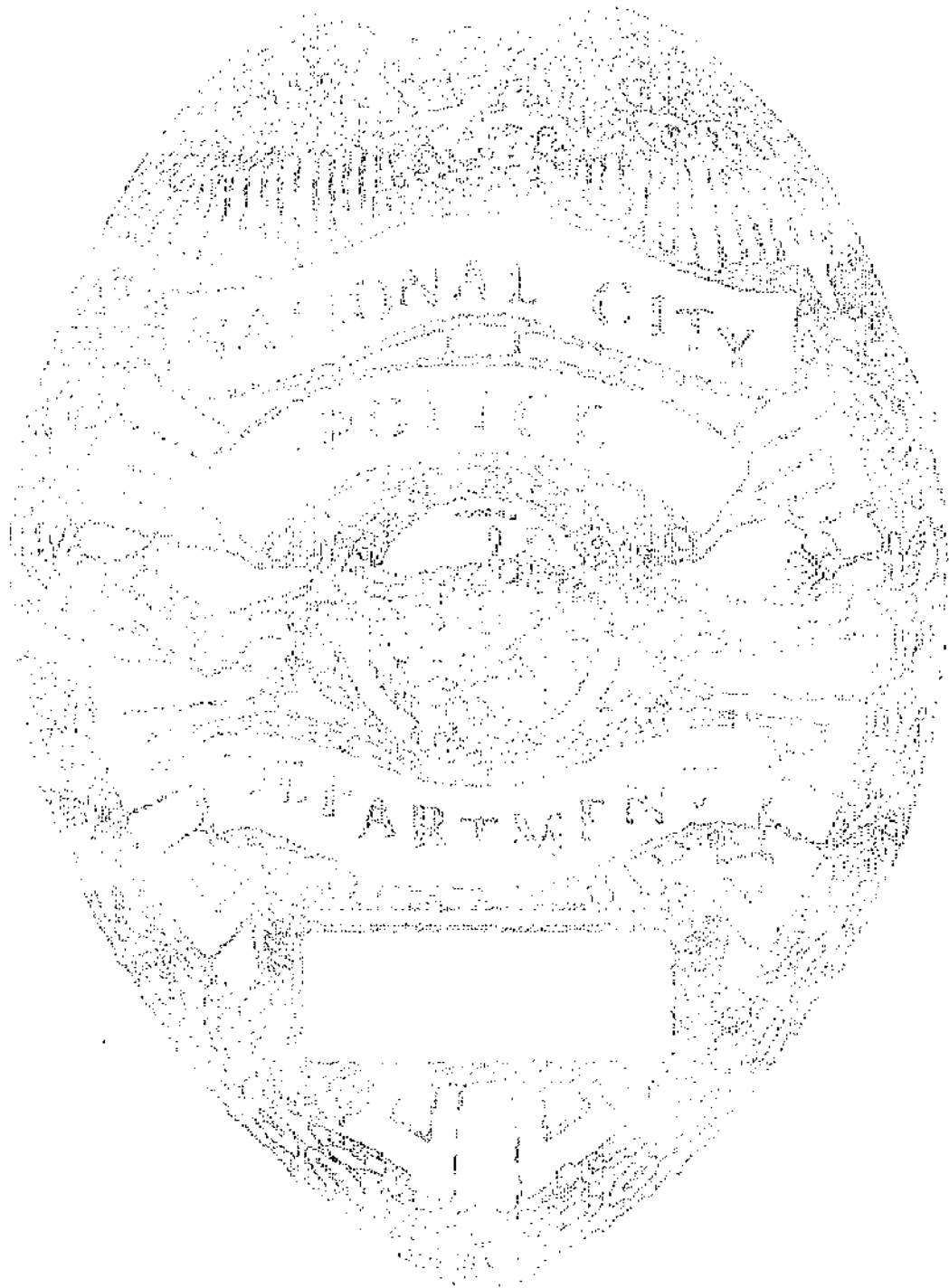


National City Police Department



West-Side Community Improvement Project



"THE WESTSIDE" COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

SUBMITTED IN CONSIDERATION FOR THE

HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD

SUMMARY

SCANNING: The oldest part of National City historically has been referred to as the "West Side". As time progressed, the "West Side" transformed into an area that truly symbolized the Broken Window Theory. The oldest street gang in San Diego County, "Old Town National City", had terrorized the neighborhood for several years. The West Side was the hub for OTNC activity, and it was in this dimly lit area that the gang furthered their criminal enterprises. The members were responsible for acts as minor as vandalism and as heinous as murder.

The West Side is a multi-zoned area consisting of residential properties, as well as light industrial and automotive businesses. The multi-zoning issue created problems such as inadequate parking, and the public consumption of alcohol by off-duty employees.

Because of the problems caused by the gang members combined with the multi-zoning issues, many residential owners in the area lacked motivation to provide maintenance and renovations to their properties. This lack of pride in ownership lead to the overall dilapidation of the majority of residences on the West Side.

ANALYSIS: The analysis was gathered by several means. Statistical data was gathered from the Crime Analysis Unit, as well as from other police department databases. This analysis revealed there were 935 calls for police service in the area.

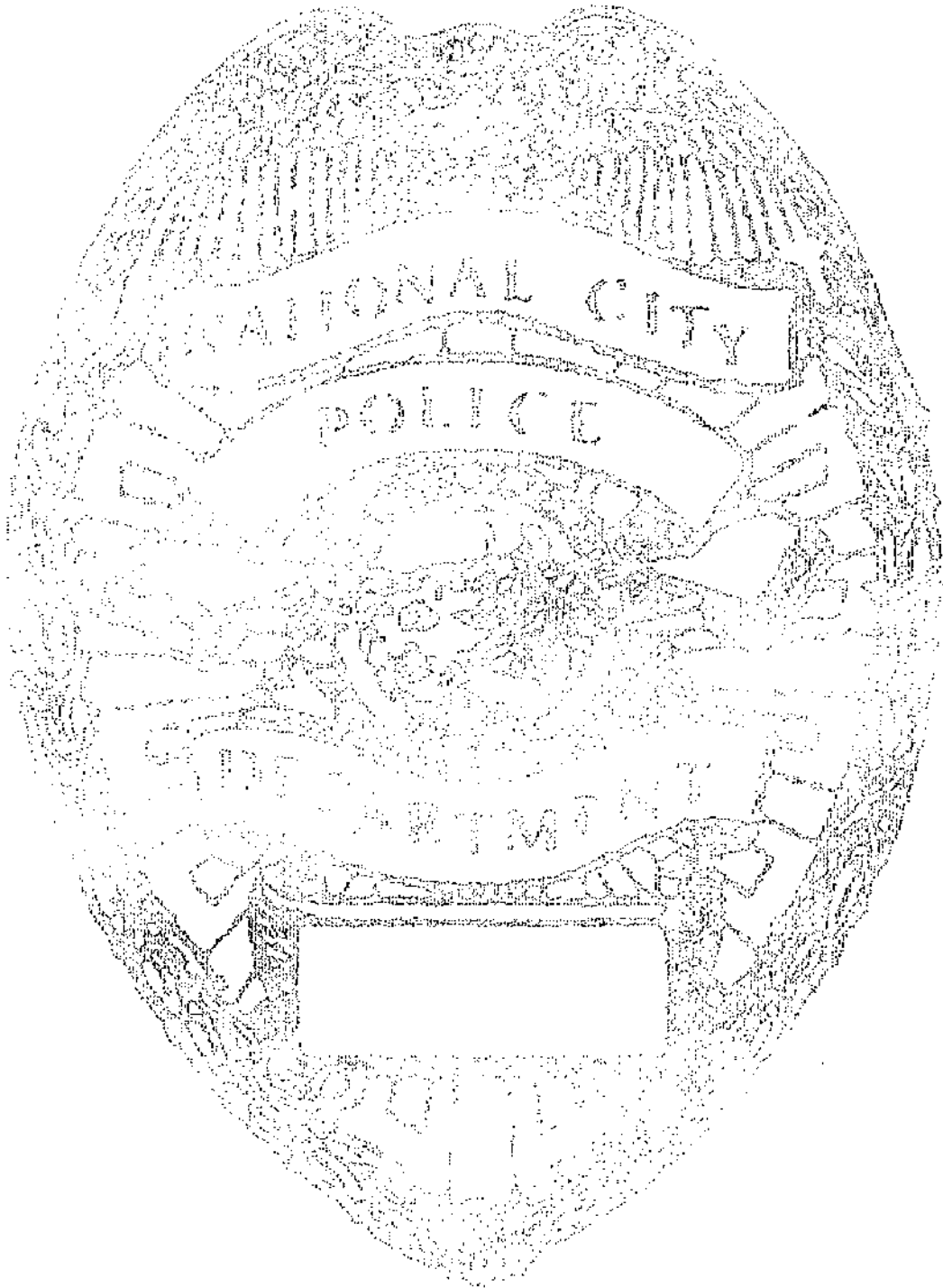
Other analysis was gathered by visual observations and from talking with more tenured officers in the department as well as those working patrol. Citizen interviews regarding the issues were also conducted.

RESPONSE: The National City Police Department's Neighborhood Police Department initiated a comprehensive, multi-faceted,

community oriented policing project at the beginning of January, 1998. The project was thoroughly planned to address:

- 1) Suppressing the large amount of gang activity.
- 2) Providing adequate street lighting in the area.
- 3) Working with agencies such as Code Conformance and Building & Safety to address unsafe substandard housing.
- 4) Providing information to the homeowners in the West Side community regarding low interest improvement loans available through the Community Development Commission

ASSESSMENT: The project has transformed the West Side of the City of National City into a more suitable place for the residence and business owners alike. The area is now adequately lit; many property owners in the area have completed significant improvements. Gang activity in the area is almost non-existent, and most importantly, the project has yielded an overall 52% decrease in calls for service from 01/01/98 through 12/31/1999.



National City Police Department Neighborhood Policing Team "West Side" Community Improvement Project

DESCRIPTION:

A. SCANNING:

1. What was the nature of the problem?

The "West Side" of the City of National City, is the oldest populated portion of the city. The heart of the West Side has historically been plagued with all sorts of criminal activity. The residents seemed to have reached a point of "no hope" due to being frustrated by the problems in the neighborhood. Absentee landlords seemed to contribute greatly to the problem by renting substandard housing.

Because there was an obvious zoning conflict in the area regarding the amount of light industrial businesses erected built next door to single and multi-family residences, many problems arose such as parking, abandoned vehicles, and the public consumption of alcoholic beverages

in front of youth. The consumption of alcoholic beverages was mostly a problem with **workers** from nearby businesses.

The West Side was the hub for San Diego County's oldest street-gang, Old Town National City (OTNC). The gang was relentless in its criminal activity and had a large presence on the West Side. With over 350 documented members, it was not uncommon to witness 30 to 40 gang members loitering in large numbers in front of certain residences in the area. Members of this gang were responsible for acts as minor as vandalism and as heinous as murder.

Because the gang members were always loitering so close to a corner liquor store, they randomly victimized the owner, his staff, and his family. Several gang members committed heinous physical assaults against the store clerks. Many times the clerks were attacked with deadly weapons and robbed.

2. How was the problem identified?

While the problems on the West Side were common knowledge among the police department, the true magnitude of the situation could not be known until an in-depth analysis was done. The statistics gathered from the police department's Crime Analysis Unit revealed what most suspected, that officers were responding to a large number of calls for service on the West Side.

Additionally, many complaints had come to the attention of the police department via the City Mayor's Office, or from members of the City Council. Over several years, these complaints resulted in numerous problem oriented policing projects being conducted by patrol officers, almost all ending with no long-term results.

3. Who identified the problem?

See above.

4. Far more problems are identified than can be explored adequately. How and why was this problem selected among other problems?

The gang problems on the West Side were very "in your face" in a manner of speaking. To elaborate, two major gang houses were located off of a major arterial roadway. With so many gang members loitering in mass in public view, many professionals often elected not to do business in the City of National City. This infuriated several businesses based on the West Side. Many had tolerated being victimized by the gang, but drew the line when the gang problems generated a decline in their business. By now, many owners were threatening to relocate their businesses, even at the expense of a higher overhead because of the gang presence.

The gang problems had escalated and become so large geographically that it was affecting the entire city. All of these things considered, the West Side was deserving of immediate attention.

5. What was the initial level of diagnosis/unit of analysis (e.g., crime type, neighborhood, specific premise, specific offender group, etc?)

The criminal activity on the West Side consisted of, but was not limited to, drug dealing, auto theft, assaults, vandalism, robberies and burglaries (residential & commercial). The dilapidated housing was a huge contributing factor to these problems but was more symptomatic in nature. The main problem was still gang activity. The overwhelming presence of gang members was a catalyst for many other criminal problems. Much of the activity proved to be enterprising for the gang members, such as armed robberies, auto theft, and narcotic activities.

B. ANALYSIS:

1) What methods, data and information sources were used to analyze the problem?

Statistical data regarding the amount of calls for service, the amount of crime reports as well as the most prevalent crime types, was done by the department's Crime Analysis Unit. Additional information regarding the specifics of crime cases, as well as officer contacts were obtained by

utilizing a county wide computer database. More tenured and beat officers within the police department were interviewed regarding the long-term problems on the West Side.

The Neighborhood Policing Team (NPT) went to the residents on the West Side and interviewed them. Many were exhausted with the problems and wanted to share their experiences. This supported all notions regarding residents being frustrated over the quality of life in the area.

2) History: How long was it a problem?

The problems on the West Side are believed to have existed for well over 15 years. The high volume of criminal and gang activity is well documented from 1991 to 1998. The problems peaked from 1993 to 1997.

3) Who was involved in the problem (offenders, victims, others) and what were their respective motivations, gains and losses?

The offender group was identified as OTNC gang members. Their motivation to further promote themselves was purely at the expense of the entire community.

The victims were the residents and business owners in the community. While the gang victimized several businesses, the corner liquor store (Cozine's) was violated the most.

Many residents were on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, and could not financially afford relocating citizens are third generation residents of the West Side and are living in homes willed to them by their grandparents and parents. In short, many could not leave the neighborhood if they wanted to and some do not want to leave because it is their neighborhood.

The stakeholders in resolving this problem were the residents, police department, the corner liquor store (Cozine's Liquor), and the City of National City as a whole. These stakeholders had everything to gain from a long-term solution for the problems on the West Side.

4) What harms resulted from the problem?

The harms were many. Many families living on the West Side were conditioned to stay in their homes after dark to avoid being caught in the middle of gang violence. Many of these same families had their homes burglarized, vehicles stolen, and property vandalized by OTNC. The feeling of being violated effected the quality of life of those living in the community.

The extent of the harm done by OTNC did not stop with the residents being victimized and in fact extended to the businesses. Business owners incurred great financial and equipment losses at the hands of gang members. Some business owners also suffered physical and emotional harm at the hand of the gang members.

5) How was the problem being addressed before the problem-solving project? What were the results of those responses?

The problems on the West Side were most often addressed through traditional police methods of enforcement. This proved, as would be

expected, to only render temporary solutions/Over the years when the problems on the West Side were at their peak, there were at least 20 Problem Oriented Policing projects initiated. Almost all of these projects were concluded with no long-term results. One officer initiated a project that created permanent solutions for a multi-family dwelling located on the West Side. This officer's work foreshadowed the type of action that would bring about long-term solutions to the problems. The officer established a relationship with the frustrated property owner of the small apartment complex. After assisting the owner in evicting the problematic tenants, he then encouraged him to make aesthetic changes.

6)What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem?

When examining the analysis that was gathered, it painted a clearer picture of why traditional policing methods were failing. Many officers were placing faith in arrests, extra patrols, and field contacts to solve problems. These approaches yielded temporary results. They were treating the symptoms of the problems and not the root cause. The

high amount of calls for service along with the multitude of crime and arrest reports being accumulated year after year only supported this fact.

7) What did the analysis reveal about the nature and the extent of the problem?

While it seemed to be common knowledge that officers spent a great amount of time responding to calls in the 1.5 square mile area, no one would have guessed that the annual amount of calls from January 1, 1997 to December of 1997 exceeded the 1,100 mark. 1126 calls for service generated from the heart of the West Side. The amount of gang related calls for the same area and time frame totaled 138.

8) What situational information was needed to better understand the problem (e.g. time of occurrence, location, and other particulars re: the environment, etc)?

It became clear the community on the West Side did not have the means to work together to bring about change. The residents lacked a "sense of community" due in part to being broken up by mixed zoning.

9) Was there an open discussion with the community about the problem?

There were different forums to establish dialogue with the community. First, a community hotline was activated for those residents on the West Side to directly inform police of problems or to ask questions. Each home on the West Side was informed of this service in English and Spanish.

Secondly, many homeowners from the project area were invited to a community meeting to discuss the problems on the West Side. Those in attendance freely asked questions regarding any problems they experienced.

Lastly, members of NPT went out into the West Side community and conducted interviews with anyone who wanted to express their concerns regarding the gang problems.

C. RESPONSE:

1) What ranges of possible response alternatives were considered to deal with the problem?

It was initially believed that the concentration of illegal immigrants in the area was due to a smuggler or smuggling ring working in the area. An initial plan was to involve the United States Border Patrol to help investigate this issue. Once NPT examined the issue it was discovered that this problem was not significant

It was also believed that juveniles who lived in the area were regularly truant and loitering on the West Side during the day. Again, after starting the project it was discovered that truancy on the West Side was not of concern.

2) What responses did you use to address the problem?

Upon initiating the plan for improvement in this community, it was decided that the changes would be put into effect within a 12-month time frame. When re-evaluating the complexity and amount of problems to be dealt with, the project lasted close to 24 months.

Four members of NPT were assigned to create long-term solutions for these issues on the West Side. Each officer who was involved in the project was tasked with developing a precise plan of action utilizing both conventional and unconventional methodology of policing. The following are brief descriptions of the solutions that were implemented.

A) At the start of the project, NPT distributed leaflets to all of the residents and businesses on the West Side. The leaflets were written in English and Spanish.

The main purpose of distributing the leaflets was to announce the project to the community and solicit their help in making it a success. The leaflets that were distributed made the West Side community aware of the geographic boundaries of the project, as well as the quality of life issues being addressed.

The leaflets listed the issues to be addressed by NPT. The most important of these issues were:

- 1) Suppressing the large amount of gang activity.

- 2) Providing adequate street lighting in the area.
- 3) Working with other agencies such as code conformance as well as building and safety to address unsafe and substandard housing.
- 4) Providing information to homeowners in the area on low interest improvement loans that were possibly available through the city's Community Development Commission.

After highlighting the purposes for doing the community oriented policing project the leaflets also unveiled **"The West Side Community Improvement Hotline."** This was a non-emergency phone-line equipped with a voice-mail. Citizens could call the hotline and report criminal activity, housing concerns, or request extra patrol. These hotlines were checked up to three times a day by NPT. This maintained an open line of communication with the community 24 hours a day and provided anonymity for informers.

B) To address the many substandard structures in the area, NPT began to solicit help of the property owners. To facilitate this partnership, many owners of suspected substandard dwellings on

the West Side were invited to attend a community meeting. The meeting served other purposes as well, but most **importantly**, it was structured to motivate them toward improving their properties.

At least 50-60% of the property owners were in attendance at the community meeting. Initially, the purpose and focus of the project was covered. Because many of the rental properties were **mismanaged**, proper management and tenant screening procedures were discussed. All of the owners who rented or leased their properties were urged to join the local Apartment Manager's Association. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques were then covered. The owners were given examples of how to make CPTED work for them.

Following the topic of CPTED, a presentation from the Building & Safety Department was done. The representative from Building & Safety covered the most common violations he observes in homes. The property owners on the West Side were encouraged to fix any perceived problems before the time came for an inspection.

The meeting was concluded with a representative from the city's Community Development Commission speaking on how owners could obtain low interest loans with their assistance.

C) Two of the many houses on the West Side were not only substandard but were major locations for gang members to congregate. Gang members actually resided at each of these residences. One family whose son was a prominent gang member, had lived in their house for over 15 years. NPT and the owner began working toward evicting the problem families and demolishing both houses.

D) In an effort to restore a sense of pride and unity in the community, NPT organized a major community clean up. To spread the word regarding the event NPT used flyers and the newspaper. Everyone played an active role in the event. This event netted nearly 50 volunteers who cleaned the entire West Side neighborhood. Volunteers painted out graffiti, picked up trash, and cleaned vacant

lots throughout the neighborhood. . Several major chain businesses donated materials and refreshments for volunteers. The event was a total success.

E) As a crime preventative measure and a means of environmental improvement, an inventory was taken of all the lighting that was not working. SDG&E was contacted and lighting in the area was restored to adequately illuminate the area.

F) The corner liquor store had experienced random acts of violence at the hand of gang members and the employees were genuinely concerned for their safety. NPT assisted the storeowner in authoring a court petition for a restraining order against those gang members responsible for committing criminal acts.

G) In order to curb public drunkenness, NPT first sent letters to all of the business in and around the neighborhood advising them, and their employees, of the applicable violations of the law. The letter advised that a "zero tolerance" stance would be taken toward enforcement of the law. Those who would not fret being cited,

would be concerned regarding repercussions from their boss regarding violating company policy.

H) To combat the problem with public alcohol consumption in the area NPT began conducting Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) type enforcement operations such as "Cops in Shops." Cops in Shops is a program where officers work undercover on or around licensed ABC locations and arrest persons buying alcohol for minors, drinking in public, or other related violations.

I) The problems with parking and abandoned vehicles were mostly due to the over saturation of automotive businesses. NPT wrote the owners of these businesses and informed them of the applicable vehicle code statues and city ordinances regarding vehicles parked or left on the city streets. NPT worked with the traffic division to ensure that all of the appropriate vehicle codes were enforced to ease the parking congestion.

J) Addressing the OTNC Street gang problem seemed to be another project in itself, but the reality was they were the problem on the West Side.

To combat the gang problem, NPT chose to seek a gang injunction. The City of National City was only the second city to obtain a court order restricting gang members activity. Additionally, the total targets, or **defendants**, that were being focused on with the injunction was an unprecedented number in San Diego County (66

The amount of work involved in gathering the supporting data to obtain the gang injunction was phenomenal. The Department of Justice in the State of California clearly outlined the criteria to be able to document a person as being any gang member. While adhering to these guidelines, over 350 members of the OTNC gang were properly documented. Of the 350, 66 were selected because of their activity to promote the gang. Much of this

information was gathered during a major gang sweep organized by NPT that involved several agencies.

To assist in identifying the most prominent gang members, NPT took an interesting and innovative approach. NPT coordinated several "mock interviews" around the City of National City. The mock interviews were designed to have a law enforcement officer pose as a television journalist and poll gang members around the area regarding their habits & activities (criminal and otherwise). A series of pre-designated questions were asked of each gang member while they were video taped. The interviews had every characteristic of being authentic. The interviewer and cameraman had professional credentials, a television camera, and were dressed in business attire.

This effort was such a success the entire footage was shown to a panel of government and police officials during a symposium addressing gang violence in San Diego County. This footage was also instrumental in obtaining the gang injunction.

Once the preliminary injunction was granted, a second massive gang sweep involving over 100 law enforcement officials was organized with a primary purpose of serving the defendants (the gang members).). The injunction prohibits these defendants from being within so many feet of another gang member and engaging in gang related activities such as using hand gang signs, or wearing clothing associating them with the gang. It was already expected that most named on the injunction would avoid service, which was not a set back. The injunction was later granted on a permanent basis and is key in the decrease in calls for service at the conclusion of this project.

3) How did you develop a response as a result of your analysis?

We developed our response as a result of utilizing the crime analysis as well as using our experiences and knowledge.

4) What evaluation criteria were most important to the department before implementation of the response alternative(s) (e.g., legality, community values, potential effectiveness, cost, practicality, etc.)?

It was important to maintain a long term and effective partnership with both the residents and the business owners on the "west-side". There was a great concern regarding conducting fair and unbiased parking enforcement so neither a business owner or resident would feel mistreated.

While urging the property owners to take action in rectifying their substandard houses, it was important to accomplish this tactfully. We wanted to work with the owners and not make them feel "bullied".

When it came to the obtaining the injunction against the 66 members of OTNC, it was of great concern to maintain the ability to defend its constitutionality both in court and to the public. Additionally, NPT was

prepared to deal with the displacement factor pending with the success of the injunction.

5) What did you intend to accomplish with your response plan (i.e. project goal and corresponding measurable objectives)?

The objective was to bring about a decrease in calls for service, criminal and gang activity while simultaneously improving the quality of life and aesthetics in the neighborhood.

6) What resources were available to help you solve the problem?

There were a variety of resources available to ensure the success of this project. The City Attorney's Office was a resource that was utilized to obtain the gang injunction. The Public Works Department assisted by donating their equipment for neighborhood a cleanup. San Diego Gas & Electric assisted by repairing the broken lights in the neighborhood. Several law enforcement agencies also assisted by lending their

personnel to work at both major gang sweeps. The city Building & Safety Departments assisted by conducting housing inspections at the request of NPT.

7) What was done before you implemented your response plan?

Please refer to the "Scanning" and "Analysis" sections.

8) What difficulties were encountered during response implementation?

When doing project of this size, setbacks and difficulties are bound to happen. One specific problem was with the owners of the neighboring automotive establishments. When the parking violations were enforced, and the vehicles with expired registration were towed from the streets, many of these owners became disgruntle. They were very willing to acknowledge the parking problems but would not face the reality of being part of the problem. The increase in parking enforcement resulted in claims of unfairness being made to the Mayor's office, City

Council members, Chief of **Police**, as well as other department heads in the police department.

Another difficulty was with the amount of work needed to conduct the documentation for the gang injunction. NPT performed all of the documentation and investigation for the City Attorney as needed.

The owner of the two problematic gang houses on the West Side was initially reluctant to cooperate with the police department. After NPT established a rapport with the owner, it was discovered the he had discouraging past experiences with the City of National City regarding his businesses. After realizing this, NPT encouraged the owner to realize the need to work with the police department to solve the problems occurring at the two residences.

9) Who was involved in the response to your problem?

Please refer to previously answered questions.

3) Who was involved in the evaluation?

Input regarding the success of the project was taken from all of those involved. The overall success of the project was graded by gaining input from patrol officers, statistics gathered from crime analysis, as well as feedback from the community.

4) Were there problems in implementing the response plan?

Please refer to the answer to question #8.

5) If there was no improvement in the problem, were there other systematic efforts considered to handle the problem?

Not applicable.

6) What response goals were accomplished?

Assessment analysis indicates the goals and objectives of the response were met. This is also affirmed by observation of the overall appearance of the area.

7) How did you measure your results?

Previously answered.

8) What data supported your conclusions?

Previously answered.

9) How could you have made the response more effective?

When anyone coordinates a concerted effort to make change, the mistake that is often made is not communicating with those who are also involved. The response would have been more effective if communication would have been consistently maintained.

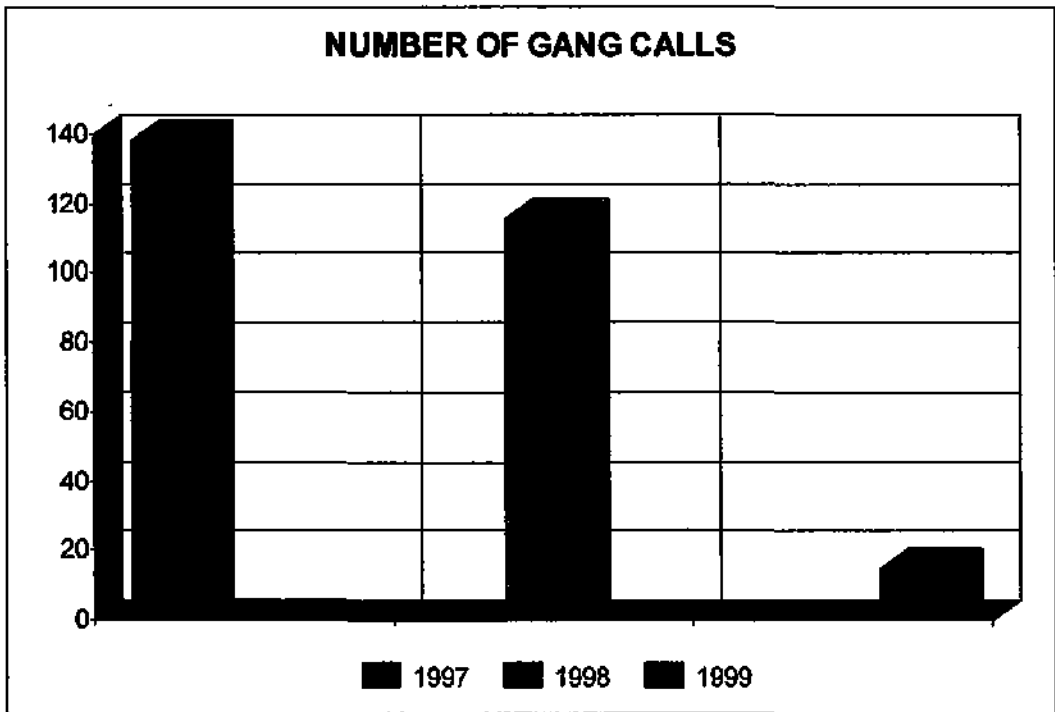
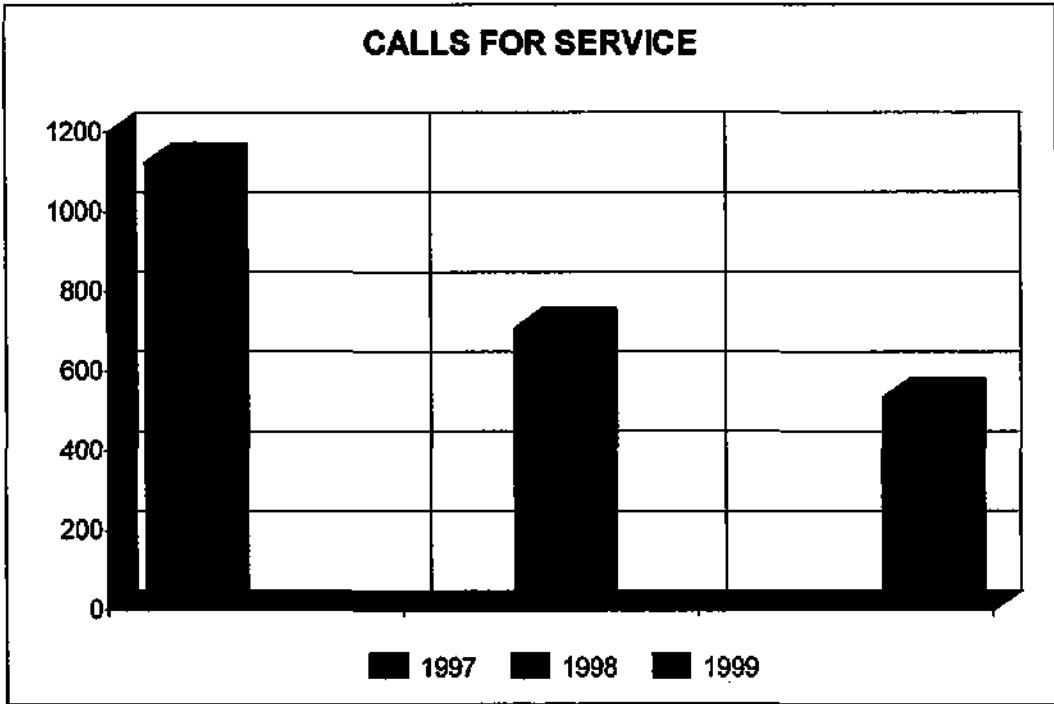
10) Was there concern about displacement (i.e. pushing the problem somewhere else)?

Yes, there was a great deal of concern with displacement of the gang members and pushing the problems to other sections of the city. Interesting, enough, the displacement factor has so far worked to the advantage of the project. When members of the gang are encountered in other parts of the city, they are usually by themselves or in small groups. They are nowhere near as much of a problem now as they

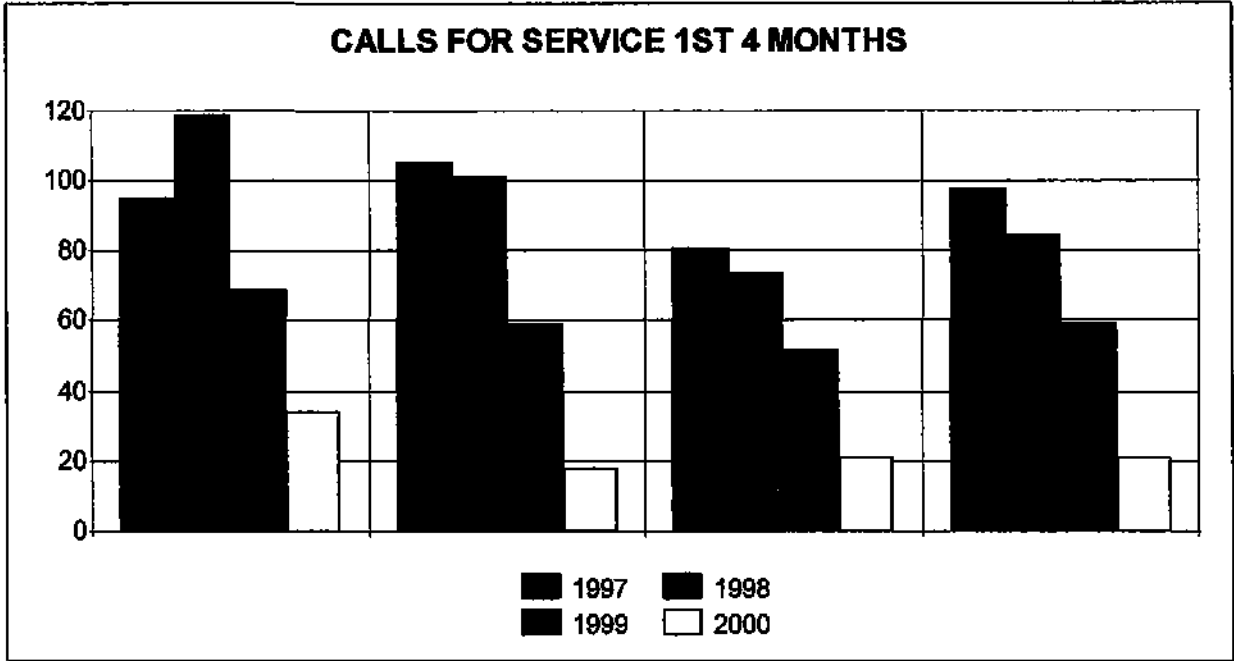
cannot legally gather in mass. A comparison can be made to that of a major corporation with no headquarters—it makes it hard to function!

11) Will your response require continued monitoring or a continuing effort to maintain your results?

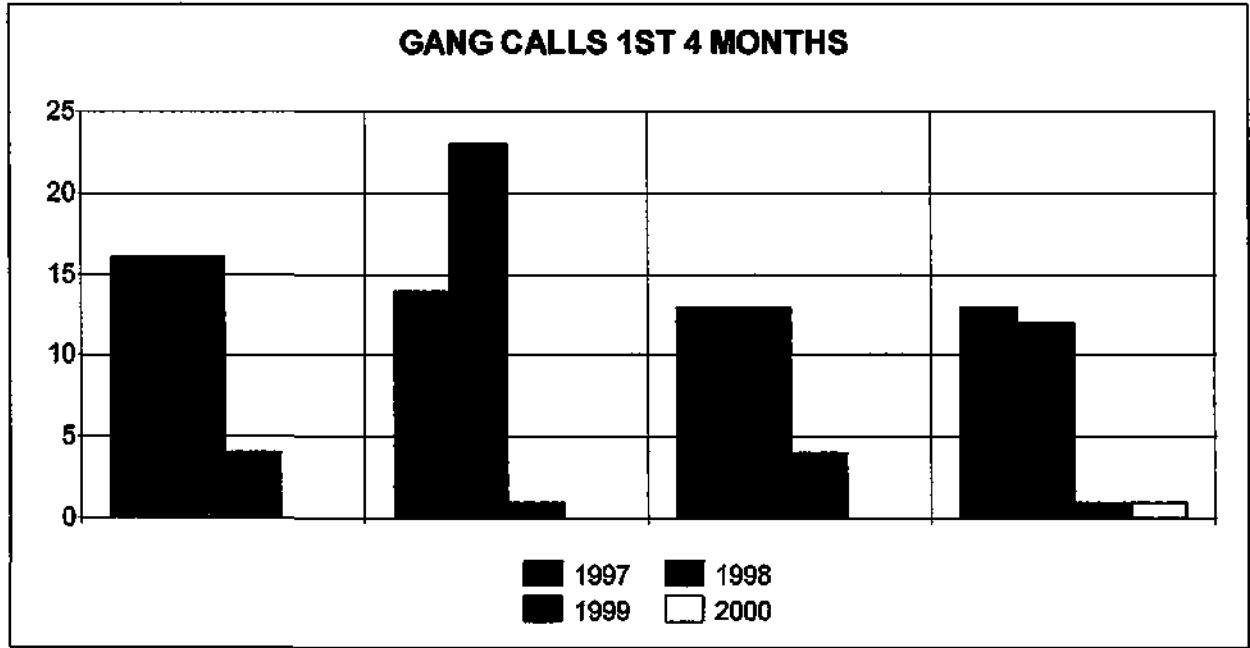
Absolutely! The reason so many of the property owners willingly cooperated in the project was because they saw the police department actually doing something about the program in the community. If there is no continued monitoring of the problem, the same situations will reoccur. It is equally important to monitor the program to ensure that gang members do not disregard the gang injunction. It is imperative to monitor the younger gang members in the event they attempt to reinitiate gang activities for veteran gang members who are part of the injunction.



CALLS FOR SERVICE 1ST 4 MONTHS



GANG CALLS 1ST 4 MONTHS



**SUBMITTED IN CONSIDERATION FOR THE
HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM ORIENTED
POLICING**

AGENCY and OFFICER INFORMATION

- 1) At what level of the police organization was this problem-solving initiative adopted (e.g., the entire department, a few select officers, etc.)?**

This particular Community Oriented Policing effort was adopted by our department's Neighborhood Policing Team (NPT). NPT is a proactive policing unit staffed with six officers on a permanent basis. NPT has, time after time, achieved great success when utilizing POP means and methods. NPT by design was intended to supplement the department's endeavors toward Community Oriented Policing.

While NPT was responsible for organizing this initiative, it was a total departmental effort. With strong support from the Chief of Police down to the Division Lieutenant, and the assistance gained from the patrol sergeants and officers, this effort was destined to be a success. Patrol was

invaluable when it came to enforcement measures, and keeping NPT up to date with information such as gang related reports, contacts, and activity or displacement of the problems we were addressing.

2) Did officers or management receive any training in problem-oriented policing and/or problem solving before this project began or during its execution?

The officers assigned to NPT who were involved in this endeavor have received training either prior to, or during this project. In addition to attending select Problem and Community Oriented Policing training, every member of the Neighborhood Policing Team has attended the POP conference several years in a row.

3) Were additional incentives given to police officers who engaged in problem solving?

There were no incentives given to officers purse, however, problem solving is of the highest priority within our department. Problem Solving is also a big part of officers' annual evaluations within our police department.

4) What resources and guidelines (manuals, past problem solving examples, etc) were used, if any, by police officers to help them manage this problem solving initiative.

Every genuine problem solving effort within our police department is bound and stored as a ready resource for officers to utilize. Within NPT, every project this is done is also bound and also readily available as a departmental resource. All of the projects that done by NPT officers follow the S.A.R.A. model and are designed to fully detail what methods of problem solving will be employed.

In order to ensure that every problem is addressed in a new and innovative manner, NPT also conducts "strategy meetings" to focus on problems. This tactic has opened the doors for all possibilities to be explored.

5) What issues/problems were identified with the problem-oriented policing model or the problem-solving model?

None.

6) What general resources (financial and /or personnel) were committed to this project, and of those resources, what went beyond the existing department budget?

In general, the resources consisted of the officers in NPT. Any funding for home improvements were accessible through the city's Community Development Commission. While it was not suggested, many owners of rental properties elected to sale their properties as opposed to spending funds for improvement. The buyers of these properties were willing to spend money in renovations. This worked to the advantage of meeting the goals of the project.

Project Contact Person:

- a) Thomas Wilkins
- b) Police Officer/Neighborhood Policing Team
- c) 1200 National City Boulevard
- d) National City, California 91950
- e) (619)336-4520
- f) (619) 336-4525
- g) WilkinsCa@aol.com

