

Evaluation of the New Britain Weed and Seed Program

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OVERVIEW OF THE WEED AND SEED PROGRAM

Summary: The New Britain Police Department received federal funding from 1997 through 2005 to implement the Weed and Seed program in high crime neighborhoods.

The Federal Weed and Seed Initiative

Operation Weed and Seed is a federally funded initiative created by the U.S Department of Justice. The Executive Office for Weed and Seed (EWOS) has provided funding to more than 250 communities since its inception in 1991. The primary goal of Operation Weed and Seed is to rid high crime neighborhoods of violent offenders (weeding) while implementing numerous social service programs (seeding), which will essentially improve the overall quality of life for citizens living in such communities. The concept of Weed and Seed is based on the principle that once violent offenders are removed, the city can begin to revitalize. Social, economic and housing improvements should deter violent offenders from returning, as a result creating an overall safer community. In order to receive federal funding for a Weed and Seed program, local police departments must adopt this two-pronged approach to rid the city of violent crime while providing members of the community with a safe place to live and work.

Weed and Seed in New Britain

The New Britain Police Department was first awarded federal Weed and Seed funding (\$175,000) in 1997 and continued through 2005. The total amount of federal funding was \$ 947,528. The initial funding went to the Broad Street area. In 2001, New Britain's Weed and Seed area was expanded to include the Arch and Oak Street neighborhoods. In accordance with the Federal Weed and Seed initiative, New Britain's program centered on weeding activities (gun abatement, street level drug dealing, and neighborhood blight) accompanied by seeding activities (community policing, programs for youth and seniors, supporting the Neighborhood Revitalization Zones, housing, employment, and economic development).

Prior Evaluation of New Britain's Weed and Seed Program

An evaluation of the initial two years of the Weed and Seed program found that New Britain's efforts were consistent with the mission set forth by the Executive Office of Weed and Seed¹. The evaluation also found that total calls for service, drug calls for service, property felonies and personal crimes were different in the Weed and Seed site compared to the entire jurisdiction. Calls for service in the Weed and Seed neighborhood increased during the first part of the Weed and Seed program but sharply decreased throughout the two year period. This increase was most likely due to the placement of additional community police officers on Broad Street, creating a more positive perception of law enforcement. This reduction in calls for service suggested that the overall rate of crime on Broad Street had decreased.

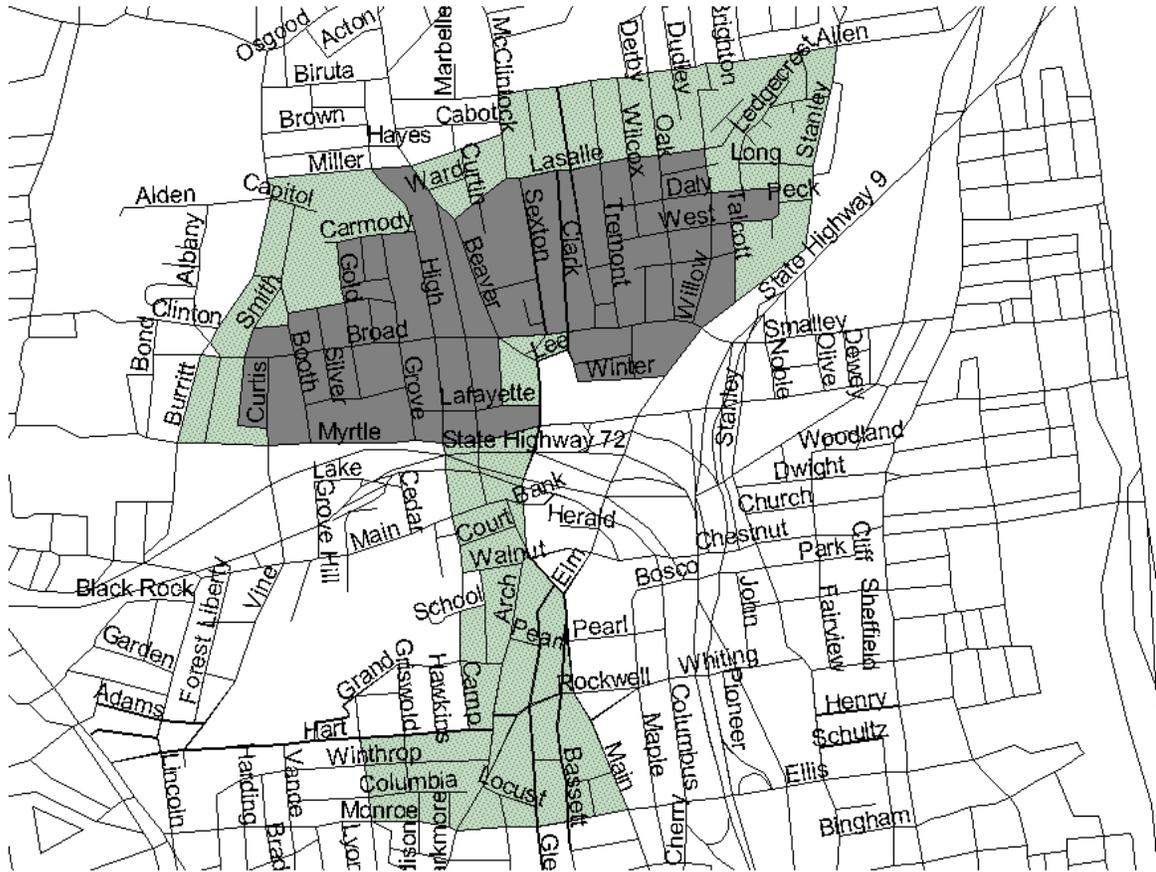
Scope of the Report

This report summarizes the primary activities of the New Britain Police Department's Weed and Seed program and provides an assessment of its' affects on citizens' calls for police assistance inside and outside of the Weed and Seed area.

¹ Cox, Stephen M. (1999). Final Report of the New Britain Police Department's Weed and Seed Program. New Britain, CT: New Britain Police Department.

MAP OF THE NEW BRITAIN WEED AND SEED AREA

Summary: The initial Weed and Seed area encompassed a 47 block collection units² out of 748 block collection units for the entire city. In 2001, the Weed and Seed area was expanded to include two additional neighborhoods (57 more block collection units).



- Weed and Seed Neighborhoods 1997-2000**
- Weed and Seed Neighborhoods 2001-2005**
- Non Weed and Seed Neighborhoods 1995-2005**

² Block Collection Units are the smallest collection unit used by the U.S. Bureau of Census.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary: The New Britain Police Department implemented the Weed and Seed program in accordance with the objectives of the federal initiative. Calls for service data reveal distinct patterns between the initial Weed and Seed area, the expanded area, and the rest of the city that suggest the Weed and Seed program had significant positive effects on decreasing crime.

Conclusions

1. The New Britain Police Department successfully implemented all aspects of its Weed and Seed program.

First, there was very little turnover in the Weed and Seed coordinator position, with the initial coordinator being in the position until February, 2006. This coordinator was a nonsworn member of the New Britain Police Department who maintained an office at a police substation inside of the initial Weed and Seed area. She was instrumental in most of the Weed and Seed activities and provided Weed and Seed funding to several community organizations to provide prevention and intervention programs.

Second, the steering committee was very active for the majority of the program and met on a regular basis during the first five years of Weed and Seed funding. The steering committee consisted of representatives from the New Britain Police Department, Mayor's Office, other criminal justice agencies (both state and federal), and community organizations.

Third, the New Britain Police Department was fully invested in the community policing model in the Weed and Seed area. A major activity was the placement of police substations that were staffed by community volunteers and were offices used by police officers in the Weed and Seed area.

Fourth, the New Britain Police Department worked collaboratively with federal, state, and local agencies (criminal justice as well as noncriminal justice agencies) along with community organizations. These relationships ranged from working with the Chief State's Attorney's Office on blight reduction to the Greater New Britain Community Development Corporation to provide a tenant training program.

2. An analysis of calls for service in the Weed and Seed areas and throughout the rest of New Britain found that calls for violent crime, drug crime, and nonviolent crime significantly decreased after the implementation of Weed and Seed.

Following the inception of Weed and Seed, calls for violent crime dropped 33% (from 1996 to 2005) in the initial area and decreased 36% in the expansion area (from 2000 to 2005), while decreasing 21% throughout the rest of the city (from 1996 to 2005).

Drug calls decreased by 76% in the initial Weed and Seed area after the implementation of Weed and Seed (1996 to 2005), decreased by 48% in the expanded area after the expansion (2000 to 2005), and 51% throughout the rest of the city from 1996 to 2005.

The number of calls for nonviolent crime decreased 47% in the initial area from 1996 to 2005, decreased 6% in the expansion area following expansion (2000 to 2005), and decreased 30% citywide from 1996 to 2005).

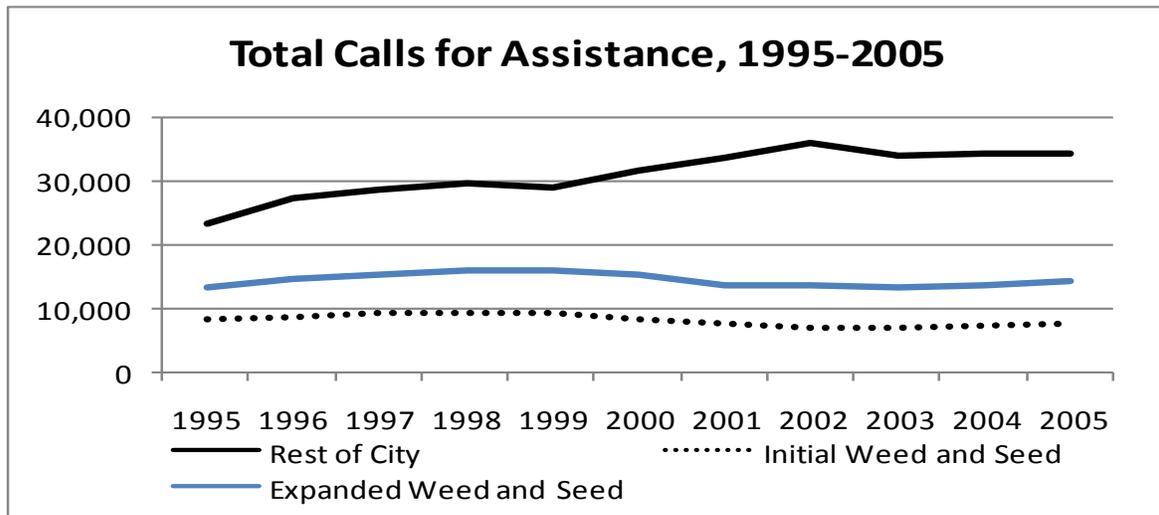
EVALUATION FINDINGS³

Summary: Calls for service data was used to assess the effects of the Weed and Seed program. There were distinct patterns for the Weed and Seed areas for total calls for service, violent crime, drug crimes, nonviolent crimes, and public order issues

Data and Method

Over 800,000 citizen calls for police service data were collected from the New Britain Police Department from January 1, 1992 to December 31, 2007. For the evaluation, we use calls for service from January 1, 1995 through December 31, 2005. Calls for service data were used for two reasons. First, it allowed for more detailed analyses for criminal activity in the Weed and Seed area and the rest of the city. Second, it was a more exact measure of police activity over and above the Uniform Crime Reports (which is based on police arrests and specific categories of crime reported to the police).

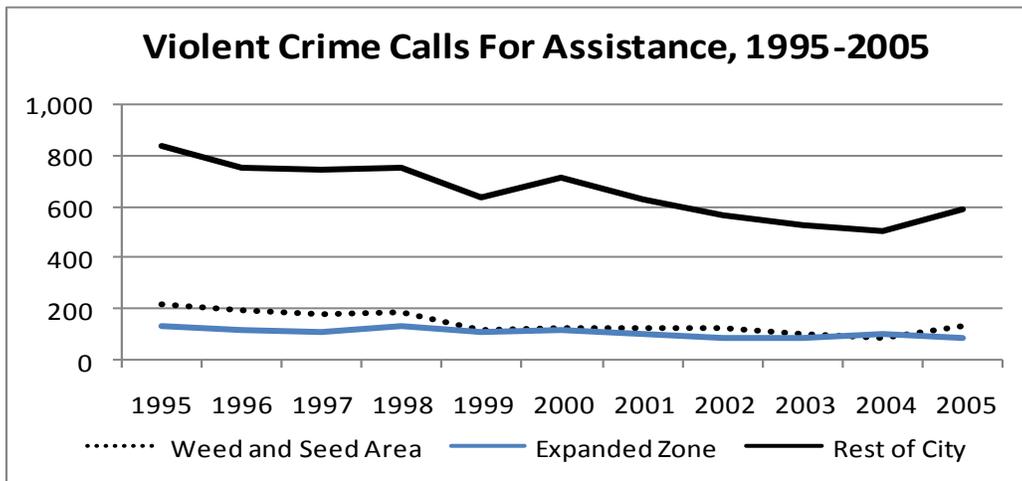
Total Calls for Assistance



In comparing total calls for service in the initial Weed and Seed area, the expanded Weed and Seed area, and the rest of New Britain, total calls for service remained relatively stable in the initial Weed and Seed area and the Expanded Weed and Seed area after the 1997 onset of the program while they increased for the rest of the city. A similar pattern occurred after the expansion of the Weed and Seed area in 2001. Calls for service decreased in the two Weed and Seed areas in 2001 and 2002 while increasing throughout the rest of the city.

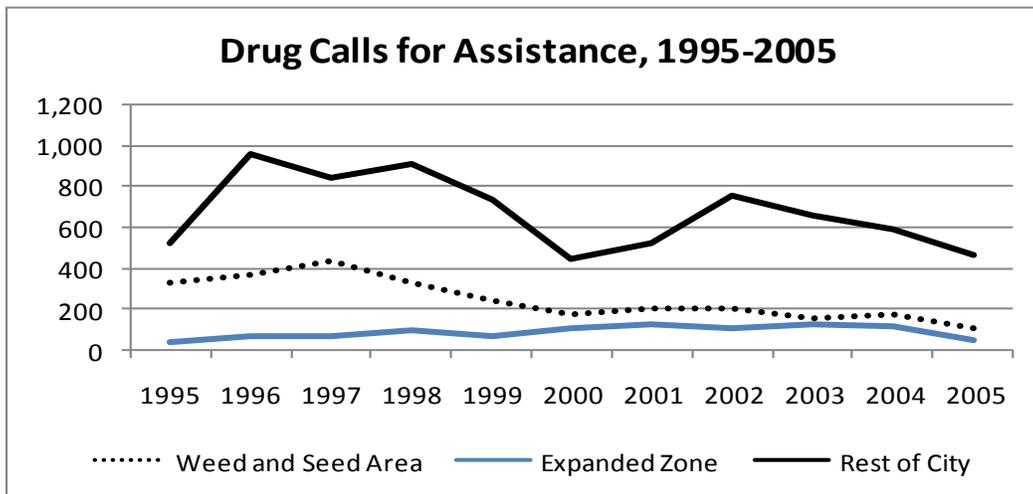
³ See the Appendix for the data tables that were used to create each graph.

Violent Crime Calls for Assistance



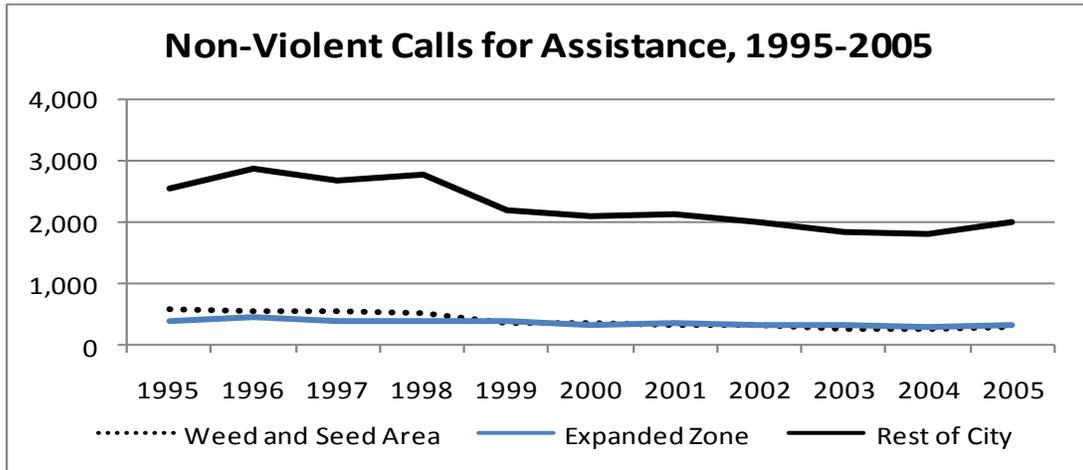
Citizens' reports of violent crime increased during the first year of Weed and Seed in the initial and expansion areas but decreased the following year and remained lower throughout the program. However, decreases in violent crime in the two Weed and Seed areas appear to be related to an initial increase in violent crime throughout the city. Following the inception of Weed and Seed in the original area, calls for violent crime dropped 33% (from 1996 to 2005). A 36% decrease was seen in the expansion area (from 2000 to 2005), while violent crime throughout the city decreased 21% from 1996 to 2005.

Drug Calls for Assistance



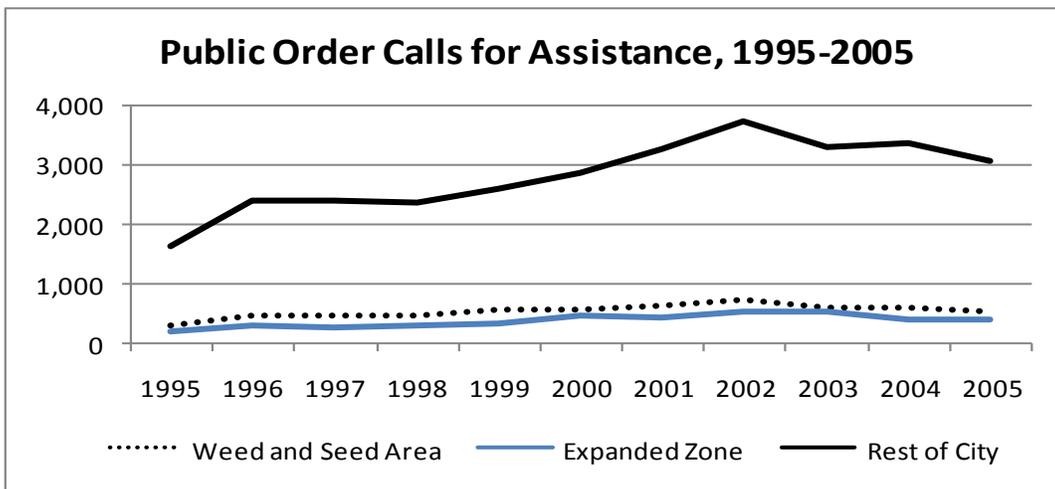
Citizen calls for drug offenses sharply decreased in both Weed and Seed areas after the 1997 implementation and the 2001 expansion while increasing throughout the city. Overall, drug calls decreased by 76% in the initial Weed and Seed area after the implementation of Weed and Seed (1996 to 2005), decreased by 48% in the expanded area after the expansion (2000 to 2005), and decreased 51% throughout the rest of the city from 1996 to 2005.

Non-Violent Crime Calls for Assistance



Nonviolent crime calls had a slightly different pattern than the violent and drug calls but also shows a positive effect of Weed and Seed funding. Calls decreased at a higher rate in both the initial and expanded Weed and Seed areas after the implementation of the program while increasing throughout the city. Overall, the number of calls for nonviolent crime decreased 47% in the initial area from 1996 to 2005, decreased 6% in the expansion area following expansion (2000 to 2005), and decreased 30% for the rest of the city (from 1996 to 2005).

Public Order Calls for Assistance



Public order calls for service commonly consist of barking dogs, loud parties or teenagers, abandoned cars, etc. As crime decreases, citizens tend to call the police more often for less serious activities. So, we would expect public order calls to increase in the Weed and Seed areas since violent and drug crimes have decreased. In the two Weed and Seed areas, public order calls increased steadily throughout the funding but at a similar rate as public order calls throughout the rest of the city.

IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW BRITAIN'S WEED AND SEED PROGRAM

Summary: The New Britain Weed and Seed Program consisted of three major components. Each component was implemented in accordance with the goals and objectives of the federal Weed and Seed initiative.

The mission of Weed and Seed is to promote comprehensive strategies to reduce crime and revitalize communities. In order to receive federal Weed and Seed funding, municipalities must adhere to three objectives. First, cities must collaborate with various criminal justice and social service agencies in order to adequately provide the community members with economic, social and housing improvement programs. Second, federal, state and local funding should be concentrated within the high crime area in order to effectively target violent crime. Third, Weed and Seed sites should encourage community participation and involvement so that they can aid local law enforcement in identifying known violent offenders in the community as well as help local law enforcement determine the community's social service needs. Cities receiving federal funding were required to provide Weed and Seed activities across four areas: community policing, prevention, intervention and treatment, law enforcement, and community revitalization.

Weed and Seed Coordinator

A Weed and Seed coordinator was hired to organize and manage all programs and services. This person organized the majority of Weed and Seed activities and was able to provide funding for various services in the Weed and Seed area. In addition, the Weed and Seed coordinator attended many of the NRZ (Neighborhood Revitalization Zone) meetings to better understand their concerns and provide Weed and Seed assistance when possible. The coordinator also met with other neighborhood groups, which may not have representation on the NRZ committees. The Coordinator assisted in locating external funding for programs that have demonstrated their benefits so as to continue the operation of the program. Throughout the program, New Britain had one permanent Weed and Seed coordinator, and a temporary coordinator from February 2006 until the end of the program.

Steering Committee

The Executive Office for Weed and Seed requires Weed and Seed sites to have Steering Committees that are responsible for creating the program's goals and objectives, provide oversight on implementation, and assess program achievements. Members of the Steering Committee are stakeholders in the community who have input on decisions that affect the Weed and Seed target area. Stakeholders typically represent the police department, other city agencies, the private sector, community organizations, and neighborhoods in the Weed and Seed area.

The core members of New Britain's Steering Committee consisted of members from the police department, Office of the U.S. Attorney, Mayor's Office, Connecticut Chief State's Attorney's Office, Neighborhood Housing Services of New Britain, North-Oak Street and Broad Street Neighborhood Revitalization Zone presidents, the New Britain Boys and Girls Club, two business owners, and two residents. Steering Committee meetings were held on a monthly basis throughout the project period.

The federal Weed and Seed initiative required programs and services in four distinct categories. These are community policing, prevention, intervention, and treatment, law enforcement, and neighborhood revitalization. The New Britain Weed and Seed program consisted of myriad of programs and services across these four categories.

Community Policing: Community policing is believed to be the “bridge” between weeding and seeding by establishing trust between the police and the community. Police officers serve as neighborhood problem-solvers and the community helps to identify crime patterns and offenders.

- **Anti-graffiti group of New Britain-** Provided partnering programs to encourage graffiti reduction. Weed and Seed provided volunteers and time to paint over graffiti and also provided an alternative art program.
- **CSO (Community Service Officers) of New Britain-** The Weed and Seed Coordinator participated in the community service officer program as a community service officer. CSO's provided volunteer services to the police department and assisted in non-criminal policing.
- **New Britain Police Department-**
 - Provided officers for after school programs
 - Operated DEFY (Drug Education for Youth) mentors
 - Served as safeguard mentors
 - Sponsored community police initiatives
 - Organized block watches
 - Provided security surveys
 - Coordinated all law enforcement efforts
- **Police Explorers-** Weed and Seed worked with explorers on community crime reduction events provides support for explorer projects.
- **Substation Volunteers-** Weed and Seed supported volunteers operating within the police substations by providing support services.
- **TRIAD of New Britain-** Collaboration between law enforcement and seniors to reduce senior victimization and increase senior awareness of public safety issues.

Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (PIT): *Intended to reduce the risk factors that are known to cause violence, crime and drug abuse in the target neighborhoods. Prevention, intervention and treatment programs are often coordinated through “safe havens” in the target neighborhoods*

- **Boys and Girls Club of New Britain-** Weed and Seed partnered with the club to bring youth activities, computer training and mentoring skills to residents in the target area.
- **Central Connecticut State University-** Worked within the Weed and Seed site to familiarize social work students with community organizing. CCSU provided students to work with the residents on activities and helped to organize focus groups to identify community needs.
- **Human Resources Agency of New Britain-** Provided support services, including a “Free To Grow”/Head Start program to the Weed and Seed area.
- **Mayor’s Public Safety Council-** Weed and Seed coordinator served on the council which granted funds to grassroots community crime reduction initiatives, such as crime prevention through environmental design and target hardening.
- **Neighborhood Housing Services of New Britain-** Weed and Seed partnered with Neighborhood Housing Services to provide landlord education to property owners as a means of increasing responsible renting practices.

- **New Britain Board of Education-** Partnered with Weed and Seed to address concerns of high school dropout rate and youth school based after school programs.
- **New Britain Parks and Recreation-** Department of Parks and Recreation provided activities and resources for children within the target area through activities as well as support programs.
- **New Britain Senior Center-** Collaborated on senior and inter-generational activities.
- **Police Athletic League of New Britain (PAL)-** PAL provided organized sport related programs to the youth in the target area.
- **Smalley Academy-** Weed and Seed partnered with Smalley Academy to provide services and information to parents of children in the target area. Weed and Seed actively supported an annual family education day at the school.
- **V.I.B.E Athletics-** Provided a youth mentoring program to the Weed and Seed site. This program included sports and computer skills as well as job internships for older teens through Aetna.
- **Greater New Britain Community Development Corp-** Provided tenant training program and support.

Law Enforcement: *the goal of law enforcement was to identify arrest, prosecute, convict and incarcerate serious violent offenders operating in the target area.*

- **State Attorney's Office-** Nuisance Abatement, (Multi-Agency Response to Community Hotlines) Programs, and support services when necessary.
- **State of Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles-** Kept COPS officers informed on the status of all city parolees, included COPS officers in home visits and provided youth awareness through Parole Reaches Out Program.
- **Gun Abatement-** Directed police patrols in gun crime hot spots. This goal of this program was to reduce gun related crimes by seizing illegal firearms.
- **Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) -** New Britain Police Department set up a liaison with the DEA to work on several high profile drug cases in the city.
- **Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) -** Investigated armed robberies that occurred throughout the city to assess the usage and sale of illegal firearms. Utilized their "e-trace" computer system to locate the illegal firearms.
- **Drunk Driving Enforcement:** The new Britain Police Department routinely set up DUI checkpoints throughout the city.
- **Traffic Enforcement-** After the police department received numerous complaints regarding loud music and speeding cars, police officers that pull a vehicle over for loud music will confiscate the stereo until the defendant shows up for court.

Neighborhood Revitalization: *Assist in restoring neighborhoods so that police and social services remain intact once Federal funding has been expended*

- **Arch Street Neighborhood Revitalization Zone-** Residents in the Arch Street NRZ worked with the Weed and Seed Coordinator to identify community needs and develop strategies to address them.
- **Broad Street Neighborhood Revitalization Zone-** The Weed and Seed Coordinator worked extensively with the Broad Street NRZ residents to address crime reduction and neighborhood restoration strategies.

- **City of New Britain-** The Weed and Seed Coordinator worked with the city to create crime prevention strategies, encouraged resident participation in revitalization, and developed new methods of economic growth.
- **North-Oak Neighborhood Revitalization Zone-**The Weed and Seed Coordinator worked with NRZ residents to reduce crime and promote neighborhood revitalization.
- **Urban Oaks Organic Farm-** W&S partnered with Urban Oaks to create businesses that brought both jobs and training to the target area.
- **Willow and Oak St Neighborhood Association (WOSNA)-** An organization created out of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's New Approach Drug Elimination Grant. WOSNA partnered with Weed and Seed to address crime reduction in the North-Oak Street and Arch Street neighborhoods.

NEW BRITAIN'S INITIAL NEED FOR WEED AND SEED

Summary: The Broad Street neighborhood was selected as the first Weed and Seed area because of its' high amount of crime and blight.

In 1995, the Weed and Seed area consisted of the Broad Street neighborhood (the North-Oak Street area was added in 1997) due to high incidences of gang and narcotic-related violence. The region was afflicted with poverty, unemployment and deteriorated housing. Broad Street was a city and state recognized NRZ, or Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, therefore a needs assessment of the area had been conducted to determine the assets, needs and issues of priority for the area⁴. The statistical information on poverty, housing issues and educational attainment showed to be consistently higher in the Broad Street area when compared with the city of New Britain before Weed and Seed commenced¹.

The Broad Street neighborhood encompassed residential, commercial and mixed-use structures within its 28-blocks¹. It had an average poverty rate of 22.8% with a per capita income averaging only \$11,557¹. Most of the area's housing was aged with many single lots containing more than one multi-family unit¹. This overcrowding resulted from a boom in manufacturing in the area during the 40's, 50's and 60's¹. However, once factories began to close in New Britain, the area was left with vacant factories and homes, empty apartments and decreased property values¹. The racial make-up of the area was quite diverse at the start of the Weed and Seed initiative. A 1990 census indicated 66.5% of the population was white, 2.9% African-American, 29.1% Hispanic and 1.5% indicated "other"¹.

The North-Oak Street neighborhood had been heavily infested with drug crime and gang activity prior to the initiation of Weed and Seed and had been recognized as one of the more active locations in the city of New Britain for drug-related offenses. The New Britain Police Department (NBPD) tirelessly executed arrest and search and seizure warrants, as well as executed numerous sting operations in response to citizen complaints, resulting in numerous arrests and the confiscation of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, guns and money. However, the drug dealers removed from the streets were simply replaced by new ones. Several large-scale, multi-jurisdictional investigations were executed involving the NBPD, Connecticut Statewide Narcotics Task Force, Connecticut Chief States Attorney's Office-Gang Prosecution Unit and the FBI. While these efforts would prove successful, the progress was always short-lived. Street-level drug sales continued. It seemed clear that this single-pronged approach to dealing with crime was time-and-time again proving fruitless.

⁴ Application for Weed and Seed Official Recognition, New Britain, CT

APPENDIX A

Description of New Britain

New Britain Connecticut, with a population estimated at 71,538 in 2006 and a population density of 5,321 people per square mile, it sits just 12 miles from Connecticut's state capital, Hartford. The Weed and Seed target area encompasses the Broad, North Oak and Arch Street neighborhoods⁵. These neighborhoods are located on the eastern edge of New Britain's downtown business district and cover 1.19 square miles¹. The Weed and Seed area is the most densely populated and poorest area in the city. The median household income for the Weed and Seed area is only \$25,497 with a per capita income of only \$15,605¹. The city of New Britain's median household income in 2005 was \$39,303. The adult population within the Weed and Seed area without a high school diploma encompasses 23.66%¹ of residents. It is a culturally diverse population with 48.5% of residents being of Hispanic ethnicity¹ in 2005 and 42.48% in 2000 when the city of New Britain's Hispanic population was only 26.8% in 2000⁶.

Description of Weed and Seed sites

The Weed and Seed area includes eight public schools: one high school, one middle school, and six elementary schools, with a total population of approximately 3,500 students. Slightly more than five percent of youth are enrolled in private schools. The graduation rate for the 2003-2004 school year for the high school in the Weed and Seed area was 78.2 percent, slightly higher than the Public School System's overall graduation rate of 74.8 percent.⁵ The Department of Education's grading system for school districts and individual schools placed the Public School System in "Academic Watch" status, meaning that the district as a whole met only five of the 18 criteria.

Race and Gender

	Weed and Seed Sites	Entire City
Race		
Caucasian	57%	69%
African American	12%	11%
Native American	0	0
Asian	1.5%	2%
Hawaiian	0	0
Other/Mixed	12.3%	18%
Gender		
Male	48.6%	48
Female	51.4%	51.4%

⁵ Weed and Seed Data Center website <http://www.weedandseeddatacenter.org/sitedetail.aspx?sitekey=0141S00>, retrieved December 5, 2007

⁶ <http://www.fedstats.gov/qf/states/09/0950370.html>, retrieved December 5, 2007

Housing and Education

	Weed and Seed Sites	Entire City
Total Population 2005	15,678	71,538
Median Age	32.4	33.9
Percent under age 18	26.12%	24.17%
Total Housing Units:	7,473	31,164
Owner occupied	16.22%	42.69%
Renter occupied	71.72%	57.31%
Vacant	12.06%	8.36%
Family Household:		
Age 18+ population	11,582	54,249
Educational Attainment:		
Total population age 25+	9,299	
No high school diploma	23.66%	2,429
High school graduate	34.81%	14,809
Percent of HS graduate with college degree (Associate, Bachelor or Graduate Degree)	12.95%	6.90%
Median Household Income	10,112	25,497

APPENDIX B

Calls for Assistance 1995-2005

Violent Crimes Calls for Assistance

Year	Weed and Seed Area	Expanded Zone	Rest of City
1995	215	132	842
1996	196	120	754
1997	177	108	745
1998	189	135	756
1999	116	110	642
2000	127	121	717
2001	123	104	631
2002	127	88	571
2003	107	90	528
2004	89	106	506
2005	132	89	593

Drug Crimes Calls for Assistance

Year	Weed and Seed Area	Expanded Zone	Rest of City
1995	330	42	531
1996	370	68	962
1997	433	74	847
1998	329	96	912
1999	237	68	741
2000	178	107	449
2001	200	123	522
2002	199	110	763
2003	158	127	665
2004	177	121	591
2005	106	56	467

Non-Violent Calls for Assistance

Year	Weed and Seed Area	Expanded Zone	Rest of City
1995	579	391	2,531
1996	552	453	2,858
1997	544	397	2,650
1998	520	396	2,752
1999	357	390	2,189
2000	357	330	2,075
2001	324	370	2,134
2002	330	312	1,986
2003	270	333	1,840
2004	280	290	1,801
2005	292	311	1,988

Public Order Crimes Calls for Assistance

Year	Weed and Seed Area	Expanded Zone	Rest of City
1995	307	212	1,647
1996	471	305	2,402
1997	472	285	2,403
1998	466	312	2,366
1999	552	339	2,608
2000	566	459	2,881
2001	625	439	3,271
2002	725	513	3,734
2003	611	524	3,314
2004	586	391	3,379
2005	529	389	3,074

Total Calls for Assistance

Year	Weed and Seed Area	Expanded Zone	Rest of City
1995	8,062	13,326	23,472
1996	8,605	14,698	27,252
1997	9,073	15,224	28,678
1998	9,121	15,705	29,564
1999	9,152	15,844	29,105
2000	8,281	15,219	31,770
2001	7,375	13,673	33,495
2002	6,797	13,649	35,899
2003	6,787	13,248	33,969
2004	7,259	13,511	34,195
2005	7,466	14,340	34,138