

# Crime Reduction Through Neighborhood Crime Watches

## I. Summary

The City of Plano, Texas, is located in the Southern portion of Collin County and it has a population of 260,200. It is just 20 minutes north of downtown Dallas. The Plano Police Department is the largest law enforcement agency in its county and it is authorized to have 613 employees (360 sworn officers, 161 non-sworn employees, 90 non-sworn part time employees, and 2 contract employees).

The Crime Prevention Unit is comprised of a Sergeant, 3 sworn officers and 4 non sworn civilians. This unit is responsible for the administration of 32 education and prevention programs for the City of Plano residents and businesses.

The mission of the Plano Police Department is to provide outstanding police services in partnership with the community to maintain a safe environment that contributes to the quality of life. Our project was chosen in direct relation to our commitment to this mission.

The project chosen by the Plano Police Department Crime Prevention Unit was to decrease Part 1 crimes by 5% in Council District 1 by increasing neighborhood crime watch areas. It should be noted that Plano is comprised of 4 City Council Districts. City Council District 1 includes 21.1 square miles on the eastern portion of Plano with a population of 57,713.

A Neighborhood Watch program consists of a group of people living in a mutual area who work with local law enforcement to reduce crime to improve their quality of life. Neighborhood Watch groups have regular meetings to plan how they will accomplish their specific goals. Neighborhood Watch groups have specific leaders and assigned responsibilities (USA on Watch).

Neighborhood Watch is homeland security at the most local level. It is an opportunity to volunteer and work towards increasing the safety and security of our homes and our homeland. Neighborhood Watch empowers citizens and communities to become active in emergency preparedness, as well as the fight against crime and domestic terrorism (USA on Watch).

The Crime Prevention Unit began actively recruiting citizens to become involved in the Neighborhood Crime Watch Program. In January 2007, there were 27 Neighborhood Crime Watch areas in Council District 1. By December 2007, the number of Neighborhood Crime Watch areas increased to 49. This was a total increase of 22 new crime watch areas in Council District 1. This was an 81% increase. Part 1 crimes were reduced by 9% in 2007, surpassing the goal of a 5% reduction.

## **II. Description**

### **A. Scanning:**

The Plano Police Department Strategic Plan outlines the Departments vision for the next five years. Each year the department crafts annual goals in furtherance of this vision. In 2007 one of these goals was to reduce UCR Part 1 crimes by 5% in City Council District 1 and increase the number of Crime Watch areas in City Council District 1. This goal was shared by all in the Department. It was the primary responsibility of the Crime Prevention Unit to increase Neighborhood Crime Watch areas in City Council District 1.

Each member of the Crime Prevention Unit understood his or her role in carrying out the project. Each member was provided information which included the obvious benefits that Neighborhood Watch volunteers and their communities have experienced throughout the years. These benefits include crime reduction and a better quality of life. Neighborhood Watch participants are also provided a greater sense of security, responsibility and personal control. Crime Prevention Officers attended training related to recruitment and implementation of Neighborhood Crime Watch Programs.

### **B. Analysis:**

The City of Plano is comprised of 4 City Council Districts. City Council District 1 includes 21.1 square miles on the eastern portion of Plano with a population of 57,713.

| <b>Council District 1</b>              | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Total Population</b>                |               |                |
| January 1, 2007 estimate               | 57713         |                |
| 2000 Census                            | 51464         |                |
| <b>Gender Distribution</b>             |               |                |
| Male                                   | 26430         | 51.4           |
| Female                                 | 25034         | 48.6           |
| <b>Age Distribution</b>                |               |                |
| Under 5 years                          | 4210          | 8.2            |
| 5 to 9 years                           | 4069          | 7.9            |
| 10 to 14 years                         | 3680          | 7.2            |
| 15 to 19 years                         | 3832          | 7.4            |
| 20 to 24 years                         | 3910          | 7.6            |
| 25 to 34 years                         | 9849          | 19.1           |
| 35 to 44 years                         | 9265          | 18.0           |
| 45 to 54 years                         | 6531          | 12.7           |
| 55 to 64 years                         | 3494          | 6.8            |
| Over 64 years                          | 2624          | 5.1            |
| <b>Median age</b>                      | 30.1 years    |                |
| <b>Ethnic Distribution</b>             |               |                |
| Hispanic                               | 12100         | 23.5           |
| Non Hispanic                           |               | 39364          |
| <b>Racial Distribution</b>             |               |                |
| <i>Non-Hispanic, one race</i>          |               |                |
| African American or Black              | 4088          | 7.9            |
| American Indian Alaska Native          | 213           | 0.4            |
| Asian                                  | 3421          | 6.6            |
| Native Hawaiian Other Pacific Islander | 25            | 0.0            |
| Some other race                        | 64            | 0.1            |
| White                                  | 30600         | 59.5           |
| <i>Non Hispanic, two or more races</i> | 953           | 1.9            |
| <b>Housing Statistics</b>              |               |                |
| Total Housing Units                    | 19245         |                |
| Occupied Housing Units                 | 18303         | 95.1           |
| Vacant Housing Units                   | 942           | 4.9            |
| Owner Occupied                         | 10502         | 57.4           |
| Renter Occupied                        | 7801          | 42.6           |
| <b>Income</b>                          |               |                |
| Estimated households from sample       | 18445         |                |
| Under \$25,000                         | 2767          | 15.0           |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999                   | 5179          | 28.1           |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999                   | 4416          | 23.9           |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999                   | 2766          | 15.0           |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999                 | 2208          | 12.0           |
| \$150,000 and over                     | 1109          | 6.0            |
| <b>Median household income</b>         | \$53,116      |                |

| <b>Total Population</b>                | <b>Council District 2</b> | <b>Council District 3</b> | <b>Council District 4</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| January 1, 2007 estimate               | 66813                     | 66138                     | 61312                     | 194263       |                |
| 2000 Census                            | 53831                     | 56586                     | 60149                     | 170566       |                |
| <b>Gender Distribution</b>             |                           |                           |                           |              |                |
| Male                                   | 26570                     | 28012                     | 29607                     | 84189        | 49.4           |
| Female                                 | 27261                     | 28574                     | 30542                     | 86377        | 50.6           |
| <b>Age Distribution</b>                |                           |                           |                           |              |                |
| Under 5 years                          | 4519                      | 5704                      | 3946                      | 14169        | 8.3            |
| 5 to 9 years                           | 4549                      | 5477                      | 4424                      | 14450        | 8.5            |
| 10 to 14 years                         | 4186                      | 4843                      | 4676                      | 13705        | 8.0            |
| 15 to 19 years                         | 3013                      | 3247                      | 4230                      | 10490        | 6.2            |
| 20 to 24 years                         | 2436                      | 1932                      | 2361                      | 6729         | 3.9            |
| 25 to 34 years                         | 9593                      | 9214                      | 6920                      | 25727        | 15.1           |
| 35 to 44 years                         | 12105                     | 13225                     | 10948                     | 36278        | 21.3           |
| 45 to 54 years                         | 8328                      | 7965                      | 11358                     | 27651        | 16.2           |
| 55 to 64 years                         | 3187                      | 3024                      | 6869                      | 13080        | 7.7            |
| Over 64 years                          | 1915                      | 1955                      | 4417                      | 8287         | 4.9            |
| <b>Median age</b>                      | 33.7 years                | 32.3 years                | 38.2 years                | 34.8 years   |                |
| <b>Ethnic Distribution</b>             |                           |                           |                           |              |                |
| Hispanic                               | 2634                      | 3204                      | 4419                      | 10257        | 6.0            |
| Non Hispanic                           | 51197                     | 53382                     | 55730                     | 160309       | 94.0           |
| <b>Racial Distribution</b>             |                           |                           |                           |              |                |
| <i>Non-Hispanic, one race</i>          |                           |                           |                           |              |                |
| African American or Black              | 2253                      | 2713                      | 1935                      | 6901         | 4.0            |
| American Indian Alaska Native          | 131                       | 147                       | 164                       | 442          | 0.3            |
| Asian                                  | 7048                      | 7292                      | 4757                      | 19097        | 11.2           |
| Native Hawaiian Other Pacific Islander | 11                        | 35                        | 18                        | 64           | 0.0            |
| Some other race                        | 100                       | 80                        | 73                        | 253          | 0.1            |
| White                                  | 40846                     | 42177                     | 47920                     | 130943       | 76.8           |
| <i>Non Hispanic, two or more races</i> | 808                       | 938                       | 863                       | 2609         | 1.5            |
| <b>Housing Statistics</b>              |                           |                           |                           |              |                |
| Total Housing Units                    | 23555                     | 20982                     | 22296                     | 66833        |                |
| Occupied Housing Units                 | 21239                     | 19579                     | 21754                     | 62572        | 93.6           |
| Vacant Housing Units                   | 2316                      | 1403                      | 542                       | 4261         | 6.4            |
| Owner Occupied                         | 12283                     | 15554                     | 17286                     | 45123        | 72.1           |
| Renter Occupied                        | 8956                      | 4025                      | 4468                      | 17449        | 27.9           |
| <b>Income</b>                          |                           |                           |                           |              |                |
| Estimated households from sample       | 21331                     | 19565                     | 22808                     | 63704        |                |
| Under \$25,000                         | 1640                      | 1340                      | 3431                      | 6411         | 10.1           |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999                   | 3594                      | 2624                      | 3712                      | 9930         | 15.6           |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999                   | 3544                      | 3714                      | 4687                      | 11945        | 18.8           |

|                                |           |          |          |          |      |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|------|
| \$75,000 to \$99,999           | 2443      | 3604     | 3756     | 9803     | 15.4 |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999         | 4320      | 5346     | 4576     | 14242    | 22.4 |
| \$150,000 and over             | 5790      | 2937     | 2646     | 11373    | 17.9 |
| <b>Median household income</b> | \$101,468 | \$88,841 | \$84,413 | \$91,484 |      |

Council District 1 had the highest percentage of reported UCR Part 1 Crimes even though it had the lowest population of the 4 Council Districts.

The progress of the program was reported and evaluated during weekly and monthly meetings. These meetings helped to keep the project focused as well as monitoring the results.

### C. Response

Over the past thirty years, Neighborhood Crime Watches have enhanced public safety by creating community based partnerships to fight crime and improve the quality of neighborhood life. Therefore the Crime Prevention Unit decided to implement a plan to recruit volunteers to start Neighborhood Crime Watches.

The two types of volunteer recruitment used were focused recruitment and wide net recruitment. Focused recruitment involved contacting community members with specific skills, such as leadership skills and commitment to the community who would volunteer to serve as leaders in the program. Wide net recruitment approaches included letters, emails, door to door recruitment, and distribution of flyers in the community.

Other recruiting efforts included hosting several safety education events within Council District 1. These events provided information on Crime Prevention programs and services. These events included a Super Safety Saturday, Boy Scout Merit Badge event (which was attended by more than 500 community members), Kids Night Out Halloween Event (which was attended by more than 3000 community members).

In addition to these special events, Crime Prevention Officers also attended and provided music and sound equipment at Neighborhood Watch parties. This was done in an effort to create a relaxed, positive atmosphere in which neighbors could meet and get to know each other (some neighbors met for the first time at these events).

The Crime Prevention Unit also attended City Council Neighborhood Roundtable meetings. These meetings focus on one City Council District at a time, allowing residents and business owners in the targeted area to share their specific interests and concerns with Council and staff. City Council and staff, in turn, investigate and research citizens' suggestions and concerns, then respond to all inquiries by letter.

## D. Assessment

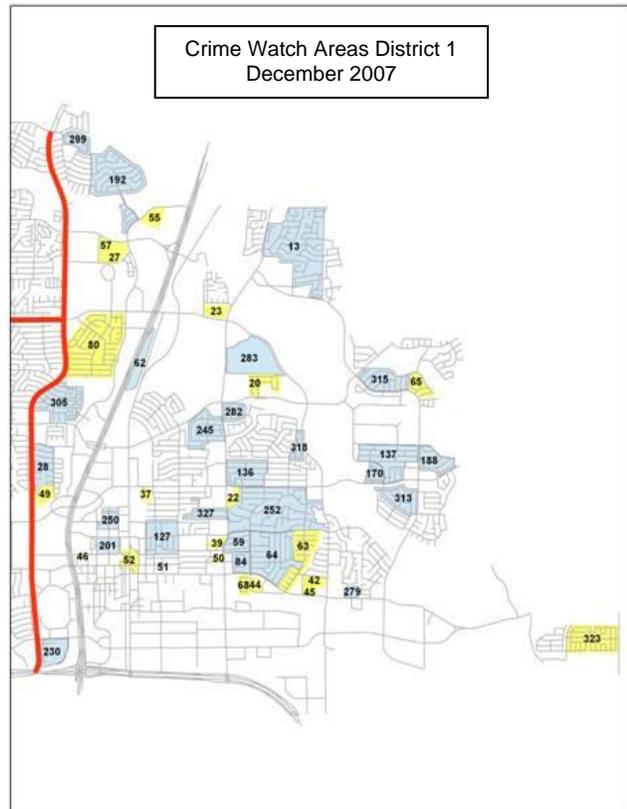
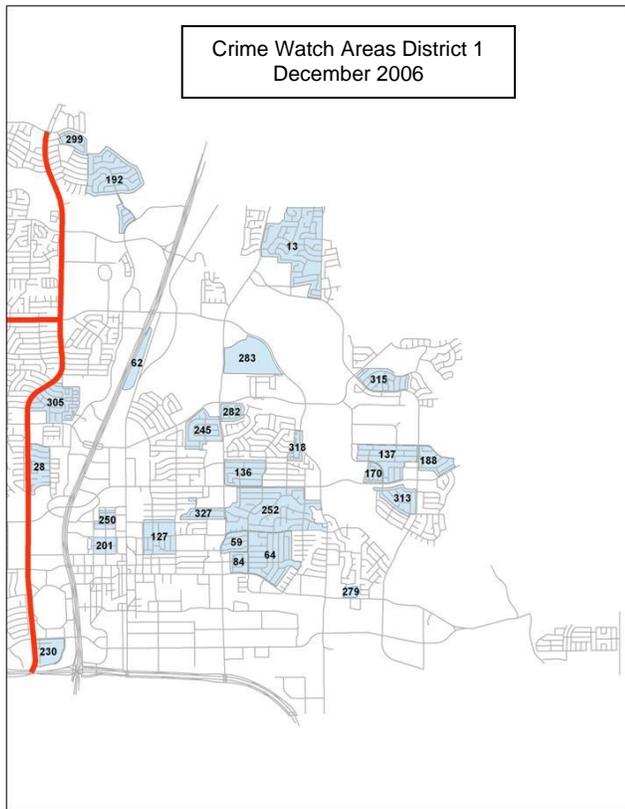
The project goal was achieved. Neighborhood Crime Watch areas in City Council District 1 were increased by 81%. 22 new Neighborhood Crime Watch areas now exist. UCR Part 1 Crimes were reduced by 9% surpassing the goal of a 5% reduction.

In addition, community members were provided with a greater sense of security, responsibility and personal control. There was an increase in community pride and unity. Citizens and community members were empowered to reduce crime and improve their quality of life in their own neighborhoods.

|                   | Dec-07 | Jan-07 |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| <b>Active CWA</b> |        |        |
| <b>District 1</b> | 49     | 27     |
| <b>District 2</b> | 67     | 61     |
| <b>District 3</b> | 55     | 48     |
| <b>District 4</b> | 46     | 45     |
| <b>Total</b>      | 217    | 181    |

Neighborhood Watch groups provided the Police Department with volunteer support and citizens became the "extra eyes and ears" of the Plano Police Department.

## 2006- 2007 Crime Watch Map Comparison



| Council District 1  | YTD Dec 06  | YTD Dec 07  | % of YTD   |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Murder              | 2           | 1           | -50%       |
| Rape                | 19          | 18          | -5%        |
| Robbery             | 86          | 88          | 2%         |
| Agg Assault         | 217         | 182         | -16%       |
| Burglary            | 493         | 490         | -1%        |
| Theft               | 2639        | 2415        | -8%        |
| Motor Vehicle Theft | 248         | 187         | -25%       |
| <b>Total Part 1</b> | <b>3701</b> | <b>3384</b> | <b>-9%</b> |

The positive results of this project are definitely maintainable over time. An example of this is the continued growth seen in this area. During the first quarter of 2008, 7 new Neighborhood Crime Watch areas have been established. UCR Part 1 crimes continue to show a reduction in City Council District 1.

Crime Prevention Officers have been contacted by surrounding agencies and asked to provide support for recruitment and implementation of this program in their cities. This is an example that this project is readily adaptable to other agencies and organizations.

The quality principals learned through this project have been adopted for use in other new crime prevention programs.

### **III. Agency and Officer Information**

This problem solving initiative was adopted by the entire department. Personnel from the Crime Prevention Unit, Patrol Division and volunteers from Citizens Assisting Plano Police were utilized.

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May 30, 2008

Rob T. Guerette, Ph.D  
Goldstein Award Coordinator

SUBJECT: Plano Police Department  
POP Initiative: Crime Reduction Through Neighborhood Watches

Dear Committee:

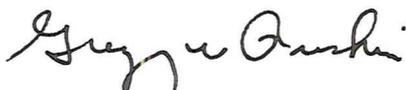
Please accept this nomination for the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing. Our nomination is based on work completed on POP: "Crime Reduction Through Neighborhood Watches" initiated by the Plano Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit. Officers from this Unit started working on this project to reach a department goal of decreasing Part 1 crimes by 5% in Council District 1.

In order to meet this goal, the Crime Prevention Unit began actively recruiting citizens to become involved in Neighborhood Crime Watch Areas in Council District 1. Neighborhood Crime Watch Areas were increased from 27 to 49. This was an 81 percent increase in active Neighborhood Crime Watch Areas. Part 1 Crimes were reduced by 9 percent, surpassing the goal of a 5 percent reduction.

Members of the Crime Prevention Unit worked tirelessly attending meetings, making presentations, and even mailing fliers in an effort to set up Neighborhood Watch Areas. The SARA Model of Problem Solving was utilized in this process to accomplish this task.

The Crime Prevention Unit worked in a joint effort with the citizens in this Council District to accomplish a specific goal. Fortunately, the goal was not only met, but it surpassed our expectations, and allowed our officers to leave a positive impression within our community.

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Rushin  
Chief of Police

GWR/LP/mw



"Professionalism - Integrity - Progress"

