



There are places in the United States where crime and violence are virtually nonexistent. In such neighborhoods, a Halloween prank could make the local headlines. Unfortunately, there are also many neighborhoods that are just the opposite—violence is all too common, the streets are not safe, nor are people’s homes. There are places where the police are not trusted. Embattled police can find themselves isolated and distant from the community they serve, all too often quickly resorting to force in resolving disputes.

Crime and violence are constant fears in these neighborhoods. Mistakes are being made by all parties involved. People are dying. These violent stories make the national headlines almost daily. In such places, many people live in fear and mistrust of each other, as well as the police. The use of the criminal justice system is seen as ineffective, selective, racist, and unjust.

At first glance, you might think that the solution to crime and violence is the implementation of new policing strategies and police reform. Although efforts on both fronts are helpful, even the most highly trained and respected police forces cannot solve the problems of crime, violence and distrust on their own.

The dominant strategy to address crime and violence in our nation has been to arrest the “bad actors.” However, putting people in jail and giving them a criminal record is one of the surest ways to make life-long criminals. As it turns out, a high incarceration rate combined with other social problems generates a never-ending supply of criminals. With this approach we have filled our prisons.

Just as the police cannot solve these problems on their own, the neighborhood cannot solve problems of crime and violence on their own (see Appendix I about the false dichotomy between the needs of police and those living in the neighborhoods they serve). Community-based organizations, local churches, community-development agencies, government institutions, and anti-violence organizations are also important contributors. However, even the efforts of all these parties combined can be undermined by unsupportive broader cultures and subcultures that undermine their work.

The problems of violence and crime are complex cultural problems that are not easily remedied by the hard work of either the police or the neighborhood organizations. The neighbors and police need to work together to create a new local culture that dramatically reduces crime and violence. The Safer Together Solution (STS) is a step-by-step and inclusive approach to creating cultures that work against crime and violence. The STS helps interested parties identify, commit to, and foster new norms and values at the community level.

Each community is unique, and so are its needs. One important strength of the STS approach is that it helps neighborhoods identify their specific needs and provides a structure by which to address them. This approach builds neighborhood capacity. It does so by bringing together residents, congregations, businesses, neighborhood organizations, local police, and other stakeholders to find common ground. The goal is to achieve both short-term solutions and to bring about sustained change.

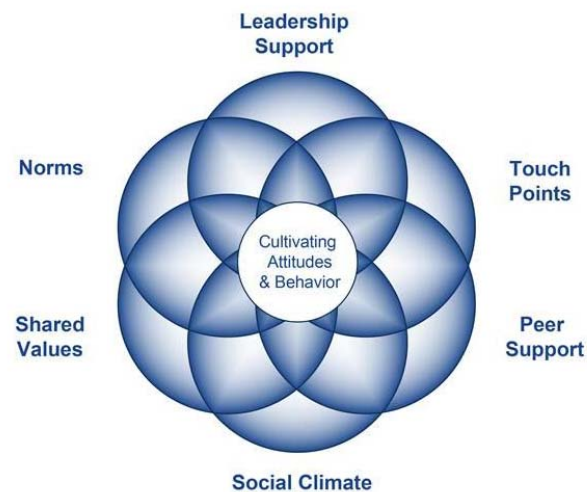
Over time, the STS culture change process can be applied to new neighborhood challenges. It builds on a sound foundation of prior community development, violence reduction initiatives and policing strategies. It is an evidence-based approach based on fundamental psychological and sociological research and practice. This collaborative process empowers

neighbors and police to dramatically reduce crime and violence by creating a vibrant and peaceful local culture that is based on mutual respect and dignity.

**By cultures, we mean** complex webs of social influences on attitudes and behavior. The word “culture” has its origins in the farming concept of cultivation. Just like farmers, groups and organizations can work to align social influences so that good ideas such as non-violence and neighborhood policing can take root and grow. Anthropologists and social scientists have identified many social influences on attitudes and behavior, such as shared values, cultural norms, modeling, traditions and rewards.

The following graphic illustrates six primary building blocks of culture addressed by the STS:

## Building Blocks of Culture



### Social Climate

Social climate is both the glue and the lubricant within a culture. It is similar to collaboration, morale, teamwork, synergy, and overall atmosphere. There are three primary climate factors, as illustrated here:

## Social Climate Factors



1. A **sense of community** exists when people trust one another, care for one another in times of need, feel a sense of belonging, and get to know one another.
2. A **shared vision** exists when people see that their values are represented in how things are done, feel inspired about what the community is doing, and see how they contribute to its overall success.
3. A **positive outlook** exists when people recognize each other's strengths and accomplishments, have a "can do" attitude, tackle difficult challenges with enthusiasm, and have fun together.

***Culture Question:** What can we do to strengthen all three social climate factors? (See Appendix II for a list of social climate norms that could be established within police departments)?*

## Shared Values

While we often think of values on a personal level, cultures also have values. They are sometimes called priorities. Typical values in successful neighborhoods include priorities such as safety, health, economic security, social justice, and innovation. It is STS' goal to build consensus regarding non-violence and crime prevention as critical neighborhood priorities.

Sometimes value conflicts emerge and undermine the culture. For example, some people see support for law enforcement as competing with support for social justice. STS will identify and foster win-win solutions for these perceived tradeoffs.

***Culture Questions:** What are our primary neighborhood values and how might they need to be strengthened or changed? How will we demonstrate our commitment to these values? What values conflicts need to be resolved, and how can we go about that?*

## **Norms**

Norms are social expectations about attitudes and behavior. They are often recognized as “the way we do things around here.” Norms influence everything from language, to safety practices, to how we work. They are often invisible forces because we get used to them. This is called *acculturation*. Hopefully, your neighborhood has many norms that support non-violence. An example would be a norm for de-escalating violence during arrests. Another helpful norm would be for neighbors to assist police in their efforts to learn about criminal activity.

***Culture Questions:** What are our norm strengths, and how will we keep them going now? What new norms are needed? Which norm changes will be the focus of our STS efforts now? (See Appendix III for a list of possible norm goals).*

## **Touch Points**

Touch points are informal and formal day-to-day influences on behavior and attitudes. There are a lot of them, and listed below are 14 primary touch points. (See Appendix IVI for definitions of the 14 primary touch points).

### **Cultural Touch Points**

1. Resource Commitment
2. Built Environment
3. Communication and Information

4. Rewards and Recognition
5. Relationship Development
6. Learning and Training
7. Modeling
8. Push-back
9. First Impressions
10. Traditions and Symbols
11. Story and Narrative
12. Roles and Responsibilities
13. Goal Setting and Planning
14. Laws and Policies

Touch points are already hard at work in your neighborhood. The STS goal is to better align them with culture change goals of reduced crime and violence. It is not necessary to shift all the touch points to strengthen a new norm or value, but rather address enough touch points to reach a tipping point in these day-to-day influences.

***Culture Questions:** What are our current touch point strengths, and how will we maintain and build upon them? Which touch points will we realign to reinforce our new norm goals?*

### **Peer Support**

Peer support is assistance provided by coworkers, friends, family and neighbors. It comes in tangible forms such as the sharing of equipment and assisting with childcare. It also comes in the form of emotional assistance, such as offering sympathy and being present. Peer support is good for both the person giving support and the person receiving support. Providing peer support raises self-esteem and builds someone's social network. Those receiving peer support are much more likely to maintain desired changes.

***Culture Questions:** Do people have sufficient opportunities to help one another? How can we strengthen the quality and quantity of peer support provided by coworkers, friends, family, and neighborhood groups?*

## Leadership Support

Leaders at all levels—elected officials, managers, and peer leaders—can lower barriers and enhance policies and practices that support a reduction in crime and violence. If you are reading this, it is likely that you are one of these leaders. There are six primary ways leaders influence the culture:

1. **Sharing the vision**, including what the new safer culture will look like, why it is important, and how people can contribute to the effort.
2. **Serving as role models** for desired change.
3. **Building a plan for culture change**.
4. **Using culture-building activities** to strengthen the social climate within the neighborhood.
5. **Aligning touch points** with STS goals.
6. **Tracking and celebrating** individual, group, and neighborhood achievements.

*Culture Questions: Who will lead this culture initiative? How will we empower leaders to perform the six leadership responsibilities?*

## Systematic Culture Change

As mentioned previously, the word “culture” originated from the word *cultivation*. As such, there is a time for preparing the soil, planting the seed, nurturing the growing crop and harvesting. Successful culture change efforts adopt a similar step-by-step approach. The culture-change process involves four steps:

1. **Pick norm goals:** Analyze the current culture and set culture-change goals.
2. **Introduce goals and get buy-in:** Explain what was learned in your analysis and ask people to pitch in.

3. **Align touch points:** Address day-to-day cultural influences such as modeling, training, policies, communications and traditions to support the desired culture.
4. **Track and celebrate success:** Assess progress, improve upon strategies, and celebrate achievements.

### The Culture-Change Process



By adopting this system, the neighborhood can continue to address new challenges as they arise. The needs of a neighborhood always evolve. STS empowers the police and neighbors to set new goals and follow the same process to bring about lasting change.

***Culture Question:** How will we handle each phase of the culture-change process?*

### Outlook

We can no longer live with fear, distrust and broken promises. We want a neighborhood-based solution that keeps us safe and dramatically reduces crime and violence. It's time for our police and neighbors to work together to...

1. Build trust (between neighbors and with the police)
2. Generate transformational, deep and sustained culture change
3. Adopt a scientific step-by-step approach to reducing crime and violence

Although cultures are omnipresent, we are so accustomed to their influences that they become only partially visible. To achieve a non-violent culture, we need to bring these webs of social influences into focus. All six building blocks of culture—leadership support, peer support,



shared values, norms, touch points and social climate—represent opportunities for aligning the culture with non-violence. We need to set culture change goals that address our current needs. We also need to adopt a systematic approach capable of bringing about lasting and positive culture change.

Many neighborhoods are experiencing high levels of violence. The pandemic has accelerated and stressed the bonds needed for creating a safe and non-violent neighborhood. Now is the time to reshape our local culture so that it enhances both individual well-being and neighborhood success. The alternative is an unproductive and unending discord and violence. We need neighborhood cultures that are ready and able to address evolving neighborhood needs. Using the ideas presented herein, you and other community members can co-create the positive cultural environments that you want and need.

## Appendix I: Creating a Win-Win that Addresses the Needs of the Neighbors and the Police

Cultures are often undermined by false dichotomies. A false dichotomy occurs when two good outcomes tend to be viewed as competing with and exclusive of one another. Unfortunately, such a false dichotomy is too often evident in current thinking about policing and the neighborhood safety. The call for defunding police is, in part motivated by this false dichotomy. The issue is equally evident when police request that disgruntled community groups stay out of their business. As the lines are drawn, people are either for the police or for the neighborhood. Instead of collaborators, the parties become adversaries. This perspective makes solutions to crime and violence in the neighborhood very difficult to achieve.

The solution to such a debilitating false dichotomy is to identify a win-win. How could successful police work result from community involvement? Similarly, how could police efforts reduce crime, injustice, and violence in the community? The following table provides ways this win-win solution would be achieved.

### Win-Win Collaboration between the Police and Neighborhood

Actions by the Neighborhood	Actions by the Police
Neighbors assist the police in achieving public safety.	Police seek to use the minimal force necessary when making an arrest.
Neighbors maintain their properties by keeping them clean and well lit.	Police favor assignment of the same officer to the same neighborhoods.
Neighbors meet with the police regularly to identify problems and work together for solutions.	Police seek neighbor input before they implement new strategies and tactics, or when a controversial police action takes place.
Neighbors speak out against and confront threats of violence within their community.	Police communicate with community members as one adult to another with mutual respect.
Neighbors support community health professionals in their efforts to address substance abuse and mental illness.	Police volunteer in the neighborhoods they serve and join community boards.
Neighbors advocate for changing unjust and ineffective laws.	Police collaborate with community members to identify problems and work together.
Neighbors work to reintegrate those convicted of crime or violence.	Officers new to a neighborhood introduce themselves to those who live and work in the neighborhood.  Police communicate about the effectiveness of laws and make suggestions for change.

## **Appendix II: Social Climate Norms**

High morale, teamwork, and trust are essential components of a social climate that supports success within any group. The following norms are particularly important within a police department that seeks to foster an effective social climate.

### **Police Department Norms for Strengthening the Sense of Community**

To get to know one another (more than what job someone does).

To trust one another.

### **Police Department Norms for Strengthening the Shared Vision**

To work in ways that are consistent with personal values.

To recognize that coworkers share values.

To work together in an organized and consistent fashion.

To feel that what the organization and workgroup are trying to achieve is inspirational and worthwhile.

### **Police Department Norms for a Positive Outlook**

To recognize and celebrate one another's achievements.

To have a "can do" attitude.

## **Appendix III: Neighborhood and Police Norm Goals**

Norms are social expectations for how to behave and think. They are sometimes referred to as the building blocks of culture, or “the way we do things around here.” Many norms support non-violence. However, some do not. It is very likely that some norms in the police force and the community will need to change to reduce violence. For example, the norms that worked when police were focused on crime may no longer work when police are primarily first-responders to those experiencing mental health crises.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to change cultural norms. It usually works best to choose only a few norm goals each year. They can be prioritized and updated based on an opinion survey. The following list of sample norm goals can stimulate a conversation about priority norm goals.

### **Norms Specific to Neighborhood Violence and Crime**

Keep the neighborhood looking well kept (by painting buildings, fixing broken windows, and picking up trash).

Know your neighbors (including those living nearby, the officers on your beat, the postal workers, the sanitation workers, clergy, and those working in local establishments).

Welcome new neighbors.

Smile at and greet people in the neighborhood.

Befriend some neighbors with who are different from you (including those who act differently, are of a different age, practice another faith, are of a different race, lifestyle, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, are down on their luck, or are managing an infirmity or illness).

Bring neighbors together for celebrations and fun recreation.

Support local employers’ efforts to pay a living wage.

If you have a gun, practice gun safety (keep it locked up and safely out of reach).

Resolve conflicts with discussions and mediation rather than with yelling, threats and coming to blows.

Intervene or get help when you see household and family violence.

Assist someone struggling with mental illness, financial insecurity, grief or stress.

Help someone to get back on their feet (including crime victims, those overcoming financial setbacks, and those reintegrating into the community after being incarcerated).

Support government and community organizations (donating or volunteer for groups that help people in need).

Provide the police with helpful information useful for solving crimes.

Share knowledge and experience about staying safe in the neighborhood.

Become familiar with community resources available to address mental illness.

Support community policing and neighborhood watches.

Support alternatives to incarceration (such as restorative justice and second chances).

Develop relationships with neighborhood police officers grounded in mutual respect and trust.

Challenge incidences of police misconduct, over aggressiveness, and discrimination (while it is occurring and afterwards).

Know when to call someone other than the police (other medical, community and government organizations that are often a more appropriate choice).

Consider a career in policing to serve your community.

### **Norms Specific to Policing**

Treat all community members with respect (including those in custody, as well as those experiencing emotional or mental health crises).

Get to know community members and their concerns.

Develop friendly and mutually respectful relationships with members of the community.

Use force only as a last resort.

Use techniques that de-escalate the potential for violence.

Assist those experiencing emotional and mental health crises safely and to connect them to support services.

Advocate for changing the underlying conditions that lead to recurring crime and violence.

## Appendix IV: Defining Cultural Touch Points

Cultural touch points are day-to-day influences on attitudes and behavior. They are the mechanisms by which cultures reinforce attitudes and behavior. Touch points can provide follow-through and reduce barriers to success.

The goal with touch points is not to create entirely new mechanisms. This would make the culture too complex. Most of the time, the best strategy is to work with existing influences and modify them to better support the desired culture. Identify those key touch points (out of the 14 below) that are likely to reach a tipping point needed to bring about desired change. The 14 primary touch points are:

- 1. Resource Commitment.** Resources such as equipment, space, time and money help demonstrate a culture's priorities. When barriers exist, they tend to have a resource component. When these barriers are addressed, people find it easier to achieve their goals. For example, if we want community policing in the neighborhood, there should be police dedicated for this purpose.
- 2. Built Environment.** In a neighborhood, the built environment includes outdoor lighting, available parking, public restrooms, and recreational facilities. The goal is to create uplifting environments that nurture positive social interactions and public safety. For example, the neighborhood should be well maintained.
- 3. Communication and Information.** The ways we communicate have certainly changed. Due to the pandemic, in-person, face-to-face communication, the previous gold standard, is now less common. The goal is to increase the quantity and quality of communication related to non-violent behavior, public safety and police work. For example, neighbors would get regular updates on community events and progress in achieving a safer neighborhood.
- 4. Rewards and Recognition.** Cultures set the standard for how rewards are perceived. For many people, major rewards include money, flexible schedules, and recognition. One goal is to develop new ways to honor the efforts of neighbors and police to address public safety. For example, celebrating neighbor-to-neighbor support for assisting those returning after incarceration.
- 5. Relationship Development.** One of the most powerful culture-building strategies is to make positive behavior also an opportunity to build social relationships, collaborations, and friendships. Relationships can also work against culture goals. This would be the case when popular and persistent social activities involve unsafe or criminal practices. An example, would be to offer more afterschool recreational activities to reduce the appeal of gang membership.
- 6. Learning and Training.** People are more likely to do what they feel competent at. We need to mobilize both formal training (via classroom or technology) and informal training to support neighborhood safety. For example, if neighbors are taught how to help those challenged by homelessness, they will be more likely to reach out.

- 7. Role Modeling.** Role models are people whom others admire and seek to emulate. Cultures differ in how someone becomes a role model. It could be because of age, position, social skills, or something else. Ideally, those practicing nonviolent behavior would become visible role models. In contrast, a second strategy would be to lower the visibility of people modeling violent practices. For example, stories could be told about role models who have mediated disputes and resolved conflicts without violence.
- 8. Push-back.** Sometimes push back is spelled out in rules or laws. The goal is to push back against unsafe or violent behavior and to reduce push back for actions that could reduce crime and violence. For example, someone showing road rage would be told by peers that such expressions of violence are unacceptable.
- 9. First Impressions.** Although neighborhoods are different from businesses in that they do not have formal recruitment programs and an orientation, early impressions are important in setting expectations. Onboarding helps new people to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to become part of the neighborhood. For example, a neighborhood could gain a reputation for being safe.
- 10. Traditions and Customs.** Traditions are repeated actions and events that have meaning within a culture. For example, the police and neighbors could co-sponsor regular events such as block parties, cookouts, neighborhood cleanups, and sporting events.
- 11. Story and Narrative.** Most cultures have a story about their founding, purpose and future. Such stories are frequently based on qualities of the founders. The goal is to add efforts to address safety crime and violence to that story. For example, many neighborhoods were originally settled by immigrants fleeing violence and discrimination. The wish to achieve a safe neighborhood is a continuation of that story.
- 12. Roles and Responsibilities.** Police have been designated as having exclusive responsibility for lower crime and violence. In safe neighborhoods, the responsibility is shared by all neighbors including those businesses and organizations that are located in the neighborhood. For example, a neighborhood watch gives neighbors a new role.
- 13. Goal Setting and Planning.** Often leaders such as mayors express their visions for neighborhoods and how they plan to make them happen. In safe neighborhoods, there is increased accountability and follow-through including a time line for progress. Violence and crime and violence reduction needs to become both a part of the vision and the planning process.
- 14. Laws and Policies.** Laws and policies have an important influence on crime and violence. As we learn more, they should be reviewed so that they better support safety and social justice. For example, marijuana use is being decriminalized. As a consequence, thousands of people will not have criminal records.

## **Appendix V: Deliverables Organized by the Culture Change Process**

The STS toolkit provides the resources and training needed during the first year. The toolkit offers support for all four phases of culture change.

### **Phase I: Analysis, Objective Setting and Leadership Development**

Goals for the first phase include assessing the current environment, determining goals for this round of culture change, and leadership preparation.

- STS communication package for informing community leaders (at business, religious, health care, media, and government organizations) about the initiative.
- STS leadership training for those responsible for organizing the culture change initiative at the police department and in the community.
- STS online and in person surveys for measuring culture change priorities.
- STS guide for conducting interviews to refine strategies to align key cultural influences (such as rewards, communication, modeling, and training).

### **Phase II: Engagement**

Goals for the second phase include informing the police and community about results of Phase I as well as enlisting their support.

The STS Workshop and support materials will be geared to specific subpopulations, such as the police department, first responders, and the public. All STS workshops will have three key elements: (1) developing a spirit of cooperation, (2) understanding the current situation, and (3) committing to a personal plan of action.

### **Phase III: Integration**

Goals for the third phase include changing day-to-day operations, policies and practices so that they better support the desired culture change.

A subset of 14 key cultural influences will be aligned with the culture change goals within the police department and in the neighborhood. The goals for Phase III will be determined during Phase I, the initial analysis. The STS package will include examples drawn from previous culture change initiatives.

### **Phase IV: Evaluation and Renewal**

Goals for the fourth phase include measuring progress, determining additional steps that must be taken, and honoring what has been achieved as well as those responsible.

The STS guide will include recommendations for assessing the project impact, celebrating progress, and developing plans for the following year.