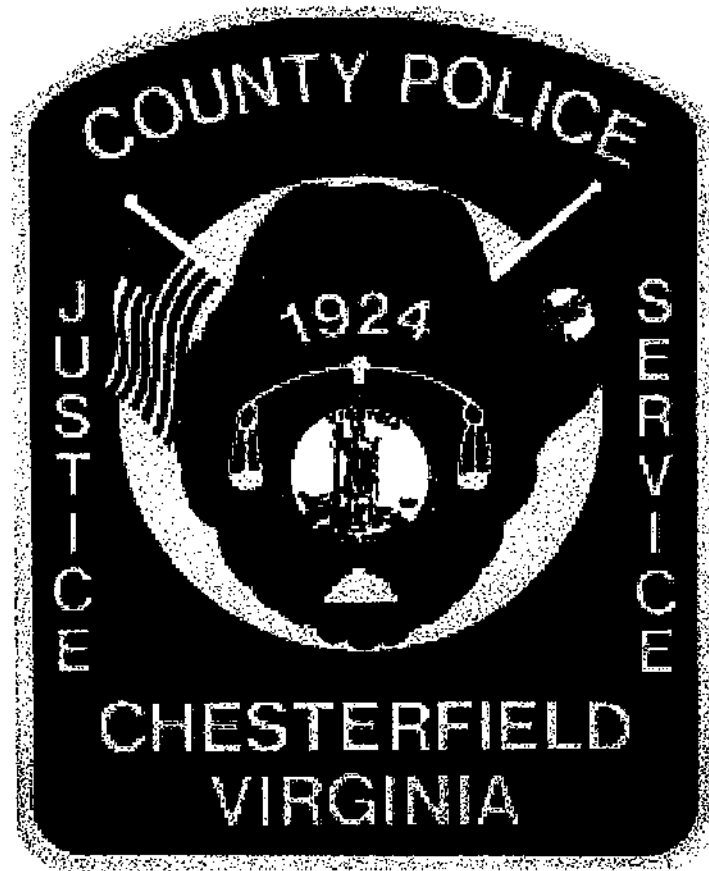


*Eastern Midlothian Business
Corridor Community Policing
Program*



Program Summary

Eastern Midlothian Turnpike Business Community Policing Program

Chesterfield County is a suburban county of 446 square miles with a population of 261,000. A large majority of the eastern portion of Chesterfield County is adjacent the City of Richmond, Virginia. One area adjacent to Richmond, called the Eastern Midlothian Turnpike Business Corridor, had begun to experience a downturn in the overall quality of life in the area. It was experiencing a significant increase in crime. Merchants were leaving the area, which left vacant buildings and fewer shoppers. The corridor was beginning to be perceived as being unsafe and was in a state of decay due to a lack of code of enforcement.

In October of 1995, the Chesterfield County Police Department initiated its first business community policing program in response to these problems. The Midlothian Business Corridor is two miles long and consists of a regional mall, several strip shopping centers, and numerous freestanding businesses totaling approximately 300 in number.

From the inception, an experienced community police officer was assigned to the program. The officer had three primary objectives:

- r Reduce U.C.R. Part One Offenses.
- r_ Establish effective partnerships with the business community in order to solve problems in the area.
- tar Improve the area by significantly impacting the area's state of decay through effective code enforcement.

With success in these three areas, it was anticipated that the downturn in the quality of life in the area could be halted and reversed.

The community police officer immediately began speaking to area merchants about their concerns, while at the same time, forming bonds with County departments that could aid him in his endeavor. The merchants readily embraced the concept of working with the police and county departments to address their concerns. As a result the community police officer and the Planning Department began developing a long-range plan for the area. The formation of the Gateway Business Association was a direct result of this community partnership. It became a leading force in the revitalization efforts of the Corridor.

The results of this program have been and are extremely successful. The Corridor has experienced a 55.16% decrease in U.C.R. Part One Offenses since its inception. In addition, a cooperative community development plan was developed and implemented. Businesses are re-locating to the corridor and the overall quality of life has significantly increased.

Program Description
Eastern Midlothian Turnpike Business Corridor Community Policing Program

A. Scanning

The Eastern Midlothian Turnpike Business Corridor Community Policing Program encompasses a two-mile stretch of Midlothian Turnpike, which is a major thoroughfare in Chesterfield County. The area contains several strip shopping centers and a large regional mall as well as many freestanding businesses. Twenty-five years ago, the area was an up-and-coming retail center for Chesterfield County with little retail development to the west. In October 1995, when the program was started, retail development had spread westward on Midlothian Turnpike and near the end of the newer development area was a large flourishing mall. As development moved west, the Eastern Midlothian Business Corridor began to age and suffered from neglect. The area borders the City of Richmond and began to experience "spill over crime" from the city. As a result of these factors, crime increased in the area and it developed a reputation of being unsafe. The perception among the shopping public was that it was not safe to shop in the area. This hurt sales and caused businesses to move out of the area.

The problem was identified through a number of sources. The Chesterfield County Police Department is continually monitoring the health of communities within the County via crime analysis. This is done by looking at both short term and long term trends of calls for service and actual crimes. Through crime analysis we could see calls

for service and actual crime were on the increase. Specifically robberies of individuals and businesses as well as larcenies in general were becoming a problem. Also, business owners, shopping center managers, and citizens contacted County leaders and Police Department Administration expressing concern over the future of the area. Both the print and television media continually highlighted crime in the area. Much of the exposure the area was getting was negative, which of course heightened negative attitude of citizens toward the area. The perception of the business people in the corridor was that the media unfairly targeted the area labeling it as a high crime area.

There were a number of reasons for targeting the Corridor for a new program rather than other areas. The City of Richmond borders most of the eastern section of the County. Chesterfield County leaders had identified this eastern section as an aging area in need of extra attention. The Midlothian Corridor is a part of the larger area and was in acute need. The Police Department understood that we needed to reverse the increase in crime and reduction in the quality of life. If we did not, this problem would continue to spread like a cancer throughout the County. The economic importance of this area to Chesterfield County is significant. The area holds a large retail tax base and provides many employment opportunities for our residents. Midlothian Turnpike is a major gateway into our community and it is important to the Police Department that it is a safe passageway for our citizens and visitors.

B. Analysis

The problem was analyzed by looking at several pieces of statistical information.

Departmental crime analysts provided calls for service and actual crimes for the entire Corridor prior to the start of the program. The information was also broken down by location such as shopping centers and malls. The information also was further broken down by day of week and time of occurrence. Once the program started, the officer received detailed reports for offenses occurring within the Corridor on a daily basis. He also received weekly and monthly totals of the calls for service. One of the first initiatives of the community police officer was to individually meet with the merchants in the area. He gained valuable information on the various problems and concerns.

The community police officer also held meetings with the merchants to speak collectively about the problems. As a part of the analysis, security assessments of businesses were conducted and recommendations were made on how to improve the physical and environmental security of each structure. The community police officer made a physical inspection of the entire Corridor to evaluate the physical state of the area.

It was apparent from all of the information gathered that the harms that resulted from the problem encompassed several issues. The overall physical appearance of the area was not up to community standards when compared to other more viable business areas nearby. The overall crime rate had been steadily increasing over the past several years.

Several locations, including the regional mall, were plagued with disorderly loiterers who scared and intimidated shoppers. Businesses had either already relocated out of the area or many were contemplating relocating if things did not get better. According to business owners and the mall management, fewer people were shopping in their stores and profits were decreasing. The area also was stigmatized by the negative media attention given to the crimes occurring in the Corridor.

The response from the Police Department prior to the start of the program was "traditional" in nature. Officers were deployed in beats on the three shifts and responded to calls for service and reacted to problems. There was little proactive problem solving on the part of the Police Department, unless it was self initiated by an individual officer. Arrest was the primary response to problems with little thought to why the situations were occurring. Code enforcement issues such as dilapidated buildings or improper uses of a property were dealt with only if a complaint was made to the County's Zoning Enforcement Office. If a complaint was made, it took an extremely long time to remedy the problems if they were ever remedied. Some crime prevention activities were being carried out by members of the Police Department's Crime Prevention Section, but these activities were spotty in nature. No comprehensive crime prevention plan was being carried out.

After analyzing all of the information gathered, it revealed that many of the problems discovered had slowly developed over time. It also revealed that many of the problems were pervasive throughout the corridor. This slow development of problems was

caused by several factors. The of City of Richmond was experiencing a high violent crime rate at the time, and since crime knows no boundaries, Chesterfield County began to experience some of the same problems. There was a lack of ongoing communication between the merchants and the Police Department. As time went on the merchants and the Police were tolerating more and more crime and disorder. The attitude of the merchants was that nothing could be done about it so they must tolerate it. This caused a small segment of the population to continue to "push the envelope" to see how much they could get away with. Disorderly and/or intoxicated subjects loitering were many times sent away rather than being arrested and no thought was given as to how to keep these people away. Cars were being stolen out of shopping center parking lots and little emphasis was placed on preventing such occurrences.

The physical state of the area was poor and this seemed to invite problems to the area. There was no real pride in the area which cause a sense of despair among merchants which led to the attitude that the area was going downhill and nothing could be done about it.

Situational information that was needed to diagnose the problems was time of occurrence and location of incidents. Once we understood these factors we could consult with merchants on strategies to deal with these issues and the Police could allocate the needed resources to tackle the problems.

We also needed to learn the existing zoning ordinances and how they were being applied to the area. It was discovered that only spotty enforcement occurred and there were several businesses within the corridor that were prohibited. It was also revealed that the zoning ordinance that had been in place for quite some time would allow for undesirable businesses, such as pawn shops and check cashing facilities, to locate in the area with ease.

C. Response

Most of the responses considered were utilized in regard to the problems. We knew that we had to mobilize the merchants to get them actively involved. We also knew that we had to organize a comprehensive crime prevention education program. Code enforcement was an important issue. Therefore, we needed to build a strong working relationship with the zoning enforcement officials. We also needed to tailor our enforcement activities to the individual problems and take a zero tolerance attitude toward all violations of the law, big or small. We needed the support of the local Board of Supervisors representatives and Planning Commission members in order to tighten restrictions on the types of businesses allowed in the Corridor.

Over time we attempted to accomplish all of these responses. Coincidentally, at the same time the Police Department was attempting to initiate our community policing program, the County Planning Department was starting an initiative. They were beginning to work on a long-range strategic plan for the area which included the Eastern Midlothian Business Corridor Community Policing Program. The Planning

Department was concerned with land use issues, future development of vacant property, and the existence of vacant commercial buildings in the area. The community police officer was invited to attend the first meeting between the citizens and the Planning Department. It was apparent at the first meeting that crime and the perception of crime were first and foremost on the minds of the attendees. They felt that the fear of crime in the area was the main factor in decreasing levels of business at their establishments. After the meeting it was obvious to the Planning Department and the Police Department that our goals meshed and to be successful we should work together. A close working relationship was developed between the community police officer and the staff of the Planning Department. A second meeting was held dedicated to discussing crime issues. At this meeting a broad partnership was developed with the merchants by the formation of a business group known as the Gateway Business Association. The group, which included the community police officer and Planning Department staff, worked jointly to employ the strategy of reducing crime and the fear of crime while addressing land use and zoning issues.

From this partnership a new zoning ordinance was approved which required special use permits approved by the County's Board of Supervisors for uses determined undesirable by members of the Association such as pawnshops and check cashing facilities. It also prohibited many aggressive business uses such as tire recapping facilities and truck terminals. Previously these uses were guaranteed by right due to a historical zoning ordinance that did not consider future ramifications of such uses.

The assigned community police officer had become well-versed in property maintenance code enforcement from a previous community policing assignment. He utilized this experience in trying to clean up the Corridor. The code enforcement violation included such things as abandoned vehicles, debris and trash on properties, insecure vacant buildings, and tall grass and weeds just to name a few. The County's code enforcement officials have large geographical areas to cover. They worked on a complaint only basis and did not proactively seek out violations. The enforcement process is quite cumbersome and it normally took a long time to gain compliance for violations. Knowing this, the community police officer worked proactively to gain voluntary compliance for violations. He was quite successful in this endeavor and any non-compliant businesses were eventually turned over to the code enforcement officials.

As this was all taking place, the community police officer enlisted the help of the Police Department's crime prevention personnel to help him institute a comprehensive crime prevention program for the Corridor. The community police officer recruited businesses to join the Police Department's Business Watch Program which is administered by the Crime Prevention Section. The merchants were given instruction individually and collectively in seminars on various crime prevention topics and were regularly briefed on current crime trends. Both the community police officer and crime prevention personnel conducted security assessments on individual businesses and made recommendation on environmental and physical security. Many businesses utilized this

information to employ crime prevention through environmental design principles to make their establishments safer.

Through the coordination of the community police officer and his supervisor, other officers and detectives were brought in to target specific illegal activities. These activities included auto thefts, robberies, drug use and dealing, larcenies from vehicles, disorderly subjects loitering in shopping areas, and vice offenses occurring in store and mall bathrooms. The activities resulted in numerous arrests and the recovery of stolen property and drugs.

Another response to a problem was the formation of a partnership with Project Safe Place, Cloverleaf Mall and the Police Department. Project Safe Place is a national program that aids teens in crisis. The program has to be affiliated with a licensed shelter for teens. The program establishes businesses as safe havens for teens that are in some sort of trouble such as being a crime victim, runaway, lost, or simply in need of shelter. Once a teen accesses a Safe Place site a trained volunteer is dispatched to the business to attend to the teenager's needs. Recognizing that the Mall has a large population of teenagers who "hangout" at their mall, the mall management provided funding to start the program in Chesterfield County with the Corridor being the first area to be established. Starting the program involved hiring two staff members setting up a board of directors, and finding office space. The community police officer was

appointed to the board of directors and worked closely with the Safe Place staff in establishing the program.

In October 1998 the Police Department further illustrated its commitment to the area by opening the Department's first district station within the Corridor. Chesterfield County is broken into two large patrol districts, the north district and south district. The Midlothian Station is the command and control center for all north district patrol operations. Approximately 100 patrol officers and supervisors are deployed from the Station. The fact that the Station was placed in the Corridor directly related to our ongoing community policing efforts in the Corridor.

The most recent response in this continuing project was the opening of a community policing office in the regional mall within the last year. This 2500 square foot facility has an interactive display area, an office for the community police officers and area . patrol officers, a classroom for public education and a storage area. Much of the funding and equipment was donated by local businesses including the store space, which is donated by the mall's owners. When the community policing office was opened, two full-time community police officers were assigned to work the mall and surrounding area. These efforts show the continuing commitment on the part of the Police Department to ensure the continued success of this program.

The resources that were available to the police department were numerous. All areas of the Police Department gave their full cooperation. Within the county government we worked with the Planning Department, Building Inspectors Office, License Inspectors Office, the County Planning Commission, the County Board of Supervisors, the Fire Department's Fire Prevention Section, and the Health Department. We also partnered with private groups such as the Gateway Business Association, the Richmond Retail Merchants Association the Virginia Crime Prevention Association, and Project Safe Place.

All of the listed resources were involved in the response to some or all of the problems. Some of the difficulties encountered surrounded code enforcement issues. Some business owners did not understand the importance of code compliance and keeping the area clean as it relates to crime. In overcoming this obstacle, the community police officer explained how the Police Department subscribes to "the Broken Windows Theory" and many business managers and owner began to come around to an understanding. Another obstacle was the volume of work that was given to other county departments as a result of the community police officer's proactive problem solving approach. This program, as well as other community policing projects within the County, gave an unanticipated large workload to several other agencies within the county government. This increased workload strained the resources of the system in place at the time. As a result, a concerted effort on the part of the Police Department

was made to gain voluntary compliance and the County's response to zoning complaints was streamlined.

D. Assessment

As stated in the program summary, we had three goals:

- / Reduce Uniform Crime Report Part One Offenses.
- / Establish effective partnerships with the business community in order to solve problems in the area.
- / Improve the area by significantly impacting the area's state of decay through effective code enforcement.

In regard to the reduction of U.C.R. Part One Offenses, we far surpassed our expectations. From 1995-1999 Part One Offenses have declined by **55.16%**. However Chesterfield County as a whole experienced only a 6.59% reduction of Part One Offenses during the same period. Calls for service also fell from 4264 in 1995 to 2903 in 1999 in the Corridor. The partnership goals were realized through our close work with the County Planning Department, the formation of the Gateway Business Association and our partnership with Cloverleaf Mall in the establishment of the community policing office. Area business managers now expect to see a police officer stop in their store rather than be surprised by a visit. The business community has come to look to the community police officers assigned to the program as the community caretakers. But, they also realize that they must participate in the process of making the Corridor a better place.

In regard to our third goal of cleaning up the Corridor we have made a significant impact and continue to work on this issue. The Corridor is much cleaner and aesthetically pleasing. Many illegal businesses have been removed and new businesses have moved into the area and fewer are leaving.

We measure our results from statistical data presented to us through crime analysis and from feedback the merchants in the corridor. Crime and calls for service are down and merchants tell us their customers say they feel safer and their customer base is growing. Another measure is the lack of negative media attention. Rarely do we read in the newspaper or see on television reports of crime or how rampant crime is in the Corridor any more.

The Chesterfield Police Department continues to monitor the activity in the area through daily crime summaries, weekly crime analysis reports and monthly reports tailored specifically to the Corridor. Although our job has gotten easier, we will still need to continue to work to maintain the progress we have made and to work hard to make further progress. Our commitment this is illustrated by the assignment of two additional community police officers to Cloverleaf Mall and the opening of the community policing office.

Agency and Officer Information

Prior to the inception of this program, all sworn officers within the Police Department were given an 8-hour block of instruction on community policing and civilian staff received 4 hours of training. Officers are offered advanced community policing training in annual in-service training. Officers assigned to the formal program areas within Chesterfield receive advanced community policing and problem solving training from the Virginia Community Policing Institute and Virginia Crime Prevention Association.

Incentives are given to officers engaging in community policing in several ways. In the Departments Career Development Program officers who work in community policing are given incentive points, which aid them in attaining the different ranks within career development. Officers active in community policing are looked upon favorably when competing in the supervisors promotional process. Officers are also routinely given spot bonuses for outstanding work, which involves problem solving activity.

The main issue/problem identified was the separation between beat officers and the community police officers. This was overcome by the community police officers regularly attending patrol roll and call detective meetings where they shared and exchanged information with both groups.

To date, three officers are assigned to community policing within the Corridor. The original position dedicated to the entire Corridor and two assigned to the Cloverleaf Mall Community Policing Office. The original position was not a budgeted community policing position. The position was reallocated from a patrol shift. The opening of the Community Policing Office was not planned for or funded in the Police Department Budget. The establishment of the Community Policing Office was underwritten by local businesses.

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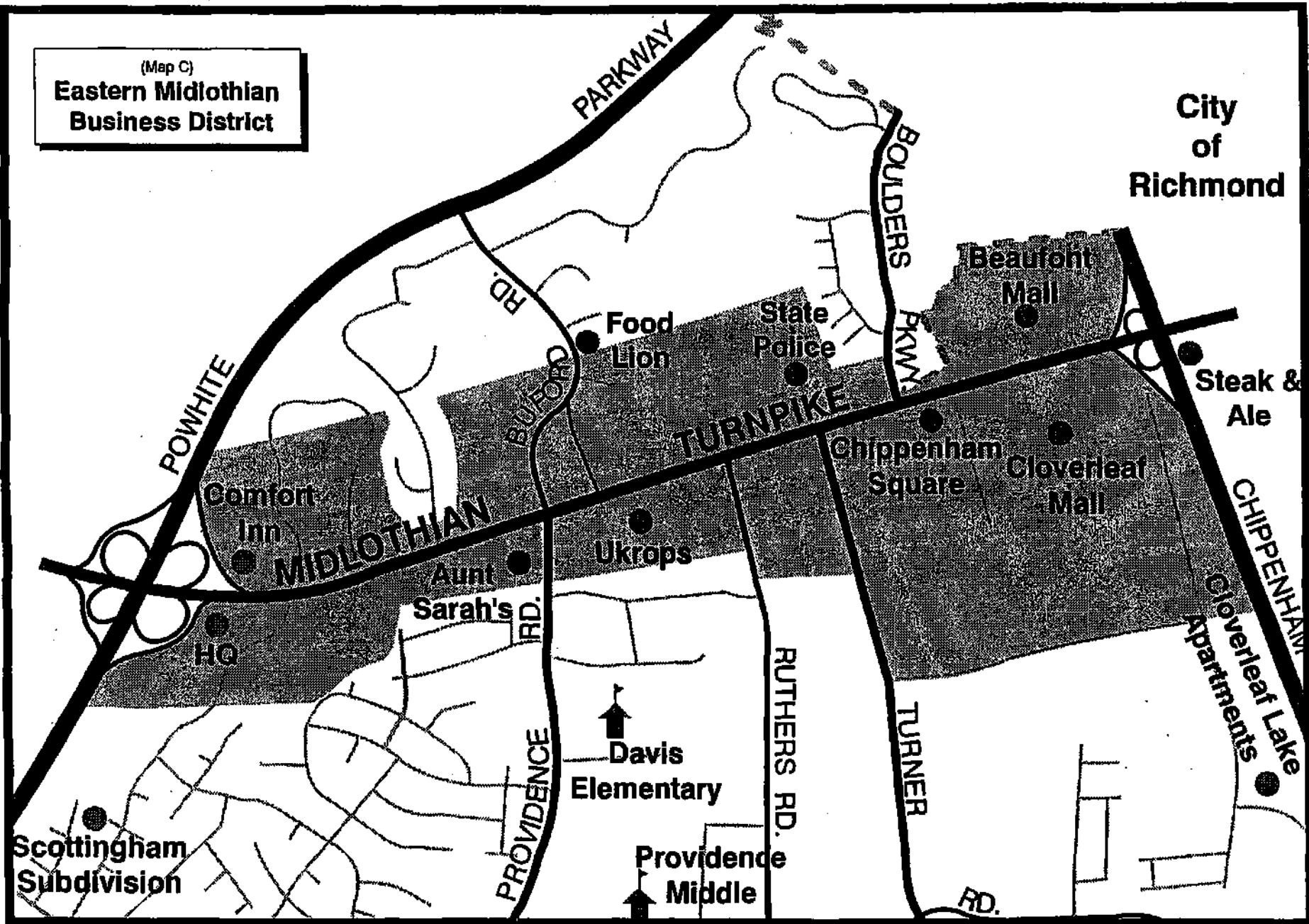
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(Map C)
**Eastern Midlothian
 Business District**



North

Not to scale

Prepared by the Chesterfield County Planning Dept.

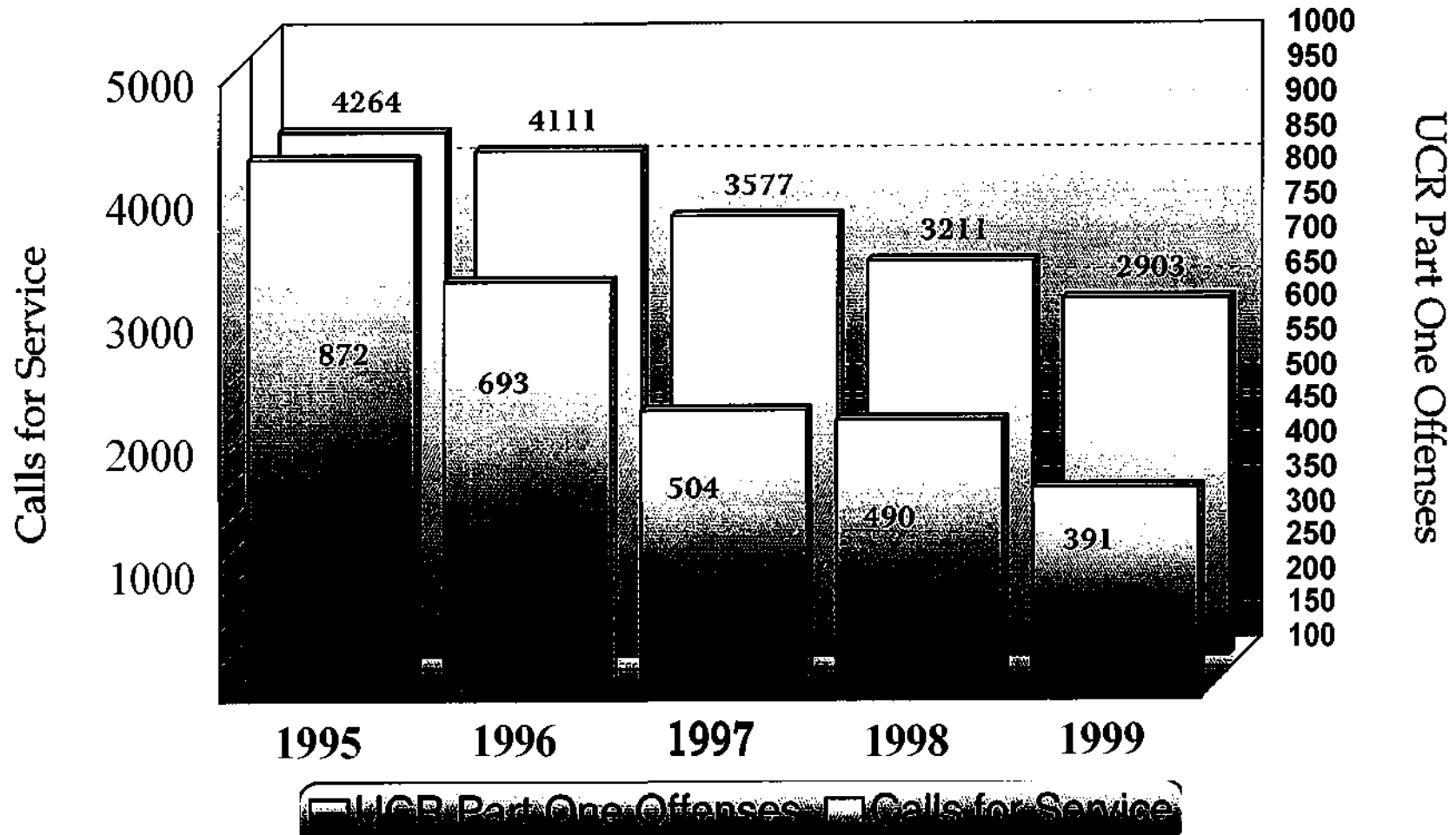


Business District Boundary

*District boundary is approximate.

Bas-tern Micflof man Turn i Business Corridor

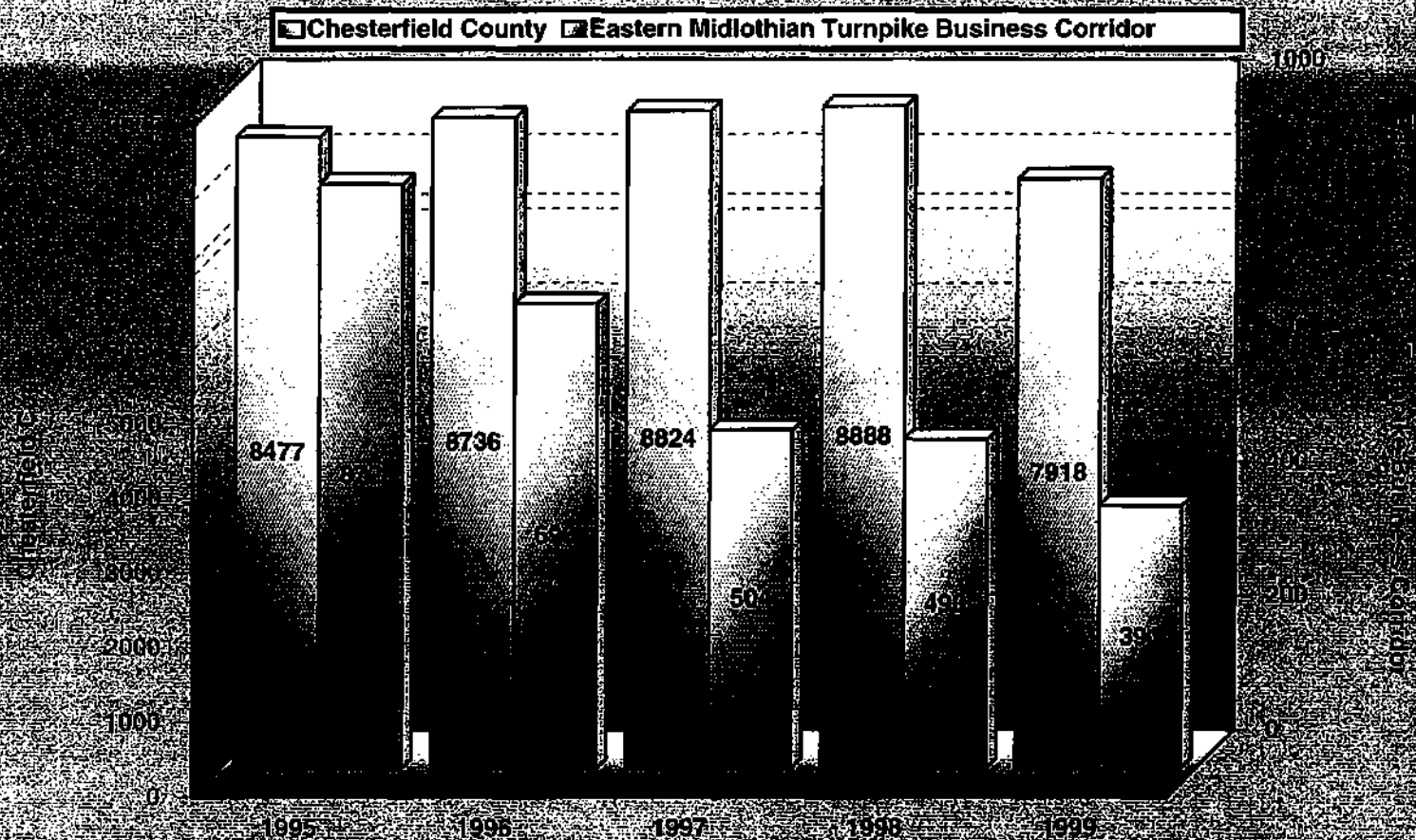
Calendar Years 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, & 1999



Calls for Service figures include 181 RMS "2000" series reports

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**UCR Part One Offenses:
Chesterfield County & the Eastern Midlothian Turnpike Business Corridor
Calendar Years 1995 - 1999**



For the listed five year interval, UCR Part One Offenses in Chesterfield County decreased 6.59%. During the same five year interval, UCR Part One Offenses occurring within the Eastern Midlothian Turnpike Business Corridor decreased 55.16%.

Source: Annual Report