoma Park.
4. **Problem:** Funding question. Does Takoma Park receive federal funding? Line items in DC not clear in regard to police

Inter-Jurisdictional Issues Work Group

1. **Problem:** Crime information not shared on a systematic basis between DC, Montgomery County and Takoma Park
Response: Have MPD (PSA 401/405) and TPPD share crime information and patterns of crime directly.
Strategy: MPD 401 and 405 command staff will fax or e-mail information to TPPD daily, weekly
2. **Problem:** Officer shortage affects effective inter-jurisdictional interaction.
Response: Regular shared police patrol between DC and Takoma Park.
Strategy: Command staff meets and sets up regular border Patrols

3. **Problem:** No established inter-jurisdictional and inter-personal Communications system.
Response: Set up system via cell phones or other technology.
Link computer systems
4. **Problem:** Residents do not communicate
Response: Conduct joint PSA and beat meetings
5. **Problem:** Exclusion of Walter Reed Hospital as a safety resource.
Response: Continue contact with Walter Reed staff
Strategy: work through CPT Solberg MPD
6. **Problem:** Time constraint of staff hinders communication and information-sharing efforts
Response: Set up serious and innovative recruitment efforts to hire patrol officers, hire recruiter, change court duties by charging individuals at the police station.

Personal Safety Issues.

1. **Problem:** Lack of community based protection
Response: Call boxes (a.) Modernize in Takoma Park (b.) establish in Takoma DC
2. **Problem:** Lack of public education regarding muggings
Response: Create seminars and flyers
3. **Problem:** Lack of measures about burglaries
Response: Train the public in home safety
4. **Problem:** Lack of public education about identity theft
Response: Distribute public information
5. **Problem:** No community cohesion
Response: Train community to look out for each other in the streets and at homes.

Metro Work Group Report

Members: *Doug Payton, Tom Carrico, Brigitte Anders-Kraus, Charlotte Stichter, Sergeant Robert Kirkpatrick, Sergeant Neil Frebowitz, Katie O'Neill*

Introduction: Major Problem Area - Overview. Our workgroup, which is made up of mostly avid Metro rail riders, has identified several issues and/or problems, which lead to a feeling of vulnerability. The issues are:

- Transportation to and from the Metro
- Information
- Metro Grounds
- Police

The following report analyzes each issue, explaining why it is a problem, recommendations for a feasible, desired outcome and recommendations for strategies to implement those recommendations.

Problem: Transportation. The community feels vulnerable walking too and from the Metro. The murder of Ms. Hill has caused fear. But there have also been several muggings, stabbings, assaults and a rape in the areas surrounding the metro.

The Takoma Metro Station is located in a mostly residential area. A large number of Metro users live within walking distance of the Metro and a Metro bus route does not service most of those areas. Also, many residents and visitors to the area want to take advantage of the shops and restaurants, which are, located an easy walk from the station.

Although there is a taxi stand at the Takoma Metro, its location is virtually unknown to Metro riders, Metro personnel, residence and, maybe most importantly, taxi companies and drivers. The taxi stand that exists presently is located across the street from the 7-11, indicated only by a blank, weathered sign since all the lettering has been worn away.

The Metro Workgroup proposes that a new, safe, visible, working taxi stand be added to the Takoma Metro as well as a local loop bus service.

Currently, WMATA plans to place the new taxi stand in the Metro parking lot, at the Kiss and Ride, in front of the handicap tunnel to the elevator.

*Note: During the time the Task Force was meeting, studying, forming recommendations, Metro built a taxi stand at the Kiss and Ride, near the elevator entrance. We are unaware if Metro officials solicited recommendations from the community as to the placement or design of the stand. The observation of this Work Group is that the stand is not located in an appropriate location and does not appear to be attracting taxicabs. Our recommendations stand.

Our immediate suggestion is that the stand be moved to the island, which separates the Kiss and Ride from the bus stops. This will allow for:

- Commuters to wait for a taxi under the lights.
- Commuters to have access to the bus shelter, which already exists there.
- Commuters be away from objects which could obstruct view, such as the bushes near the tunnel
- Commuters to wait where other commuters are will be waiting for buses and give an added sense of security
- Increased activity for those parking in the Kiss and Ride as well as pedestrians walking through the parking lot and therefore lowers the chances for crimes.

The long-term suggestion would be to move the stand to a more visible area, such as on Cedar Street or to incorporate a stand into the already approved plans for developing the grassy area in front of the metro entrance.

Steps need to be taken to educate taxi drivers as to where the taxi stand is located as well as informing commuters of the stands location.

The Metro Workgroup also recommends a local loop bus service. The bus would start at Takoma Metro and travel around in a loop, servicing the neighborhoods within a certain radius from the metro on the Washington, DC and Maryland sides, but not covering routes already serviced by metro and ride-on buses.

More research needs to be done. These could be modeled after very successful loop buses, which run in places like Silver Spring and Bethesda. We would need to talk with the officials who organized these loop buses and work from their models. Perhaps we could get a grant or have local businesses contribute if the bus were to stop at shopping areas as well. Or this may be something for which WMATA would be responsible. Also, a suggestion was made for Takoma and Takoma Park to start their own joint taxicab service.

Problem: Information is power. Informed decisions sometimes have the ability to keep a person safe. A reoccurring theme throughout of study was a personal aura, the way a person carries himself or herself, could protect from crime. If a person is wandering around, unsure of his or her surroundings and potentially lost, he/she is less likely to have a confident stance. It is important to make information available.

The Takoma Metro has not utilized the space it has to post information. Maps are in awkward spaces, only Maryland Ride-On bus schedules are displayed outside the station, Station Managers are not educated on the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Metro Workgroup proposes:

Metro placing signs within their property clearing pointing out the direction to Maryland and the direction to Washington, DC. This would be paid for by WMATA. “Historic” type signs, off metro property, giving directions to certain landmarks, such as “Takoma Park Old Town Shopping” “Takoma Theater” etc. Merchants or local organizations would most likely pay for this.

Bus route maps posted at all corresponding bus shelters. Metro responsibility.

Educate the Station Managers on the community and surrounding area. Could be something one of the organizations, such as Plan Takoma, takes on. Leave a stack of pamphlets, which has information on the neighborhood and a map so that the managers can hand those out to visitors who request directions or information about Takoma DC and Takoma Park.

Place local crime reports provided by and maintained by Lieutenant Robert Melan, on the backside of the bus information board located directly in front of the Takoma Metro entrance. Display map of the local area, donated by Brigitte Anders-Kraus, next to the crime report so people can view these side by side, enabling them to make informed decisions about their route.

Problem: METRO Grounds The Takoma Metro is ugly and not well designed. WMATA recently erected a chain link fence around the Kiss and Ride parking lot. We are suggesting the fence come down, as it does not increase safety, as it presently exists. The access tunnel for handicapped people, which leads to the elevator, is dark and scary.

The Metro Workgroup proposes adding extra lights in the tunnel. We would also suggest repositioning the camera so that it is at the far end of the tunnel

looking out, rather than at the entrance of the tunnel looking in. And we propose a community mural in the tunnel and on the wall under the bridge, much like we see at other Metro stations, such as Silver Spring and U Street Cardozo.

With the camera situated the way it is in the tunnel, someone could be mugged or attacked right at the entrance of the tunnel, and the Station Manager would never have a chance to be alerted to it. We understand that the cameras do not have videos in them. We understand that the Station Manager does not always view the monitor. However, the mere fact that the camera is placed there may make someone stop and think before they act. It could be a deterrent

Students from local schools could paint scenes from Takoma and Takoma Park. Along with brightening up the tunnel and the space under the bridge, it will create pride in their community. When people are involved in the creation of something positive in the community, they are less likely to be destructive in that community. This proposal has the potential to have very long lasting and far-reaching effect.

Perhaps the Takoma Voice could be approached about sponsoring this. Art teachers at the local schools could be approached about getting the word out to the students. Perhaps we could get the local politicians as well as the police from Takoma Park, District 4 and Metro Transit police to help sponsor, help paint, meet the students. Let's put a paintbrush in Mayor William's and Mayor Porter's hand. As we have also learned through our research, the best resources we have are each other and the more people within the community know each other, know the law enforcement, know the elected officials, the safer our community will be. Such events can also contribute to keep "At Risk" kids out of trouble.

Problem: Police. All communities want to see more police presence and to know where to find a police officer if one is needed.

There is already a police substation located in the 7-11 across the street from the Takoma Metro. The Metro Workgroup proposes that the Takoma Park police, DC police and Metro Transit police use the location more often. We understand that police need to be on the streets and not behind a desk, but we would ask that when they are taking a break, getting a cup of coffee or filling in paperwork that they use this substation. Much of feeling safe is a perception and if people feel there is a police presence in the area, it may help.

Police-Community Relations Work Group

Members: *Peter Kovar, Carol Mermey, Gayle Fisher-Stewart, Stephanie Scott-Melnyk; Contributors: Takoma Police Chief Cindy Creamer, Denise Woods, Ray Whitfield, Regina Page*

GENERAL FINDINGS: The relations between Police and the community are often dysfunctional, largely because of mutual misunderstanding.

This misunderstanding presents itself in a variety of ways (or symptoms), including perceptions by the community that

- Police sometimes don't respond quickly enough;
- Police don't always inform residents of neighborhood crimes; and
- Police don't interview neighbors immediately after crimes have been committed.

After discussing these matters at considerable length within the work group (which includes a representative of the Takoma Park, MD Police Department), and with outside experts, including law enforcement personnel, the work group concluded that, while these and other criticisms (or symptoms) may have validity in some cases, they are also a result of incomplete understandings by the community and the Police of each other's roles and responsibilities. These misunderstandings lead to misperceptions, along the lines of the "symptoms" described above. For example, police may not be able to inform communities about neighborhood crimes because of technological, staffing or budgetary problems. Similarly, police may not respond quickly because people call them for matters that fall outside the direct responsibility of the police.

A consistent theme that emerges when these issues are explored in more detail is that communication between and among the communities and the police forces is inadequate. The work group thus took as its primary goal, the idea of developing ways of improving communications. This need to improve communication falls into three broad, overlapping categories:

- communication between police and communities;
- communication between police departments in different jurisdictions (primarily Takoma Park, MD and Takoma, DC, but also the Metro police and other law enforcement entities); and
- communication among communities, with a particular focus on neighborhood associations.

Although communication problems that affect police-community relations exist in Takoma Park, MD and Takoma, DC, they do so to varying degrees, and potential solutions in each jurisdiction may therefore vary. However, there are certain consistent themes that seem relevant to both jurisdictions. In addition, because the Task Force was formed to explore ways of reducing crime across jurisdictional boundaries within the neighborhoods close to the Takoma Metro station, many of the problems that have been identified, and the recommendations for possible improvements that are detailed below, focus, of necessity, on cooperative actions between the two communities, or components of the two communities, including neighborhood residents, police departments, elected officials, community organizations, etc.

Recognizing that some elements of the task facing the Task Force are beyond the scope of such a group (e.g. creating jobs, ending poverty, developing Cold Fusion), the police-community relation's task force identified specific aspects of the relationship that a task force of this kind could reasonably address, and then developed specific recommendations for addressing them. The recommendations are short, medium and long-term, and include suggestions that the communities can achieve on their own, others that can be achieved with the cooperation and involvement of the police, and still others that require some level of governmental involvement (whether in the form of funding or other commitments). When possible, the work group also identified specific groups or individuals that would have primary responsibility for implementing the recommendations, in the event the communities endorse the recommendations.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS:

As described above, the Task Force and the work group found that poor communication was often the root of difficulties in the area of police-community relations. Among the more specific examples are the following:

1. There are not enough institutionalized forums for communication between
 - a. Police and community members, especially outside of the regular Police Service Area (PSA)¹ meetings that take place in Takoma, DC;
 - b. Police departments, across jurisdictional lines and between and among detectives and PSAs;
 - c. Neighborhood associations, especially across jurisdictional lines.

2. Residents often feel uncomfortable interacting with police. They may feel that their concerns are not taken seriously, and they may not know what to do if they are dissatisfied (i.e. ask to speak to a supervisor). People often do not see the human side of police officers and, as a result, are intimidated.
3. Residents feel they don't have enough information about
 - a. crimes that happen in their communities;
 - b. the best ways of preventing crime;
 - c. How to use the police most effectively (see also #2 above); and
 - d. Who is responsible for the physical condition of areas that can relate to public safety (shrubbery, lighting, abandoned cars, litter, etc.)?
4. Residents lack confidence in and information about 911 and 311 systems. In DC, people often call 911 for non-emergency purposes because they don't know about 311 and its purpose. In Maryland, people who call 911 don't know if their calls will be answered by dispatchers in DC or Maryland (and, if the call is answered in Maryland, whether the dispatcher is in Takoma Park or elsewhere in Montgomery County). This problem is exacerbated by the fact that many people use cell phones, for which it is more difficult to determine the location from which the calls are made, leading to greater difficulty in ensuring that the calls are routed to the appropriate jurisdiction.
5. Police feel the public doesn't understand enough about the ways they do their jobs and what police can and cannot do for the public.
6. Not all neighborhoods have functioning neighborhood associations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

General: The recommendations developed by the work group fall into three broad areas: Improvements in systems for dissemination of information about specific crimes; Improvements between and among police and law enforcement entities; and Improvements in interactions between police and the community.

Responsibility for implementation of these recommendations would be shared, depending on the specific tasks, by existing governmental and police officials and members of the community. In the case of Takoma Park, MD, it is anticipated that the Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee would play a key role. In all cases, it is anticipated that, to the extent possible, Takoma Park, MD and the Takoma, DC area, would implement the initiatives described below jointly.

- Improve the systems for dissemination of information about specific crimes, as close to real time as possible. Making improvements in this area would enable people in the community to have a better understanding of various trends in criminal activity, and variations and similarities between crime trends on both sides of the border, and make it more likely that members of the community will be more aware of specific criminal activity that may affect them (e.g. upswings in the incidence of car thefts, muggings near the Metro Station, door-to-door scams, etc.).
- This would be helpful to the police also, because members of the community would have a better sense both of what the police departments are facing and of how individual crimes they may have experienced fit into the larger patterns. In addition, residents would be more aware of how to avoid crime, and when to report suspicious activity.

Specific recommendations:

- Survey existing e-mail mechanisms on both sides of border and explore institutionalized ways of knitting them together to ensure that the information is timely and comprehensive, and consistently reaches the target audience. In order to achieve this goal, the communications experts employed by the municipal governments should play a lead role, though members of the community should also be involved (there is clearly technical expertise within the community, as the Takoma Alert list was set up fairly quickly by members of the community for minimal cost).
- Ensure that crime data gathered by police is provided as quickly as possible to the various community list serves, with a minimum of work for the police staff. As in #1 above, implementation of this recommendation would involve both members of the police forces and members of the community.

- Develop and expand on non-email systems for disseminating information. This could, for example, include regular use of the PEN newsletter and similar neighborhood newsletters. The PEN newsletter is a bimonthly, community-based, volunteer run publication written by and for Maryland residents who live in the neighborhood between Philadelphia, Carroll, Eastern and Piney Branch. There is also a newsletter with crime information that is distributed in the Takoma, DC area on a regular basis. Another option would be following the phone tree/e-mail model used on Sycamore Avenue in Takoma Park, MD to strengthen information dissemination systems at the street or smaller neighborhood level. On Sycamore, the residents have developed an email list for dissemination of important information, and several residents have agreed to get in touch with those few residents of the street who are not on the Internet. Thus, it is possible to rapidly disseminate information to all residents of the street. Additional options would include giving the neighborhood watch/orange hat patrols some responsibility for distributing information on important or significant local crimes or crime trends (though probably not comprehensive information), and working with the Metro sub-group and others to develop ways of posting crime information at the Metro stop, and, conceivably at other locations in “downtown” Takoma Park, MD and at appropriate locations in Takoma, DC.

2. Improve communication between and among various levels of police and various law enforcement jurisdictions. There is an obvious overlap here with the work of the inter-jurisdictional sub-group, but it is clear that a central aspect of improving relations between the police and the community is getting the inter-jurisdictional communication to a point where the community can be reasonably confident that the necessary level of sharing of information is taking place. However, there are some aspects of this that are not inter-jurisdictional. For example, looking into the possibility of getting cell phones for intra-departmental use (as well as inter-departmental use). The concern here is that officers in both the Takoma Park, MD police force and the DC police force have made it clear that using cell phones can be an effective communications option within forces. Unfortunately, budgetary constraints make it difficult to ensure that cell phones are widely used within the two departments.

Improve direct interaction between police and community. In some ways, this

may be the most important element of the work group's efforts. These interactions happen on several different levels: telephone contacts between members of the community and dispatchers or others in police stations; "on the street" contact between community members and police; periodic community meetings on specific topics attended by police and members of the community; regularly scheduled meetings (like our task force, PSA meetings, Takoma Park Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee, etc.). We should strive to improve all of these interactions.

Specific recommendations:

- Enhance dispatcher-community interaction. Consider additional training for dispatchers that involve discussions with the community, possibly in a community forum setting. Implementation involves police-community cooperation, but there is a necessity for the police forces to "buy in" to this recommendation.

- "Train" community members to better understand the role—and limitations—of police. Send out periodically (perhaps twice a year like leaf collection info. sheets) summaries of where and who to call for basic law enforcement information, possibly in the form of fliers or refrigerator magnets. This would include not only information such as numbers and names for non-emergency calls, and identifying information on sectors or PSAs, but also some basic information on non-police matters (e.g., who to call about abandoned cars, litter in parks, shrubbery trimming, street lights out, animal control problems, etc.). Municipal officials would play a key role in implementation of this recommendation. In addition, community newsletters and cable television could also be used to disseminate this information. There would obviously be some costs associated with preparing at least some of these materials, although members of the community working on a voluntary basis would also have a role.

- Encourage More Community Policing. The work group recommends continued follow up on the Takoma Park, MD community policing forum and initiation of a similar forum in Takoma, DC, at least in the neighborhoods nearest to the Metro

Station. This recommendation would require buy-in by the DC police, and it is unclear to what extent the department's support would be forthcoming. In addition, there are costs associated with mounting such a forum, though, in the case of the Takoma Park, MD forum, some of the costs were covered by the federal government's COPS office, and a similar cooperative effort could probably be undertaken in the case of DC.

- Continue our own Task Force meetings, perhaps on a monthly basis, but with an eye toward discussing specific, pre-determined issues at each meeting. Requires a willingness on the part of community members to continue the process, as well as finding a place to continue holding the meetings, and ensuring that the police forces and governmental officials find the meetings useful.
- Expand the neighborhood safety contact program in Takoma Park, MD, and initiate such a program in Takoma, DC, ultimately tying the two programs together in some appropriate fashion. The safety contact program, established under the aegis of the Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee, involves the designation of one or more individuals in specific neighborhoods or streets who serve as liaisons between residents and police. This recommendation would require buying into the concept by DC police, and would also require some volunteer activity.
- Urge the formation of neighborhood associations in affected areas that don't currently have them, and then work on connecting them with each other and police so that there is a capability to exchange information rapidly. Whether this recommendation succeeds will depend on what the neighborhoods want.
- Encourage the police to participate more in various neighborhood events and meetings (relates to #3 above) while being mindful of not wanting to take the police away from their basic law enforcement activities. Police departments would need to buy into this and find the time for officers to actually participate.

- Improve publicity about PSA and Sector² meetings and try to ensure that the public is represented at these meetings. Police and community should be meeting more regularly to exchange information. May need to develop regular meetings in Takoma Park, MD and better publicize existing meetings in Takoma, DC.
- Look into expanded use of hand held devices, police cruiser-based communications devices, and other technological improvements, such as cell phones, that will help get police out of stations and into communities, and possibly out of cars and on foot or bicycle beats. Obviously, there is a cost associated with this recommendation, and, particularly at a time when, at least in DC, there are currently reductions taking place in funding for this sort of technology, relevant officials should be encouraged to seek grant funding to cover some of the costs.
- Increase staffing levels. Consistent with existing budgetary constraints, efforts should be made to fill all existing vacancies on the police forces as rapidly as possible. In addition, given the fact that the process of identifying and training recruits can take many months, consideration should be given to filling open positions with temporary or part-time officers—possibly retired officers.

¹ According to the DC government's website, "The District of Columbia has 83 police service areas (PSAs), seven police districts, and three regional operations commands (ROCs). The PSA is the smallest geographical subdivision of the city; its size and shape usually follow neighborhood and natural boundaries. Every resident lives in a PSA and every PSA has a team of police officers and officials assigned to it." See <<http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/districts/districts.shtm>>. For a handbook on PSAs, see <<http://mpdc.dc.gov/news/pubs/psaroles.shtm>>.

² Sectors, applicable to Takoma Park, MD, are geographical divisions established by the Police department for covering the city. There are three sectors, each of which is subdivided into three beats.

Inter-jurisdictional Issues Work Group

Members: *Tara Liebert, Andrea Merritt-Bagwell, Anthony Wright, Stephen Coleman, Lt. Ronald Thomas (MPD-PSA 401), Joan Malloy (Walter Reed), Joseph Goings (DC Councilman Fenty's office)*

Problem: Crime information is not shared on a systematic basis between DC's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and neighboring Takoma Park, MD's Police Department (TPPD). For example, MPD and TPPD command and patrol officers and investigators do not know about crimes that have occurred across their borders in a timely, regular manner.

Recommendation: Have MPD Police Service Areas (PSAs) 401/405 and TPPD share crime blotter and patterns of crime and suspect information, on a schedule to be determined most beneficial to both departments.

Strategy for implementing recommendation: MPD PSA 401 and 405, and TPPD Command Staff will meet and decide on the method (fax and/or e-mail), the content ("part one" serious crimes only, versus all crimes), the regularity of the crime information exchange (daily, weekly, monthly), and the appropriate recipients of this information (all patrol officers, investigators only, etc.).

Problem: Joint Border Patrol, where MPD and TPPD patrol officers ride with each other along the border of Takoma, DC and Takoma Park, MD, is not occurring with regularity, due to officer shortages and for other possible reasons.

Recommendation: Have MPD and TPPD patrol officers ride with each other on a regular basis, at intervals to be determined by the police departments, to get to know each other, have a familiarity with all of the beats near the jurisdictional border, and share information in order to prevent and solve more crimes.

Strategy for implementing recommendation: MPD and TPPD Command Staff meet and set up regular scheduling of border patrol. If officer shortage is an issue, it requires creatively problem solving to address the shortage.

Problem: MPD and TPPD officers are not able to communicate with each other in a fast, easy way while on patrol.

Recommendation: Find ways for MPD and TPPD patrol officers to communicate directly with each other via two-way pager cell phones, or other

technology determined to be efficient and workable, while on patrol so they can both prevent and solve crimes in progress. Also explore the possibility of linking computer systems and regular radios.

Strategy for implementing recommendation: MPD and TPPD Command Staff, Patrol Officers, and appropriate technology professionals meet to determine the best way to communicate, raise funds, and purchase necessary equipment.

Problem: MPD and TPPD Command Staff, Patrol Officers, Investigators, Prosecutors, and Probation Officers do not meet on a regular basis to share information.

Recommendation: Have all the above parties commit to a regular schedule of meetings and follow-up communication to share leads, suspects, and crime pattern information.

Strategy for implementing recommendation Lt. Jude Waddy, MPD, volunteered to coordinate regular meetings.

Problem: Takoma, DC and Takoma Park, MD residents lack a joint forum to share safety concerns and strategies for proactive crime prevention.

Recommendation: Conduct joint PSA (MPD) and Beat (TPPD) meetings to discuss border crime issues to foster a united community working to prevent crime.

Strategy for implementing recommendation: Discuss with MPD and TPPD and residents to determine feasibility.

Problem: Walter Reed Army Medical Center and MPD need to continue their good working relationship by instituting regular meetings and/or create another forum of communication.

Recommendation: Create a system that continues regular communication regardless of personnel changes at both departments.

Strategy for implementing recommendation: Cpt. Solberg, MPD, is coordinating schedule.

Problem: Officer time constraints and staff shortages are precluding many of the inter-jurisdictional information-sharing efforts identified above.

Recommendation: Set up a serious recruitment effort to hire patrol officers, possibly by hiring a recruiter to attract and hire officers. Investigate alternative

ways to keep officers from wasting many hours in court when they could be on the streets patrolling, possibly by following the Prince George's County example of charging suspects directly at the police station.

Strategy for implementation recommendation: Meetings between MPD/TPPD Command Staff and their respective human resources and fiscal officers to discuss creative approaches to staffing.

Workgroup on Personal Safety

Member: *Katie O'Neill*

Introduction. When deciding on issues for the task force to address, personal safety was originally a separate category. However, the group as a whole realized that personal safety issues cut across all topics and each group should deal with personal safety as it is related to their area. However, the finished report did not address the personal safety issues as fully as anticipated. The report below was written after the other reports were finished.

Definition. Personal Safety refers to what each of us can do as individuals and groups to help decrease danger. In times of heightened danger, such as the community felt after the many crimes in the Takoma METRO area, people search for a form of empowerment. No one wants to feel like a victim, and the better prepared and informed people are, the safer they feel.

The four issues listed below are community-based protections.

Proposals

Call Boxes. The City of Takoma Park, Maryland, currently has four Call Boxes located on residential streets. They are located at 7200 and 7300 blocks of Cedar Avenue, 7200 Block of Maple Avenue and 7051 Carroll Avenue. The idea behind Call Boxes is when a citizen observes a crime, is a victim of crime or otherwise needs police assistance the phones are visible available and easily accessed with a direct line to the police station.

Problems The original boxes were installed on a low budget several years ago. The community at that time was concerned with aesthetics, so Boxes were made to blend in with the environment. Apparently, this was too successful, because people were unaware that these Boxes exist. A second problem was the reliability of the Call Boxes. They did not always work and apparently were not tested on a regular basis.

Solutions: Cindy Creamer, Chief of Police for Takoma Park, MD has consulted with the Deputy Chief at the University of Maryland at College Park regarding their Campus Call Boxes. Their most recent installation is “A Talk-a-Phone”. Chief Creamer says the City of Takoma Park is planning on updating the existing Call Boxes (No estimated date was given)

Recommendations: (Call Box Research by Tom Carrico) The Call Boxes should be updated, upgraded, tested by the Takoma Park Police Department and/or Neighborhood Patrol or Orange Hat Patrol on a regular basis. The location of the boxes should be publicized well within the community. If the residents do not know that the boxes exist, they cannot be helpful. Similar boxes should be installed in Takoma DC. Crime data should be studied to determine if new Call Box locations in Takoma Park are warranted.

Neighborhood Patrol/ Orange Hat Programs

Community Policing Conferences/Practices (www.cops.usdoj.gov) this is a comprehensive look at the communities' responsibilities, options, education and police relationship. Many people in the community are unaware of the different resources available to them, when to use which resource. For example, people complain that the police do not respond immediately when a car is stolen, even though the car has been gone for several hours and the owner has no leads. What the owner needs is a police report for insurance and possible recovery. This should not be reported to 911, but rather the non-emergency number. The community needs to be made aware of the resources.

The conference also recommended study of neighborhood crime issues. . Example: Muggings and street robberies of persons walking from Takoma METRO station along Cedar Avenue. Offenders – who are they? Why do they offend? Can we do anything about them? Potential victims – who are they? Why are they walking? Where are they walking? Can they be protected or made less attractive?

- Location – What makes the location attractive? How can we make location less attractive (A crime triangle – Public Safety Advisory Committee Takoma Park)?
- Practical information such as: videotape house, all property, and serial numbers and keep the tape and other important documents in a separate location. This way, if your belongings are stolen, you have identifying proof and will receive your property back, if recovered by police.
- The three “M’s” Ministering – looking out for each other: bringing newspaper and trash or recycle bins in, so it is not obvious that nobody is home. Monitoring - evaluation of systems, objective of police.
- Mentoring – Mentor each other; pull more people into the process. Use well lighted well-trafficked areas, make sure trees and shrubs are cut back, so as not to block lights and not to provide good hiding places.

Recommendation: There should be widespread use of advertising of frequently offered Community Oriented Policing Conferences in Takoma Park, MD and Takoma, DC as well as combined conferences. The importance of advertising these conferences and to gather people from all segments of the community, especially youth, cannot be over estimated.

Self Defense Courses: Feeling better prepared to deal with any dangerous situation, which may occur, offers a sense of empowerment.

Recommendation: Community sponsored self-defense courses should be offered on a regular basis, should well be publicized and encouraged.

Fiscal Issues Work Group

Members: *John Meyer, Roderick Green*

THE PROBLEM: **Crime is the problem, and fighting crime costs money.**

THE SOLUTION: More police and more anti-crime measures are the answers. The other work groups are outlining the extra measures (lighting, taxis, call-boxes, etc.) that they would like to see implemented. The “Fiscal Issues” group attempted to pinpoint where the money for these extra crime-fighting measures might come from in the midst of today’s nationwide economic crunch. The group also attempted to better understand the appropriate procedures to follow for tapping into this money. Following are some specific recommendations and questions to be considered by the DC and Takoma Park, MD authorities, followed by some supporting documentation.

QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The \$64,000 question: Obviously, there are increases in departments that always need more money—no one would argue with giving more money to education, public transportation, or employment services. But in a time when DC police are dealing with terror threats, IMF demonstrations, anthrax, and a general rise in crime, how does DC justify cutting the police budget one percent while boosting funding for things like the City Administrator, the Motion Picture office, and Zoning?
- The DC budget, under “Economic Development,” lists three different departments that seem to tackle the same issues:
 - Dep. Mayor—Planning & Economic Development
 - Office of Planning
 - Local Business Development - Why all three?
- There are currently four vacancies in the Takoma Park, MD police force, out of an authorized sworn officer force of 41 officers. Why? What will it take to fill those vacancies? What is the money allotted for their salaries being spent on when their positions are vacant? How many vacancies are there in the DC police department and what explains these vacancies?
- The authorized number of sworn officers for Takoma Park, MD has not changed in three years, and the last change was a reduction. Why? What has happened to the crime rate in those three years? What has happened

to the population total?

- Out of 41 authorized officers in Takoma Park, MD, three are in training, four are injured, four are special detectives, and four don't exist at the moment. That leaves 26 officers to handle 24 regular-duty shift slots, including Folk Festivals, vacations, sick days, etc. Is overtime costing more at the moment than four newly hired officers would cost?
- While the costs-per-officer and the percentages of police budgets eaten up by salaries are reasonably close between the two jurisdictions, there is a wide chasm between them when it comes to the number of officers per resident (and correspondingly, the amount of public safety money per resident). Obviously, this has a lot to do with the fact that DC is a large, urban area with more issues, problems, protests, etc. But their budget doesn't take federal dollars into account (which presumably would further widen the gap), and it leads one to wonder why Takoma Park, MD is seemingly left with a much greater per-officer burden than the District?
- How much money does the federal government kick in to DC's public safety budget? is that total less than the amount that the District spends on motorcades, IMF protests, and terrorism threats/attacks against federal institutions within the city? If so, why?
- Does Takoma Park, MD get federal funds for public safety and/or crime prevention in the form of the oft-touted "100,000 more officers on the streets" program or in some other way?
- Finally, it would require considerable research to locate and find out a large number of the line items in the DC budget. Therefore, it was difficult to know what items to question and/or recommend for cuts (to accommodate more public safety spending). The following line items from the DC budget's "Expenditure Reduction Options" might be good places to start looking for places to make deeper cuts.

DC CONTACT INFORMATION FOR KEY PROJECTS (FUNDING FOR LIGHTS, LANDSCAPING, COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT, AND BUS TRANSPORTATION IS ALREADY PROVIDED WITHIN THE DC CITY BUDGET):

Damon Harvey, DC DOT, #202-962-2556—In charge of current study of Metro bus program for Takoma Park area. Results expected by December 2003.

Miranda McGee, NEXTEL, #1-800-226-8078, ext. 3983—Has information about Nextel phone program for I-30sx phones at special community rates so that police can network.

DC Lights and Landscaping Service, #202-727-1000—give location of problem area when calling.

Appendix

Washington DC & Takoma Park, MD Quick facts & budget analysis

Safety Initiatives

Safety Resources

List of Participants, Takoma Task Force on Crime Issues

Washington DC Quick Facts (Compiled 2002)

Population (according to 2000 US census): 572,059 residents

Using DC Mayor's Revised Fiscal Year (FY) 03 Budget Figures:

Entire DC Budget: \$3,627,615,000

Entire DC Public Safety Budget: \$597,521,000 (16.5% of DC budget)

Entire DC Police Budget: \$295,127,000 (49.4% of PS budget; 8.1% of DC budget)

The Entire DC Budget includes following Categories: Government Support & Direction, Economic Development, Public Safety & Justice, Public Education, Human Services, Public Works, Finance & Others.

Public Safety category includes following subcategories: Police, Fire, P&F Retirement, Corrections, National Guard, DC Emergency Management, Judicial Dis., Judicial Nomination, CCRB, Adv. Sentencing Commission, Correctional Information Council, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Chief Medical Examiner, Office of Administrative Hearings.

Notes: We do not have a confirmed figure for the authorized number of sworn DC police officers, but a proposed "Expenditure Reduction Option" in this year's budget is to keep the number to 3,700. The same "Option" calculates the savings from nixing extra 100 new officers to be \$5,000,000. This means that entry-level police cost \$50,000 each per year in DC. If we assume that police with more seniority/pensions bump the average cost per officer up to \$65,000 (comparable to Takoma Park's figures), then 3,700 sworn officers cost \$240,500,000 in police salaries and benefits alone, or 81.5% of the entire DC police budget.

2003 public safety budget equals: \$1,044.51 per DC resident. \$515.90 per DC resident. \$161,492.16 per authorized officer \$79,764 per authorized officer.

There is one authorized sworn officer for every 155 Takoma, DC residents. The number of vacancies is unknown.

Takoma Park, MD Quick Facts (compiled 2002)

Population (according to the Takoma Park website): 17,299 residents

Using Actual FY 2000 figures from Takoma Park website: Entire 2000 Takoma Park budget: \$11,558,380; Entire 2000 Public Safety budget: \$3,773,728 (32.6% of Takoma Park budget), Entire 2000 police budget: Unknown

Using Chief Creamer's figures from this year's budget: Entire 2003 Takoma Park budget: Unknown; Entire 2003 public safety budget: \$4,329,323. Entire 2003 police budget: approx. \$3,500,000 (80.8% of public safety budget)

The Entire Public Safety Budget includes the following subcategories:

Office of the Chief, Operations Division, Administrative Services, Communications Division, Support Services Division.

Notes:

Takoma Park is authorized to have 41 sworn police officers. This number has not changed since 1999, when it was cut from 42. Included in the 41 are four investigators who follow up on major crimes. Aside from them, the regular rotation is four groups of six officers working 12-hour shifts. At the moment, there are four vacancies, three officers in training, and four officers on injury status. Each officer costs roughly \$65K-\$70K per year, including benefits. With no vacancies, salaries and benefits alone cost \$2,835,000, or 81% of the entire police budget. With all of that said, it is difficult to find fault with Takoma Park's budget. Public Safety was boosted \$1.4 million (or 60%) in the six years between FY 94 and FY 00, and if Chief Creamer's numbers for next year's budget are accurate, then the nine-year increase since FY 94 is almost 100 percent. During the aforementioned six-year period, the city's entire budget increased less than 30%. The only potentially questionable item worth mentioning is the rather vague "Non-Departmental" item, which received \$466,000 in FY 00 and was slated for \$820,000 the following year.

Next year's public safety budget equals: Next year's police budget equals: \$250.26 per Takoma resident. \$202.32 per Takoma resident. \$105,593.24 per authorized officer \$85,365.85 per authorized officer.

There is one authorized sworn officer for every 422 Takoma residents. With the current vacancy rate, there is one sworn officer for every 468 Takoma residents.

**Postscript for FY 2003 Washington DC
Comparing the DC Mayor's Revised FY 03 budget to the FY 02 budget**

There are 84 line items listed, and of those line items:

3 are new budget items, which did not exist in FY 02.

2 are eliminated in the FY 03 budget.

37 are increased from the previous year; and

42 are decreased from the previous year.

Under the Department heading PUBLIC SAFETY & JUSTICE:

POLICE is decreased 1%;

POLICE AND FIRE RETIREMENT is decreased 8%; and

DC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT is decreased 7%

While at the same time, the following line items are slated for increases:

<p><u>GOVERNMENT SUPPORT & DIRECTION</u> CITY ADMINISTRATOR 40% CUSTOMER SERVICE OPERATIONS 18% CFO 13%, ANCS 11%, TECHNOLOGY 8%, COG 8%, ELECTIONS 2% <u>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u> DEPT. OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES 56% APPS & REVIEW 14%, MOTION PICTURE & TELEVISION 8%, ZONING 6% LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT 5% BOARD OF REAL PROPERTY 3% PUBLIC SAFETY & JUSTICE CORRECTIONS 9%, JUDICIAL DIS. 6%, CCRB 4%, JUDICIAL NOMINATION 3% CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER 1% <u>OFFICE OF ADMIN. HEARINGS NEW ITEM</u> PUBLIC EDUCATION STATE EDUCATION OFFICE 13% DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS 8% UDC SUBSIDY 8%</p>	<p><u>CERTIF. OF PARTICIP. NEW ITEM</u> <u>HUMAN SERVICES</u> DC ENERGY OFFICE 108% OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS 19% LATINO 13%, RECREATION 7% CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES AGCY. 5% OFFICE OF VETERAN AFFAIRS 4% ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER AFFAIRS 3% DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH 1% <u>MEDICAID RESERVE NEW ITEM</u> <u>PUBLIC WORKS</u> PUBLIC WORKS 20% DMV 15%, WMATC 8%, WMATA 4% <u>FINANCE & OTHERS</u> SHORT TERM INTEREST 100% WORKFORCE INVESTMENT 12% DEBT SERVICE 5%</p>
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Safety Initiatives & Safety Resources

Item		Contact Information
Neighborhood Patrols	Orange Head Patrol Takoma, DC. Volunteers are needed	Julie Schor 202- igschor@yahoo.com
	Orange Vest Patrol Takoma Park, MD Volunteers are needed	Listed are 4:B.F.Gilbert, West PEN (Cedar Avenue), East PEN (Willow Avenue) & WACO
	West Pen (Cedar Avenue)	Rita Marth 301-589-3685 rmarth@attglobal.net
	East Pen (Willow Avenue)	Linda Carlson 301-270-3181 Lindaacarlson2@comcast.net
	WACO	Elizabeth Keyes 240-475-5053 elizabethkeyes@starpower.net
	B.F. Gilbert	Kate Stewart 301-270-8090 katestewart@brspoll.com
Driver Service	The following Takoma DC establishment offered Rides home from the METRO Station if needed	Takoma Station Tavern Address: 6914 Fourth Street NW Washington DC 20012 Telephone 4 – 8 pm David Boyd 301-404-3948 8 – 2 pm Mel Floreza 202-737-6060
		BP Gas Station Address 7000 Blair Road NW Washington DC 20012 Telephone: 202-812-7850
Takoma, DC Anti Graffiti Office	This office assists residents and business establishments to remove graffiti	DC Anti Graffiti Office Solid Waste Management Administration DPW. Dennis Butler 202-645-0804 Dennis.butler@dc.gov John Hume, Chair Main Street Design project OTBA 301-270-5635 designcommittee@mainstreettakoma.org
Anti Graffiti, Takoma Park	Takoma Park requires each resident to report and remove graffiti within 1 wk after notification	Report to Takoma Park Police Department 301-270-1100
Web Site	Alert Takoma – a site devoted To instant crime alert	http://yahoogroups.com/group/AlertTakoma
Web Site	Safe Takoma – a group Working towards	http://yahoogroups.com/group/SafeTakoma
Roscoe Button	Safety Proposal so residents of Takoma and Takoma Park recognize each other and can assist each other	Not active at present

List of Participants, Takoma Task Force on Crime Issues

Name	Name	Name
Andrea Merritt-Bagwell	Andy Donlan	Anthony Wright
Bob Melan	Brian Kleinbord	Brigitte Anders-Kraus
Carol Mermey	Charlotte Stichter	Chief Cindy Creamer
Cynthia W. Johnson	Denise Woods	Dodie Butler
Doug Payton	Eugene Martin	Evangeline Lotter
Faith Wheeler	Gayle Fisher-Stewart	Joan Malloy (Walter Reed)
John Meyer	Joy Austin-Lane	Katie O'Neill
Kristen Hansen	Lou Lieb	Lt. Ronald Thomas
Mari Johnson	Mattie Jones	Paul Montague
Peter Kovar	Ray Altevogt	Ray Whitfield
Regina Page	Roderick Green	Sgt. Neal Frebowitz
Sgt Robert Kirkpatrick	Shawn Ruffing	Stacy Mills
Stephanie Scott-Melnyk	Steve Coleman	Tara Libert
Thomas (Tom) Black	Thomas Maxwell	Tim Gronau
Tom Carrico	Vera Carley	

Report compiled in 2006

Katie O'Neill, Stacy Mills, Robert Guldin, Joy Austin-Lane, Wolfgang J. Mergner
