

# WORKING WITH THE POLICE

## UNDERSTAND THE DEPARTMENT'S STRUCTURE

- ✓ Your precinct is made up of several **units** of officers, led by **sergeants**,
- ✓ All units are under the direction of the precinct's **Commanding Officer (C.O.)**. These units serve different purposes—some cover a beat while others look into specific kinds of crimes, including quality of life crimes and narcotics.
- ✓ Each precinct has two **Community Affairs Officers** who are specifically responsible for interacting with the public. Community Affairs Officers run the **Precinct Community Council**, can help you form observation patrols, and issue noise permits for community events.
- ✓ Each precinct also has a **Community Policing Unit** which tries to prevent regular crime from recurring by patrolling problem areas at problem times.

## MAKE FRIENDS

- ✓ The police will be more likely to respond and respond quickly if they know and respect you. Get to know the officers who work in your precinct, particularly the **Beat Officers** who work in your park, the **Community Affairs Officers**, the **Commanding and Executive Officers**, the **Community Policing Unit Supervisor**, and if relevant, the **Narcotics Officers**. These relationships are crucial to solving problems in your park.
- ✓ The best way to build these relationships is to attend monthly meetings of the **Precinct Community Council**, which is a forum for police-community interaction. (See "People to Know," enclosed, for further information.)

## UNDERSTAND THE PRECINCT'S LIMITATIONS

- ✓ Precincts have limited resources—they cannot assign an officer to stand in your playground 24 hours a day, and they must respond to emergencies before they respond to nuisances. That said, the police exist to make your neighborhood safe, and the more closely your group works with them, the more positive the outcome will be.
- ✓ The police must have just cause in order to arrest someone—usually that means they must see him or her committing a crime. For minor crimes, like loitering or littering, it is much more common for the police to issue warnings and fines than to make arrests.

## CALL REPEATEDLY

- ✓ The police allocate more resources to the areas that receive the highest number of formal complaints.
- ✓ If you call about a nuisance once, you may not get much response, but if you call about it repeatedly, the chances of action increase. For the best results, have all of your neighbors and group members call too.
- ✓ Be polite—remember that you are trying to build relationships.

## TAKE NOTES

- ✓ Every time you call the police, make a record of your call. Write down the date and time, the name of the person you spoke to, the number assigned to your complaint, and the details of the complaint.
- ✓ Make a record of any follow-up. These notes will be essential if you ever need to request more resources or complain about an insufficient response.