

# **Building Bridges: Brick by Brick Travis County, Texas**

**February 28, 2006**

## **Event Summary**

**Prepared by**



**The National Crime Prevention Council**

**In partnership with**



**The Travis County Sheriff's Office**

1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW 13<sup>th</sup> floor  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: (202) 466-6272  
Fax: (202) 296-1356  
Web: [www.NCPC.org](http://www.NCPC.org)

## Executive Summary

For more than 20 years, the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) has helped communities improve quality of life and public safety through comprehensive community planning efforts. In summer 2005, Sheriff Greg Hamilton and the Travis County (TX) Sheriff's Office (TCSO) requested the technical assistance of the National Crime Prevention Council to help develop a comprehensive community planning process in order to strengthen police and community relations in Austin and the surrounding Travis County area. Over a three-month period, a team of NCPC coalition-building experts conducted extensive research and interviewed over 50 leaders across all sectors of Travis County. Four key themes emerged: (1) the need to "cross the Interstate I-35 divide (I-35)," which divides Travis County and the city of Austin into east and west, and challenge tendencies toward racial and economic segregation in Travis County; (2) the fear and lack of trust that African American and Latino/Hispanic residents feel in the presence of law enforcement officers; (3) the need for systems and institutions that protect the safety of police officers while ensuring the safety of Travis County residents; (4) ongoing and reliable education and prevention strategies.

In order to mobilize leaders and key stakeholders across all sectors to address these key issues, a one-day community summit, Building Bridges: Brick by Brick, was held in February 2006. The event was hosted by Mt. Zion Baptist Church in East Austin. More than 115 community members participated, including law enforcement, business leaders, faith-based leaders, community leaders, elected officials, and local university leaders. Participants worked together to discuss and design specific recommendations for improving police-community relations. According to participants' evaluations of the event, it was enormously useful and productive and now serves as a starting point for long-term institutional change.

This event was sponsored by the Faith and Service Technical Education Network (FASTEN). FASTEN offers informational resources and networking opportunities to faith-based practitioners, private philanthropists, and public administrators who seek to collaborate to renew urban communities. An initiative of [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#), FASTEN actively identifies best practices in faith-based services and multisector collaborations and produces and disseminates educational materials for practitioners in the public and private sectors. The following organizations, each with diverse strengths and a shared interest in strengthening and supporting faith-based social services, are partnering to accomplish FASTEN's mission: Indiana University's [Center on Philanthropy](#); Baylor



University's [School of Social Work](#); Harvard University's [Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations](#); Sagamore Institute's [Faith in Communities Initiative](#); the National Crime Prevention Council's [Center for Faith and Service](#); the United States Conference of Mayors' [Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives](#); and [Nueva Esperanza](#).

This document provides a summary and the results of the Travis County Building Bridges: Brick by Brick community summit. Detailed newsprint notes are provided to ensure that future planning efforts take into account the work of summit participants who explored both problems and solutions. Their ideas and insights resulted in over 100 recommendations for improving police-community relations in Travis County. The NCPC planning team assisted in compiling a list of the top ten recommendations from summit participants. This list and some additional strategies for implementation are included in this report. The NCPC team strongly recommends that the work of summit participants serve as a basis for planning and implementation in the months and years to come.

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Evaluation Summary.....	4
The Planning Process .....	5
The Facilitation Process: Working Groups.....	6
Summary of Working Group Notes.....	8
Top Ten Recommendations.....	32
Recommended Next Steps.....	33
Acknowledgments.....	34

### Addenda

- A. Evaluation Summary
- B. Summit Agenda and Schedule



## Evaluation Summary

There were 116 participants who attended this event; 69 written evaluations were collected on-site.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the best):

- Approximately 71 percent of the respondents thought the conference was **relevant** and provided new information and tools (rating 4+).
- More than 97 percent thought the event was **organized in a professional manner** (rating 4+).
- Approximately 82 percent thought the event was effective in **assisting to strengthen relationships or partnerships** (rating 4+).

In addition,

- For the most part, participants seemed to feel that their concerns were taken into account in this event. Many reported that they hoped this would be the first of many events to address breaking down the barriers between law enforcement and the community.
- In general, participants would have liked this event to have been longer than one day to allow more time to work together.
- There was a high level of interest in staying connected as a group as well as holding another event with additional information. Participants made suggestions on how to structure and improve a follow-up event.

The complete evaluation report is included as an addendum to this report. (See Addendum A.)

## The Planning Process

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) has had more than 20 years of experience of helping state and local leaders address public safety and quality-of-life challenges in their communities. In summer 2005, Sheriff Greg Hamilton, on behalf of the Travis County Sheriff's Office (TCSO), applied for and was awarded a technical assistance grant. The grant was made available through the Faith and Service Technical Education Network (FASTEN), a joint project of NCPC and The Pew Charitable Trusts. Over a six-month period, NCPC/FASTEN and the Travis County Sheriff's Office designed a comprehensive community planning effort aimed at improving police-community relations in Travis County, TX.

From the onset of this initiative, NCPC and TCSO set out to address the issues that directly affected the citizens of Travis County. Over a three-month period, a team of NCPC coalition-building experts conducted extensive research and interviewed more than 50 leaders. These leaders represented almost every sector in Travis County, and they included leaders in civic organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, elected officials, community colleges, universities, and law enforcement (TCSO, Austin Police Department [APD], and other law enforcement agencies from around the county). Four key themes emerged: (1) the need to "cross the I-35 divide" and challenge tendencies toward racial and economic segregation in Travis County; (2) the fear and lack of trust that African American and Latino/Hispanic residents feel in the presence of law enforcement officers; (3) the need for systems and institutions that protect the safety of police officers while ensuring the safety of Travis County residents; and (4) ongoing and reliable education and prevention strategies.

The NCPC planning team, which comprised Monica Palacio, Chief Fabienne Brooks (Ret.), and Sarah Godshall, interviewed these leaders and asked each person two questions: "What is working well with regard to police and community relations in Travis County?" and "What needs improvement with regard to police and community relations in Travis County?" A myriad of responses were received due to the varied backgrounds and experiences of the community members. Based on information obtained from those interviews, a one-day working session was developed as a vehicle for mobilizing resident involvement and for identifying a list of priority action items. The event, titled Building Bridges: Brick by Brick, would include keynote speakers addressing the four key themes. It is important to note that the goal of the planning process was not to execute a successful one-day conference but to assist community leaders in "building bridges" across the barriers to communication and partnerships



with law enforcement. The event would serve as an important first step in the community planning process.

TCSO identified and invited more than 250 people who had a vested interest in improving police-community relations in Austin and the surrounding Travis County area. Law enforcement officers, elected officials, faith-based leaders, community leaders, business leaders, and Travis County government employees were invited, and 116 accepted the invitation and participated in the event. Participants were diverse in terms of organizational affiliation, age, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, and many other aspects of identity. In order to address both the benefits and the challenges of diversity represented in the room, the lead trainer for the event, Monica Palacio, engaged participants in team-building activities based on the National Coalition Building Institute's "Leadership for Diversity" training curriculum. Participants were then challenged to think aloud, ask questions, generate ideas, and build relationships throughout the course of the day. The facilitation process used is described in more detail below.

## **The Facilitation Process: Working Groups**

The one-day community planning event was designed to engage all those present in thoughtful discussion and constructive thinking. NCPC relied heavily on an experienced team of 13 volunteer facilitators. The facilitators were identified and invited by the Travis County Sheriff's Office. Facilitators were trained on the day before the event and were crucial to the success of the planning process.

Upon registration at the event, attendees were assigned to working groups based on their occupation/affiliation and were evenly dispersed into 13 groups throughout the room. The day was structured to allow for maximum discussion and working time within the groups. Each group stayed together the entire day and even ate lunch together, an important coalition-building strategy. After each keynote address, the groups answered a series of questions with the help of a trained facilitator. Each round had specific goals and objectives for the groups.

### **ROUND 1: CROSSING THE DIVIDE**

The objective of the first session was to increase the level of trust, understanding, and communication within each group. Each participant was asked to identify and share the following information:

- A personal success story regarding the challenge of "crossing the divide"



- A personal challenge faced in “crossing the divide”

This session enabled participants to share perspectives from both sides of the physical, emotional, and philosophical divide.

## **ROUND 2: LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

In the second working group session, each participant shared a personal experience of working with or for law enforcement. Then the group discussed the lessons learned from these experiences. These discussions were intended to lay the foundation for developing recommendations.

## **ROUND 3: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

In the third and final session, each group identified proposed solutions or recommendations for improving police-community relations based on the successes and challenges discussed in the earlier sessions. Once a comprehensive list of recommendations was recorded on newsprint, participants voted to establish the highest priority recommendations.

## Summary of Working Group Notes

*Note: All of the recorded work from each group is included in the following pages.*

### **Newsprint Notes: Group A**

#### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

##### *Successes*

1. College Station baseball team (e.g., connect with team, assist with barriers, strength as a team)
2. 1970-71 getting to play football at Bartholomew, accepted as part of team before desegregation
3. Among first black officers/detectives in APD Narcotics, being accepted as an officer in spite of being black
4. Successful integration of programs: Austin Jr. Chamber Commerce Life Underwriters Association (father an example—recreation director offering programs/services “south of track”)
5. Getting to know Trooper Meyers in LaGrange as a person (family, friends, etc.)
6. Had to step out of environment to recognize differences, coming back now to address them
7. Meeting “Hollywood” Henderson and being told you can do anything

##### *Challenges*

1. How to process anger after Los Angeles riots (still have a lot of anger in Austin; how do we process it?)
2. Trying to see others' perspective of me (as a black man)
3. Completing Army Basic Training (graduated and earned respect, race was not an issue in military, translating from military to the real world)
4. Convince self that decisions made about me are not based on race/East Austin
5. Innocent comment: “We are winning the football game drove a wedge between friends and the rift spread into family and broader community.”
6. Trust across all boundaries even those you don't know
7. Learn what I was and become strong enough to stand up for personal beliefs
8. Being able to talk to father (who has been in jail for 16 years)

## **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

### *Lessons Learned*

1. Don't be nosy.
2. Sensitivity (more than uniform and badge)
3. Respect for uniform and authority and, in return, son was treated with respect; objectivity is appropriate (best) response.
4. How you approach a situation dictates outcome (build bridges from both sides).
5. Get to know officers before a situation occurs.
6. Talk to officers who patrol an area (and listen too); this helps both sides.
7. Open communication bridges the gap for understanding.
8. Appearances can be deceiving.
9. Can treat others with respect and still get the job done
10. Treat others the way you want to be treated.
11. Mutual respect
12. Avoid prejudging.

## **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

### *Recommendations*

1. Community-wide town hall meetings
  - a. Forum for more information about Citizens Academy; opportunity for in-depth information about organization; specific goals/objectives
  - b. We need your help and to hear community perspective: What is the problem?
2. Bring back D.A.R.E.
3. Interactive community activities (baseball, basketball, etc.)
4. Utilize public access forum to engage law enforcement, media, community, and faith-based organizations.
5. More diversity training in Academy and more diversity in recruitment
6. Police-community-media coordination to minimize escalation of events
7. Integrate Citizens Academy graduates into meaningful work.
8. Roundtable discussions within high schools with law enforcement (e.g., police Explorers program)

9. Police Association shouldn't be so quick to back officers in media; creates bad community relations when response comes before investigation.
10. More time (walking) out of the cars; getting to know the community
11. Stronger police monitors office
12. Expand Citizens Academy: Advertise more, present at local level; make them feel wanted.
13. More interface by law enforcement within elementary and secondary schools; building for the future
14. Engage community, including those who are angry, in roundtables; include more of those who are disenchanting.

## **Newsprint Notes: Group B**

### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

#### *Successes*

1. Ask what they need; engage directly in community.
2. Mentoring across the divide; value ourselves
3. Role models across the divide
4. Willing to be the first; build relationships
5. Willing to ask questions and finding someone willing to answer
6. Recognize the investment/returns.
7. Reach out openly to help.
8. Kids open doors—people connection

#### *Challenges*

1. Getting to deeper level of understanding
2. Navigating system barriers
3. Challenged with justice system decisions—offender, families, victims
4. Still visual, real racial divide
5. Still finding that we think about being “comfortable”
6. Life is so good that you forget about other issues/situations.
7. Issue going from generation to generation
8. Accepting the role of role model

## **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

### *Lessons Learned*

1. Mutual respect
2. What you fear is not always what is fearful.
3. Power of faith, believing
4. Building relationships
5. Honoring people's space

## **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

### *Recommendations*

1. Create meaningful and sustainable conversations in neighborhoods, churches, community, and law enforcement.
2. More programs inside to outside of jails and prisons to cut recidivism
3. Redirect 1 percent of prison budget to community programs (without cutting existing money).
4. Create more dialog about racism beyond criminal justice system to eliminate racism.
5. Neighborhood officers visit all schools regularly.
6. Bring faith partners more into internal operations.
7. Broaden discussions/dialog to include prosecutors, juvenile probation, probation, etc.

## **Newsprint Notes: Group 1**

### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

#### *Successes*

1. Not reacting to a racial slur
2. Educating self/self-awareness of cultural sensitivity
3. Self-educated to become successful in career
4. People of all races/faiths helping those in need; "disaster relief"
5. Institutions (e.g., athletic programs promoting diversity; personal experiences in ministry, military, and law enforcement)
6. Educating self through a child's innocence
7. School programs
8. Family influence to treat people with the Golden Rule

9. Parent reading program

#### *Challenges*

1. I-35 divides neighborhoods
2. Giving in to fear/terrorism, gangs
3. Student populations, targeted kids
4. Separate institutions based on race
5. Stereotypes of behavior/perceptions (e.g., locking car doors when someone walks by)
6. Understanding issues without going through the experience
7. Refusal of services/abuse based on race
8. Leaving school to work for family
9. Racial profiling
10. Pressure from management in companies for minorities to leave employment

### **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

#### *Lessons Learned*

1. Need mutual dignity and respect
2. Different perspectives, common goals
3. Law enforcement officers are human too—in stressful situations.
4. Some are jerks, good and bad law enforcement officers.
5. Need more social interaction with community members (e.g., engaging people, Citizens Police Academy; National Night Out)
6. Get rid of the idea “us vs. them”—it should be “we.”

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations*

1. Hire more officers to help solve drug and prostitution problems, school violence.
2. Law enforcement presentations at schools, civic organizations, and interactions (e.g., Neighborhood Watch group, PTO, PTA, Kiwanis)
3. Find a good “spark” and promote law enforcement efforts (i.e., Extravaganza).
4. Marketing/advertising; help educate public
5. Find a *common thread* that will help East and West Austin celebrate their diversity, e.g., music, picnics, sports games, concerts.

6. Partnerships between law enforcement and faith-based groups to hold town hall meetings, promote dialog
7. Extend invitations to law enforcement and community members to attend events without agendas (e.g., church services, community fairs).
8. Advocate for respect not fear.

## **Newsprint Notes: Group 2**

### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

#### *Successes*

1. Found passion for life
2. Expanded profession to life commitment
3. NAACP listens to you after reaching out to them.
4. Took a Hispanic boy home when he was seven years old
5. Minority youth advising, economic independence through workforce development programs (for 30+ years)
6. Give kids tools they need to succeed
7. Overcoming fear of difference to help those in need
8. Trying to broaden the doors

#### *Challenges*

1. Balancing the needs of people I am trying to help and my needs
2. Identifying the problems
3. Overcoming the intolerances (e.g., institutional and personal)
4. Overcoming stereotypes
5. Lack of or ineffective communication (e.g., law enforcement, community/citizens communicate feelings rather than the truth)
6. We don't listen!!! (Give everybody his or her three minutes!)
7. Fear (need for reflection stereotypes)
8. Coming to the table full of self
9. Discovering common ground on which to communicate
10. Lack of acknowledgment that we are segregated!

### **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

#### *Lessons Learned*

1. Cops are not all bad.
2. Treat law enforcement with respect.
3. Take time to hear both sides.
4. Do not get out of my car until requested.
5. Not all people are bad.

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations*

1. Define community relations.
2. Build law enforcement relationships with young people through tutoring and mentoring.
3. Earn respect by showing respect (works both ways).
4. Hold ourselves accountable.
5. Faith-based organizations need to become more active (e.g., with law enforcement, adopt inmates, help transition parolees back into society).
6. A clear plan to implement ongoing dialog that develops a comprehensive, measurable plan to improve police-community relations
7. A plan to improve education for low-income families

## **Newsprint Notes: Group 3**

### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

#### *Successes*

1. Understanding by groups sharing Police Department experience—working for my people
2. Hiring employees from East Austin as part of staff to work with Travis County, while still doing activism in East Austin
3. Made a personal commitment to be an ambassador between the Muslim community and the greater Austin community by serving in the APD on a civilian report team
4. A one-to-one mentor helping a Johnston High School student who became involved in criminal justice system; this led to the young adult being involved in a job development program, keeping him out of prison.

5. As a black residing west of I-35, I have dedicated and committed myself, personally and professionally, and contributed to the East Austin community people/organizations.
6. Professional—he has committed himself to ensure that activities, i.e., Texas Alcoholic Research Commission, are equally enforced across the divide; being aware that there are differences

### *Challenges*

1. No divide perceived
2. Balancing personal interest with other interest
3. Southeast Austin people feel they are treated differently—lack of trust by community of police
4. Heard about divide in 1982; he felt as a white male he has to gain trust of East Austin people. They must feel safe with him.
5. As a black person, corporate and personal interests are not always compatible; to use the resources of both to support the black community—there is a risk
6. Continue to treat all people equally throughout all Travis County; a challenge because cops do not necessarily live in East Austin/Travis County and cannot appreciate and address the divide in East Austin/Travis County

### **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

#### *Lessons Learned*

1. Law enforcement—reaching out to the community because the community doesn't always reach out to you
2. Community: Dignity and respect—no matter what the person may have done; when people are treated with dignity and respect, better outcomes result.
3. Failing to treat people with dignity and respect makes the situation worse (“God doesn't make junk”).
4. People (Muslim) have negative messages/images regarding home; they are already isolated, become more isolated and more susceptible to performing negative things; why bother? Law enforcement and the community need to reach out and get them involved.
5. Have to like what you do
6. Once you put on the badge, it can make you think it's a whole different world—takes mentorship—to make respect and dignity a part of the equation

7. Mental health classes: the why's of the behavior (inner fears)
8. Law enforcement and faith ("Afraid to die; where am I?"): Faith can be a source of strength; where is this addressed?

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations*

1. Recruiting: Officers need to be homegrown and have roots in our community; encourage officers to recruit from their family, friends. Use funds that are used for out-of-town recruiting to build a force of our citizens; look into our high school and career days, college day fair. Sheriff's Office and APD should be involved in college fairs and career days.
2. Develop (reactivate within APD) an activity or ROTC-type program within high schools that offers a career experience in APD, Sheriff's Office.
3. Building bridges between other law enforcement agencies. Proactive collaborative-cooperative community policing, rather than reactive, defensive "silos," connected by incidents or fear only (4 votes)
4. Sustain neighbor liaison program within both APD and Sheriff's Office
5. Respond to major criteria/incidents in an immediate factual manner, public media, etc. Law enforcement should not filter, screen what's shared with community based on what law enforcement determines as adequate dissemination, distribution of information.
6. Mini-camp one-day orientation
7. Law enforcement needs to assure community (and follow through on this) that swift and appropriate reviews and disciplinary actions are accomplished in every instance of alleged and subsequent misconduct.

### **Newsprint Notes: Group 4**

#### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

##### *Successes*

1. 1970s engaged West Austin Environmental Justice to assist and work with East Austin to focus on working with like-minded folks for a cleaner and safer environment
2. Disrespectful treatment of local high school property by citywide community members led one concerned resident to incite action by formal leadership by stepping up to the plate herself and clearing away clutter and trash.



3. Worked with a neighbor to promote neighborhood-wide standards for personal property maintenance that promotes positive neighborhood interactions
4. Through experience and education, enlightened the minds of one set of culture and means about another set of culture and means, resulting in open dialog on how many cultures have similarities and differences
5. Educate employees on words and communication techniques to use to create an equal environment
6. Use facilitators for meetings that have diverse experiences and cultural backgrounds
7. Student view is that law enforcement stops are based on color; when instructed and presented with facts and statistics, students considered another point of view.
8. Helped female officer learn how to use different techniques of dealing with sexual diversity

#### *Challenges*

1. Break down comfort zone
2. Generation of poverty; cultural education
3. Accepting that differences exist
4. Unconditional response and respect

#### **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

##### *Lessons Learned*

1. Hard job at times (e.g., messenger of family loss, etc.)
2. Good and bad officers, just like in all professions
3. Mutual respect for each other
4. Realization that as an officer you can be wrong at times

#### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

##### *Recommendations*

1. Program that would educate students, parents during school about mutual respect
2. Program where law enforcement officers go door to door, introducing themselves, building relationships
3. Churches should take it outside the building to educate law enforcement and inmates by hosting breakfast, then witnessing.

4. Teach nonviolence in classrooms, homes, and in enforcement organizations.
5. Buy-in from business to allow employees time off
6. Create servant focus groups in the community on improving law enforcement and community relations.

## **Newsprint Notes: Group 5**

### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

#### *Successes*

1. Outreach strategies
2. Respect the differences
3. Break down barriers
4. Mentoring for Spanish-speaking community
5. Change our “language” of how we refer to one another
6. More education, rights, training of the community
7. Parental involvement (village concept)
8. Change paradigm, having exposure to different cultures and allowing more opportunities in life
9. Socially preparing girls—gender differences in the home, as well as for life (pre-K through 16 years)
10. Recognize deficiencies in each culture
11. Reeducating people on “how to” of economics (tools for life)
12. Katrina relief efforts
13. Neighborhood Association East/West collaboration with other service agencies
14. Students leaving Austin, going to Pflugerville
15. Amigos en Azul—Hispanic Police Association interfacing with the community; Boy Scout Troop in the Dove Springs neighborhood
16. Utilize Spanish speakers as interpreters for police-related issues.
17. Mexican Consulate and APD enabling immigrants to have savings/checking account with Wells Fargo Bank
18. Encouraging new officers that they have a mission and a ministry (training)
19. Break down stereotypes in different cultures

20. Educating on how to be stopped by police/dispelling stereotypes (recognize stereotypes)

### *Challenges*

1. Lack of collaboration between agencies, churches, and law enforcement
2. Asking what is your personal goal and family goal (don't assume we all want the same)
3. Families not being able to afford college for their children
4. Educating families on child-rearing
5. How do you know who to go to for specific resources?
6. Develop leaders in the community.
7. Pulling resources together to send students to training
8. Competition
9. Technology
10. Breaking down diversity (deemphasizing culture, looking at each other universally rather than ethnically, seeing the "best" in us)
11. Recognize the value and potential each individual brings.
12. Identify collaboration rather than competition.
13. Ask yourself, "What will I do to make a difference?" (stop worshipping ideologies).
14. How to provide free legal services to the community (especially cross-culturally)
15. Identify and engage our communities.

### **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

#### *Lessons Learned*

1. Treating the public with dignity and respect while showing compassion and understanding (e.g., National Coalition Building Institute icebreakers, greetings like "Good evening," introducing yourself—"I'm officer...and the reason why I stopped you..." depending on the totality of the situation)
2. Escalation
3. De-escalation
4. Training the officer
5. Respond rather than react.

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations*

1. Improve and implement cultural classes with accountability with teeth in it.
2. Community leaders and media should not perpetuate the problem.
3. Building a rapport with a mission (serve and protect) and ministry (building a relationship) concept in the community where they serve
4. Sponsor officer appreciation and citizen appreciation event.
5. Community-police reversals (where community are police and police are community) for video use in training
6. Need chief of police to be more involved in the community.
7. Get rid of the “thin blue line.”
8. Community-police role reversals (where each group swaps roles and carries out a scenario)
9. Areas of town are going to have different problems, but treat each fairly and equitably.
10. Educate the community on law enforcement.
11. National Night Out continues yearly and not just once a year.
12. Police should apologize to the community.
13. Community needs to be respectful of police.

### **Newsprint Notes: Group 6**

#### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

##### *Successes*

1. Becoming personally aware of other groups' issues
2. Learning to share effective tools for growth
3. Examining self to challenge personal bias and prejudice
4. Redefining personal power, responsibility, and respect
5. Respecting each individual to move toward solutions, unconditional love
6. Working with diverse groups to reach common goals
7. Stepping out of “my culture” norm, learning to live on other's terms

##### *Challenges*

1. Communicating unconditional love, heart-to-heart



2. Standing up for myself
3. Healing offenders and victims with forgiveness and love, improving the system
4. Recognizing we have far to go—everywhere
5. Staying real sincere and true
6. Transmuting anger
7. Education
8. Healing victims and offenders and community through education, unconditional love, and forgiveness

### **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

#### *Lessons Learned*

1. Communication is key.
2. Respect goes both ways.
3. Everyone is human.

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations (ranked)*

1. Co-instruction by culture, group members for law enforcement officers' diversity training
2. Law enforcement agencies provide training for community leaders to implement education within their community.
3. Training videos, etc., in schools to educate young people about how/why arrests happen
4. Educate the community's religious groups about what the laws are.
5. Civilian-police review committee
6. Community-law enforcement communication process
7. Educate law enforcement officers to recognize mental illness and communicate effectively.

## **Newsprint Notes: Group 7**

### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

#### *Successes*

1. Caring enough to respect individual choices
2. Educating people on resources to share and care with community needs and causes
3. Use of compassion and influence to be catalyst for change in one individual's life



4. Realigning resources to meet emerging and unplanned need opportunities, compassionate self-sacrifice for hurricane victims
5. Identifying and engaging unusual suspects to avoid profiling
6. Turning initial fears into unprecedented opportunities, taking differences and using as strength, cooperation of different disciplines
7. Matching with need opportunity, connecting macro view with distribution channels, local churches partnering with the city

### *Challenges*

1. Mental health and mental retardation, opportunity in Travis County jail not yet addressed; insensitivity—failure to take advantage of opportunity
2. Experiencing ignorance and intolerance when reaching out to minority groups
3. Resources (funding) not available to address needs
4. How do we get past personal history to find common ground and build bridges—unwilling to break into common ground
5. Not receiving open dialog when it is initiated
6. Lack of trust and willingness to hear different positions

## **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

### *Lessons Learned*

1. Don't generalize everyone in one group, good or bad.
2. Understand each other (listen, cultural understanding important).
3. Spend some time with an officer when things are not poignant; walk in his or her shoes, do a ride-along.
4. More interaction on a personal level and setting
5. More interaction by bicycle patrol, on foot
6. Two steps back, be less reactionary (officers and community)
7. Encouraging persons with affluence to engage groups needing capacity building
8. Servant leadership, law enforcement
9. Move toward level playing field (education, opportunity), which helps overall economic development and the fundamental issues at stake
10. Define the problem from a strong point of view.

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations*

1. Officers more exposed in mentoring opportunities (e.g., Girl Scouts, afterschool programs, Boy Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs)
2. Operationalize all these good ideas.
3. Increase the number of district representatives, problem solvers.
4. Empower the police monitor.
5. Increase interaction availability to build personal relationships.
6. Increase cultural exchange to educate on realities and disparity—problems only perceived on East side.
7. Celebrate success, award innovators with significant recognition and monetary support.
8. Promote Neighborhood Watches, community policing.
9. Create recognition days for law enforcement within community organizations that also provide law enforcement education and officer endearment practices.

### **Newsprint Notes: Group 8**

#### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

##### *Successes*

1. The Council for Community Reconciliation and the Plowshares Institute came in to address issues re: Cedar Street Incident; role-plays (conflict transformation)
2. Establishing Communities Connecting for a Better Tomorrow (CCBT)
3. Jesus video project
4. Being here today
5. Assisting on Sheriff's Campaign

##### *Challenges*

1. Getting local politicians to consistently recognize challenges and commit to work on addressing them
2. Get East Austin to demand what they want instead of asking
3. Speak with one voice
4. Jobs/lack of opportunities
5. The recognition of I-35 as the "Berlin Wall"
6. Institutions in East Austin run by people from a culture other than the one(s) represented



7. Overwhelming desire of others not living in East Austin to “help” East Austin
8. Katrina evacuee placement
9. Disparity between East and West Austin too dramatic (health, education, living environment, etc.)
10. Gentrification
11. Division: change/shift in attitudes deeply rooted in the history of Austin
12. Memory an enemy of our faith (it won’t work because it didn’t work before)
13. Apathy and fear that nothing’s going to change
14. People making decisions don’t get it
15. East Austin not involved in politics
16. Differences in perception (East vs. West Austin)
17. The focus on I-35 being “the” divide

### **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

#### *Lessons Learned*

1. Law enforcement culture causes a perception of guilty until proven innocent.
2. Need to lead by example (law enforcement leaders)
3. Law enforcement needs to find ways to become embedded in the community.
4. Law enforcement needs to commit.
5. Top-down leadership that encourages the development of community relationships
6. Law enforcement should go to the people, not make the community come to them.
7. Go back to “To Serve and Protect” motto (on cars) (need to define “serve” and “protect”)
8. More East Austin residents should become law enforcement officers.

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations (ranked)*

1. Change recruiting procedures for officers and chiefs; have diversity training taught by diverse and competent instructors.
2. Direct continuous communication between chief and community on their time and turf; tie embedded criteria to police contract to have monetary incentive.
3. Educate our children (that law enforcement officers are friends).
4. Collaborating with individual community members to observe ways of life

5. Change law enforcement culture by having officers go to churches, schools, etc.
6. Incorporate field experience in Academy.
7. "Crash" as part of training
8. "Adopt-an-Officer" Program
9. Police chief to have his finger on the pulse of the community
10. Be proactive.
11. Use the camera before the gun.
12. Be willing to admit mistakes.

## **Newsprint Notes: Group 9**

### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

#### *Successes*

1. Mother teaching and speaking against injustice
2. Assimilation process coming to America
3. Raised in friendly multicultural environment
4. Building a positive relationship and being honest when hurt
5. Suspended from school for challenging social/racial injustice
6. Didn't grow up to be a bigot even though stepdad was
7. Becoming a success when told by society that he "could not" be successful

#### *Challenges*

1. Understanding other cultures and differences
2. Overcoming apathy
3. Keeping positive and overcoming being sheltered
4. Overcoming gender bias
5. Challenged to be peaceful
6. Not to be apologetic for who you are and give in
7. Acceptance of other's perception of reality

### **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

#### *Lessons Learned*

1. Law enforcement officers are "people" too, fallible, hurt, and capable of making mistakes.



2. Law enforcement officers are “peace” officers.
3. Mistakes do happen.
4. Must be a community-wide effort—belief, support, and action

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations (ranked)*

1. Monthly meetings of this group to follow through, including sheriff, mayor, manager, police chief, and media; establish an advisory board to hold group accountable for follow-through and eventually include citizens.
2. Develop an accountability report card (e.g., Communication, Collaboration, Coordination, Cooperation, and Commitment).
3. Review and implement the Austin Independent School District school safety task force recommendations.
4. Neighborhood cleanup
5. Establish school safety zones.
6. APD and TCSO work together with neighborhood associations; have an open door for communicating with city leaders.
7. Strengthen Neighborhood Watch programs cooperatively with APD and TCSO and school districts.

### **Newsprint Notes: Group 10**

#### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

##### *Successes*

1. Bridge campus and community (e.g., youth programming, college prep, communication, parent involvement, bring Austin Community College to the community)
2. Lifestyle, daily practice in educating people about one another, engaging conversations, connecting with people who don't look like you as minority, showing up everyday is “crossing the divide”
3. Muslim outreach to a Christian church, share dinner, risk by doing something for the first time
4. Convening religious leaders around “transcending the divide of I-35”; acting on those conversations by developing an open letter to city

5. Reaching out, *taking opportunities*, not succumbing to fear, transcending preconceived ideas, letting people/youth *know who you are*; beneath appearances, treat one another with basic decency, shake hands, look in eyes, human being to human being.
6. Teaching facts/figures to students (e.g., gang and terrorism education sessions “approved” by people from other cultures; attend to culture, language to break barriers; think beyond images presented in the news)
7. Community education campaigns involve different sectors of community.
8. Eliminate geographic boundaries that divide U.S. stereotypes, and change the notion that there are “bad parts of town.”
9. Rita evacuation: Shelter-hopping officers treated people with dignity, built relationships.

### *Challenges*

1. Offensive remarks: how to respond? (Determine if remark is made from ignorance or malice, decide whether to educate or confront.)
2. Overcoming visual cues, assumptions
3. Prejudices
4. Media exploit differences, magnify the divide.
5. Power imbalance, inequity, injustices, lack of access (e.g., misperceptions about poor people and rich folks)
6. Assumptions about religious commonalities, not seeing/respecting differences
7. Miscommunications
8. East Austin/I-35 divide (e.g., people unwilling to cross the divide, restaurants won’t deliver, no banks, no cabs)

## **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

### *Lessons Learned*

1. Officers are human with all the good and bad.
2. Perception is reality.
3. First impression matters, positive and negative.
4. Faith community’s role in shaping perceptions is crucial!! It can help make things better and needs to be more proactive.
5. Importance of diversity training in academy and from community leaders; ongoing interaction between community and officers

6. We all have different perceptions.
7. Address specific issues around youth (e.g., bring youth into officer diversity training).
8. Reduce high school dropout.
9. Create training programs for formerly incarcerated people (e.g., reentry programs, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, education available in jails, etc.).
10. Parenting programs, support programs for kids with parents in prison
11. Report in media on positive community policing; tell success stories (e.g., bring media into process of police-community reconciliation; get their commitment to promote positive stories, use religious leaders in this strategy).

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations*

1. Ongoing diversity training (e.g., utilize community leaders in developing and presenting training)
2. Ensure that people have access to education, jobs, housing; fair playing field helps police relations.
3. Create community advisory (e.g., boards to determine training needs, be proactive).
4. Incorporate youth in the officer training, gang leaders and members.
5. Incorporate prayer, spiritual leadership in community, healing.
6. Acknowledge systematic disparities in Austin; develop a plan to address them.

### **Newsprint Notes: Groups 11/12**

#### **Round 1: Crossing the Divide**

##### *Successes*

1. Took resources from University of Texas to East Austin (e.g., free breakfast program for youth, Headstart programs)
2. Production manager at Motorola addressed disparity in hiring, successful by taking issue to upper management, achieved hiring equity (special areas for those with criminal records), broken barriers
3. Gender issues (e.g., a woman can find acceptance in male-dominated workplace)

4. Established office of community liaison (celebrating sixth annual conference, despite challenge of biases)
5. Bridged the divide among faiths by inviting friends to predominantly African American church. Some of them became members.
6. Working with kids who tend to be free of “divides”; learned through them that acceptance is not based on labels, titles, etc.
7. My life is a success story; we don’t need tolerance but true understanding of each other.

### *Challenges*

1. Belief that others of different races will work on best behalf because of previous letdowns
2. Trying not to be like those who do evil and using resources to the greater good; sometimes it seems you have to do bad things to get what you want/need.
3. Overcome police bias due to two influential officers in my life
4. Overcoming public perception that things are much worse in police departments than they are
5. Break down silos in law enforcement (more accessible)
6. Changing penal system so that inmates have access to education to improve outcomes upon release from prison (resolve to abolish violence everywhere)
7. Fear being perceived as insincere and not understood (e.g., personal race and ethnicity/religion cause challenge, being Jewish in a heavily Christian environment)
8. Education is key: responds to all the challenges cited.
9. Integration during the 1970s: had to dispel myths (e.g., African Americans) before finding acceptance
10. Racism can cause problems that lead to juvenile justice problems.
11. Lack of education about history of slavery (young people are not aware of contributions, not only in the United States but globally)
12. Keeping the same folks at the table to solve problems: how do you keep people involved?

## **Round 2: Laying the Foundation**

### *Lessons Learned*

1. You can build bridges if you are willing to work together/communicate honestly.
2. There were still double standards by APD in 2005.

3. The training that Department of Public Safety troopers receive seems to emphasize treating the person with more dignity/professionalism, even in West Austin.
4. Being black with APD is like already being guilty (i.e., you have to prove your innocence, complaints don't go anywhere).
5. Complaints even with many eyewitnesses are brushed aside if they have to do with race or involve a black or minority person.
6. If I see an injustice (like an assault by an officer on an inmate) and my manager does not do anything about it, I need to take it up higher... I need to speak up.
7. When you report a complaint to police, you are treated like a criminal
8. If police see you filming them, they will ask you to turn it off because you are obstructing justice.
9. Lack of transparency in the way police conduct their business
10. There is hope...there are officers who are willing to work to solve the problem.
11. When good people stand silently by while the bad things are happening, they are giving permission for them to happen.

### **Round 3: Recommendations for Improving Police-Community Relations**

#### *Recommendations*

1. Accountability: If a person files a complaint, it should be followed up. If it is proven that the accusation is true, the officer should be punished, just like the citizen would be.
2. Education: Sheriff Hamilton, Commander Holt, and other law enforcement officials should have a monthly show on KAZI radio or television where they can focus on things happening in the community, what they are trying to do, etc., so that good police officers have a voice.
3. Community: Attend community events, not just to bust people but to participate.
4. Offer "Health Realization" training for all officers.
5. A variety and continuing diversity education for police officers
6. More visibility by law enforcement in the minority community doing positive things; working with kids, teenagers; doing more programs on African American and Hispanic media; and letting the community know about their programs
7. More transparencies in police practices

8. Citizen education courses that teach citizens about the responsibility police officers have, as well as citizens' rights
9. All recommendations adopted today have to become policy so that people can be held accountable if they violate policy.
10. Dialoguing between police and the community to define "profiling"; share existing information on profiling
11. The grand jury should be made up of attorneys, rather than citizens, when it comes to officer-involved shootings because they know the law.
12. More support for good cops
13. More programs that encourage bystanders to speak up

## Top Ten Recommendations

During the final round of group work, participants were asked to vote on the list of recommendations generated by their group. Votes were tallied, and the NCPC team compiled the following list of high-priority recommendations for improving police-community relations in Travis County. This list was presented to all those convened before the day concluded.

1. Create meaningful and sustainable conversations between neighborhoods, churches, communities, and law enforcement.
2. Convene community-wide town hall meetings and more forums for more information about Citizens Academies and to address specific community issues (enlist help from residents).
3. Ensure that officers are provided with mentoring opportunities, e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, afterschool programs.
4. Recruit “home-grown” officers within the Travis County community, and encourage officers to recruit from family and friends.
5. Bring the media into the process of police-community reconciliation, and get their commitment to promote positive stories.
6. Extend invitations to law enforcement and community members to join an event with no specific agenda such as church services, community fairs, and cultural events.
7. Establish partnerships between law enforcement and faith-based groups to hold town hall meetings.
8. Offer training sessions based on co-instruction for law enforcement on the topic of diversity by members of diverse cultural groups.
9. Develop more support systems and programs inside and outside jails and prisons.
10. Provide programs during the school day that educate students and parents on positive traits of law enforcement; stress mutual respect.

## Recommended Next Steps

Travis County leaders and residents are uniquely positioned to open a new chapter with regard to how residents and law enforcement work together toward greater public safety. Leaders across the county and the City of Austin are ready, willing, and able to move forward on key issues such as respect, race relations, and improving the quality of life for all Travis County residents. The information and recommendations contained in this report can and must be used as a call to action.

In order to maintain involvement and momentum, NCPC recommends that the following steps be taken:

1. The establishment of a Travis County Working Group to serve as steering committee: This Working Group will have 15 to 25 members and will determine a workplan with specific goals and a timetable through the end of 2006. Meetings can be held twice a month for the first three months and then monthly thereafter.
2. Coalition building and ongoing cultural awareness training for members of the Working Group, particularly as the group can and should represent all the diversity of Travis County and all sectors (faith groups, law enforcement, schools, business, etc.).
3. Quarterly events such as town hall meetings or community forums during which progress can be reported and residents and law enforcement officers can interact.
4. Ongoing documentation of the Working Group activities and open rapport and partnership development with local media outlets in order to share the work it is undertaking.
5. A follow-up event in one year in order to invite broader participation and continue the work of coalition building and community planning.

## **Acknowledgments**

Sheriff Greg Hamilton and his staff are to be commended for their professionalism, commitment to the integrity of the planning process, and the long hours they dedicated before, during, and after the Building Bridges event. The NCPC team wishes to acknowledge the TCSO staff and all the community leaders who took time out of their busy schedules to meet and express their points of view. The NCPC team also wishes to thank Mt. Zion Baptist Church for hosting the Building Bridges event.

